

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 27th April, 1978

The SPEAKER (Mr Thompson) took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Ridge (Minister for Health), and read a first time.

ALUMINA REFINERY (WAGERUP) AGREEMENT AND ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 20th April.

MR H. D. EVANS (Warren) [2.18 p.m.]: The purpose of the Bill before the House is to ratify an agreement between the Government and Alcoa of Australia Limited to establish a third refinery at Wagerup. It is a Bill which can have very significant consequences, and probably one of the most important Bills we have discussed during the life of this Government.

The parent Act—the Alumina Refinery Agreement Act, 1961-1974—will be virtually unaltered, except where specifically indicated. Clause (13) of the Alumina Refinery (Pinjarra) Agreement Act confers on the company a right to establish a third refinery. The only limitation in regard to the quantity to be extracted rests with the State Government which will decide what is reasonable in the light of the reserves available in the lease area. That is of some significance, and there are also environmental considerations. These are the major alterations involved, and as we examine the matter further, we will look at them in their proper perspective.

The production capacity of the company's Kwinana alumina refinery is approximately 1.3 million tonnes per annum, and the production capacity at Pinjarra is approximately 2.2 million tonnes per annum. Under this agreement, the proposed refinery at Wagerup will have a capacity of 200 000 tonnes per annum, increasing to two million tonnes over a 15-year period. The Minister says that to be economically viable, a refinery must produce two million tonnes per annum under present-day costing and techniques of operation. At this stage I would like to indicate that the management of Alwest Pty. Ltd. has stated that a minimum economic size for a refinery is 800 000 tonnes, and so there is a considerable difference between these two figures.

Ten years ago it was considered that a capacity of 220 000 tonnes per annum was necessary for a viable refinery, but this figure has now been raised to 800 000 tonnes. These figures highlight the difficulties involved in endeavouring to obtain prices and accurate information, without which no reasonable, intelligent debate can proceed. We are grossly short of this information in the Chamber at the present time.

I wish to allude to a number of other important questions. It may be said that the difference between these figures is simply a mathematical error or a complication of some kind, but let me point out that a whole range of other questions depend upon the capacity of a refinery, including the known life of the refinery. Consideration must be given to human beings and the environment. We should be given some indication as to how long people in the industry will be involved in a particular mining operation.

The old trait when there was a boom in the mining industry was to extract all the metal possible and then bust, with the population being dispersed. This has happened dozens of times during the history of mining in Western Australia. The other question of the environment is raised also, and we want to know what period of time we will have to make various studies before the final crunch, when the vital decision has to be made.

I will now proceed to the terms of the agreement. The establishment of the refinery depends upon certain conditions. Firstly, the company must submit to the Government for approval a detailed environmental review and management plan, not only for the refinery, but also for associated operations.

Certainly this is happening in respect of stage 4, and with hindsight I suppose it is regrettable that it did not happen not only in respect of the original agreement, but also in respect of other industries. However, it will be noted that the approval of the Government will be required for the environmental review and management programme. There is no suggestion that the Environmental Protection Authority or anyone else will be involved in the evaluation of the ERMP when it is received, and so in reality Cabinet will make the final determination; and if it comes to that, it will be the decision of the Premier.

The company must also agree to a continuous programme of monitoring and research to improve environmental management techniques. Again, this is a very desirable feature. The company must also submit annual reports and

detailed three-yearly reviews of the results of the environmental research and management programmes which it will carry out; and on the surface that sounds quite admirable. However, the internal workings and procedures of evaluation and the demands for testing the veracity and conclusions of reports are not clearly set out. At this stage it is purely the company putting forward to the Government a statement for which it seeks approval, and that will not necessarily be known to the community at large.

The Premier has also indicated there will be no definite requirement on the part of the company to make public any of the ERMPs that it brings forward. The onus appears to be on the company so far as the provision of environmental data is concerned. How will this be checked by the Government? Perhaps the Minister will indicate this to us in his reply; it is one of the further unknowns to which I have alluded.

No mention is made of the action which will be required in the event of any deleterious effect being caused to the environment by operations once they are commenced. This, too, seems to be a shortcoming. On paper, the statement seems quite desirable but when looked at in respect of its actual implementation and the various safeguards and checks which should be placed upon it, we find some deficiency. A further requirement on the company is that it must observe all laws and regulations relating to the environmental affairs from time to time. Of course, that too is desirable.

The expansion of the Wagerup refinery beyond a capacity of two million tonnes will require a further environmental review and management programme study, and the same applies to the Pinjarra refinery. Alcoa will be required to produce an environmental review and impact programme before the expansion of its Pinjarra refinery can be undertaken. I point out that this requirement which holds the level of extraction in the Dwellingup area to its present level is desirable; and this level will be maintained for some time. This will thus increase the time during which bauxite mining is concentrated only in the high rainfall area; that is, the western side of the scarp where dieback is most prevalent and the salt content in the profile of the soil is low, and where rehabilitation and water quality techniques are already demonstrated and established.

Further time will, therefore, be available for research to be carried out in the lower rainfall areas well in advance of any commitment to mine

the areas on the eastern side of the scarp. Let us not forget at the same time that if Wagerup goes ahead it is fairly obvious that the total quantity of alumina available to Alcoa at Pinjarra will be decreased by that amount; and the period of mining on the western side of the scarp—where it is relatively safe to mine—will be contracted by that amount.

That is a question which arises in respect of this statement and its implications, and we would very much like to know just what are the mining programmes of Alcoa at this time. Does the company propose to mine in an easterly direction, going around Dwellingup, and then going south as has been suggested; and, if so, just how long will it be before it crosses the Huntley Ridge and enters the highly susceptible eastern side where we have a salinity problem that has not been resolved at this time?

Also, there is the question of the dieback-free areas around Dwellingup. Will they be subjected to mining within a comparatively few years? I have noticed that the Minister has given an assurance in his second reading speech in respect of only 10 to 15 years, and that is not a long time in terms of creating a forest—or, for that matter, in terms of a mining operation.

I think the question also should be asked whether any attempt is being made to place a constraint on the company to mine in a north-south axis along the western scarp, rather than proceeding eastwards. Further clarification is needed on whether there will be any attempt by the company to direct its operations away from the relatively healthy jarrah areas which are comparatively free from *phytophthora cinnamomi* and which there is a possibility of saving.

It is true that the effects and implication of dieback were not known at the time the original agreement was drawn up, and there could be some justification for its non-inclusion.

Mr Mensaros: As an ex-Minister, do you know when dieback was first discovered?

Mr H. D. EVANS: A doctor identified the causation of dieback some time ago. I am fairly familiar with the history of it, and the Forests Department and the CSIRO first described its identification, which was the first breakthrough. Then followed other developments in the subsequent 20 years in terms of expansion by the Forests Department after heavy machinery had been used in the area.

At the time the original alumina agreement was signed the significance of dieback was not known; it was discovered only subsequently. Nonetheless, the problem has multiplied since that time. In case the Minister feels I am being unduly critical, I should like to establish with him that I am not being critical in that light because the scientific data was just not available in those early years.

Had that knowledge with regard to dieback been available, the deliberations of people in this Chamber 15 years ago when the original agreement was being adopted might have taken a considerably different course, not only because of dieback but also for other reasons. I take the opportunity to place on record a reiteration of some of the conclusions that were echoed in this Chamber some time ago. I suggest that in view of the changed situation a review of the whole agreement could be made. The Minister suggests that at that time there was a deficiency of information on this one subject. That is quite so, and that is one reason that the ball game has changed almost completely and why there should be a total review at this time.

I am also certain that this changed situation has led the Government and the company to agree to variations in the original agreement taking us from an agreement which was totally without restriction to the far firmer situation contained in this Bill, albeit it has many deficiencies and shortcomings which will have to be examined and put in their perspective. No doubt public interest and public pressure have had something to do with this attitude and are responsible for this Bill appearing in the form it has appeared before the Legislative Assembly.

It has to be accepted that there will inevitably be some clash of interests between the environment and mining. It is a question of degree, and this is what we are endeavouring to elucidate and to evaluate at present. I point out also that not knowing the details of the mining programme of Alcoa is an illustration of how a lack of scientific knowledge can make it impossible for an Opposition and, for that matter, the entire community of Western Australia to evaluate properly the consequences of bauxite mining in this State.

I have no doubt that the Government will say the intentions of the company are confidential. That is perhaps so, but only to some extent. I most certainly argue that point. But the unalterable truth remains: Without detailed information the full implications of the operations cannot be appreciated or evaluated. That is just another illustration of the deficiency of the knowledge before this House at present.

This is one of the most important issues we have seen in a very long time. A 10-year mining plan is required for Wagerup, but whether this is to be made public again is not known. This secrecy, this absence of specific information, is one of the main sources of concern that confront us.

In his second reading speech the Minister said—

Further time will therefore be available for research in the lower rainfall areas . . .

He said that when indicating that the time at which Alcoa can proceed will depend on an ERMP which will allow time for further research. But by using those words the Minister makes it plain that the problems of restoring the eastern scarp are just not resolved at present. The phrase has to be regarded in the context of the claim that bauxite mining will be in high rainfall areas for the next 10 to 15 years; and that is not a very long time. That is all the time there will be for research before the crunch comes—before the really critical decision has to be made. This is another crucial question to which we must direct some further attention in a little while.

Mr Speaker, much has been made in the Press of the environmental review and management programme studies that will be required of the company. The Minister pointed out in his introductory remarks that the provision requiring an ERMP and contained on page 9 in clause 6 is the most significant of all the provisions in the agreement. An ERMP is required prior to the establishment of the Wagerup refinery, the expansion of the Pinjarra refinery, and the expansion of the Wagerup refinery again beyond the two million tonnes capacity, and subsequently in the following years. Most members would probably be fully aware of the location of those requirements.

A definition of an ERMP is found in clause 6. It states—

An environmental review and management programme is specified for the protection and management of the environment, including rehabilitation, and for restoration of mined areas.

It is worth bearing the definition in mind because upon this a number of fairly important questions devolve. The provision embodies a principle which is not only desirable but also absolutely vital in establishing mining operations. I am talking now only of the principle, not the actual type of study, which has to be queried. The principle of an environmental study before a mining operation is allowed to proceed is a vital one, and I feel most people here would be quite prepared to accept that.

In other countries much more stringent provisions are frequently placed on projects and companies have to meet conditions which have never been formulated in this State. One example is the bonding of a company to protect against its going into liquidation. I know that the company concerned in this agreement is a stable and well-regarded mining company, but at the same time there is the question of who, in the event of the mining operations ceasing at this stage, will pick up the tab and carry out the restoration work which has been left unfinished. That is a common requirement of companies in some countries and is just an illustration of the type of additional restraints which are placed on them.

It must be asked whether an environmental review and management programme is really the full answer to what is required in a matter which is of such great importance. Firstly, the document is filed by the particular company. That is the essential point in the whole matter. As I said, it does have shortcomings. It embodies some information that can be provided only by the company. I make the point that the mining company manager is responsible to a board of directors which is in turn responsible to shareholders domiciled, in the main, in countries other than Australia. Therefore, they must obviously be slanted in their views. It would be less than human to expect them to be anything other than biased. This must be borne in mind.

The problem does not concern only the actual factual information from the companies. As I have already said, we are not even aware of the mining programme proposed for the established works at Alcoa and this is the sort of shortcoming that can be expected. It is a human shortcoming; but it is one that should not be allowed to be perpetuated.

Secondly, I should like to ask who evaluates the ERMP and how it is evaluated. That has not been explained fully to us. We do not even know precisely what is meant by an ERMP.

I recall the impact statement which was required for the establishment of a wood chip industry. That was prepared by professional men without a vested interest and it was a document of some substance. It was the first environmental study required for a new project to be established in Australia. That is the manner in which it was undertaken. Is there to be a specified body, committee, or group which will be able to review such reports? This question must be asked also: Will they have powers to order a particular course of action as a result? Will they have the power to make an amendment or a change; or will the

report simply go to Cabinet where it may never see the light of day so far as the public is concerned?

We come back to the question of whether the Cabinet and *ipso facto* the Premier makes a decision arising from such a study. It appears that, if I may use the phrase, an environmental review and management programme is nothing short of a watered-down environmental statement and I have given the instance of the first of what I would have hoped would be a series of impact statements in Australia. It appears also that the Commonwealth Government is avoiding its responsibilities in this matter.

I draw the sharp contrast to the study and the programme which was carried out in connection with the industry I have mentioned during the time the Tonkin Government was in office. There are additional environmental provisions by way of the standard environmental clause which has been included in all new ratified agreements since 1971. I am tempted to ask who was in government at that time. The importance of the alumina industry in Western Australia was canvassed thoroughly by the Minister and it is a matter which the Opposition is fully aware and for which it has due regard.

The figures quoted by the Minister indicate that Alcoa employs 2 800 people in this State. Wagerup will provide an additional 330 permanent jobs at a production level of 500 000 tonnes per annum, with a further 210 permanent jobs for every expansion in the capacity of Wagerup of half a million tonnes. Therefore, it can be seen the work force is significant, particularly in this time of high unemployment. At two million tonnes capacity—that is the end of the first stage of the Wagerup refinery—960 people will be employed. It is accepted generally that an additional two to three jobs in service and related industries will be created as a result of every permanent job established. This will depend on the type of industry and its location. The ratio can vary with different regions for different reasons.

Where there is an established infrastructure, where there has already been the creation of services of various kinds, the creation of new jobs will be diminished; but it is accepted in this case that two to three additional jobs will be created as a result of every permanent position established within the work force of the refinery.

During the three years of construction of the refinery, the work force of contractors will reach a maximum of 760 and will average 380 over the three-year construction period. So 380 will be the average number of employees in the work

force over that 15-year period, taking a period of 15 years if the capacity of the refinery is expanded to two million tonnes.

The total investment by Alcoa in Western Australia is \$450 million. The production of alumina by Alcoa in 1977 was 3.5 million tonnes which was valued in excess of \$275 million. As far as expenditure is concerned, the company spent \$114 million in producing alumina in this State. Another significant aspect is the fact that it paid \$14 million to State and local governments, \$35 million to employees, and \$65 million to contractors and suppliers. This expenditure contributed to increasing economic activity and, therefore, the creation of more jobs.

One deficiency in the statement made by the Minister—and I feel I should make reference to it as it is contained in the annual report of Alcoa—revealed the total income of Alcoa in Australia in 1977 was \$437 million, with a net profit which rose from \$42.6 million to \$65.1 million and a bonus issue of 125 million shares was made on the 30th December, 1977. The total share capital was \$210 million and the value of assets was \$960 million. Obviously the company is in a sound financial position and is engaged in a secure, sound, profitable mining venture.

Whilst this agreement is before the House it might be as well if the Minister could give the answer to some questions during the course of his reply. The questions are: How the present level of royalties has been determined having regard to the fact that the industry has become established over a period of years; how the calculation of royalties is related to profitability; and whether the royalties received by this State are fair and equitable when compared with similar bauxite ventures in overseas countries.

Perhaps the Minister could answer also whether the level of restoration work and research is adequate or whether there are reasonable grounds for seeking an obligation for additional expenditure on the part of the company. The Opposition is aware of the importance of this industry and it is anxious—probably more anxious than the Government—to see the creation of further jobs which will alleviate the situation we have in Western Australia at the present time.

Returning to the further provisions of the agreements, it can be seen they cover the other aspects of the industry which include the obligation on the company to use rail transport for its bulk material. Obviously this is a most desirable inclusion in the agreement. It must use Bunbury as the port for the shipment of a quantity of alumina and bulk materials are to be exported

through either Bunbury or Kwinana. This will involve the acquisition of additional land in the vicinity of the Port of Bunbury and the Railways Commission will construct at the company's expense any additional lines which may be necessary.

These are machinery provisions which are properly included and which are very pleasing to see. The company must provide finance for rolling stock if required by the Government. This finance will be on terms to be decided; but nonetheless if the Government is placed in a favourable financial position as it has access to funds from this particular source.

The company is required to provide the terminal equipment for loading and unloading, and to provide adequate staff to operate these facilities. The responsibility is with the company.

The Bill also makes provision for the granting of licences for the road transport of materials required for the construction of the refinery, and this could well be necessary in many areas.

Provision is made in the Bill for Alcoa to give preference to the use of local goods and services, including professional services and materials. Of course, it is recognised that this might not be possible right throughout the entire period of construction because it is obvious there will not be a sufficient number of trained personnel in specific categories to meet the requirements for short periods in the course of construction. However, the inclusion of such a clause is desirable and it demonstrates good intent on the part of the Government.

Housing the work force at Wagerup will be the responsibility of the company. Any works associated with the provision of water will be the subject of a proposal put to the Government for approval.

Mr Herzfeld: Why not tell us something we do not know?

Mr Pearce: Anything we could tell you you would not know!

Mr H. D. EVANS: I will come onto the things we have not been told in a moment and I will turn to the member for Mundaring for answers.

Mr Bryce: The oracle from the back bench!

Mr H. D. EVANS: No doubt the honourable member will be on his feet later with some rhetorical information.

The construction or upgrading of roads will also be at the company's expense; and provision for any variation of the agreement must be

tabled in Parliament for 12 sitting days during which an opportunity will be available to members to move for its disallowance.

Finally, the only other provision to which I would like to make reference is the clause to enable the Bunbury Port Authority Act to be modified.

In his concluding remarks the Minister stated—

This agreement therefore has not been framed to expand bauxite mining and the bauxite industry.

This is rather odd logic. I will come back to the original agreement shortly, but in making that conclusion the Minister has implied that he hopes there will not be an increase in the capacity of the bauxite mining industry when, in fact, the total quantity will be increased; and this is the essential aspect which has to be studied. The agreement limits the ultimate size to which the industry may expand without submitting an ERMP, but it almost doubles the output of the company from something like 3.4 million or 3.5 million to 5.5 million tonnes, and therefore it is an effective increase in industry in Western Australia.

Even before the Bill was introduced the Opposition determined the approach it would take, bearing in mind the complexity of the matter and the need to glean all the information it possibly could from various sources. On becoming aware of the intention of the Government to introduce the agreement, the SPLP undertook a research programme of considerable depth and extending over a lengthy period of time. The committee meetings which examined the total question were attended by an average of 10 members over the period, and this was a commendable effort and one which was appreciated. No parliamentarian has a great deal of spare time; he can always find something to do. The effort made by the Opposition reflects the importance it places on this industry and the Bill we are now debating.

The SPLP visited Alcoa and Alwest. Once again there is never enough time, but a full day was required to achieve what was undertaken. It met with representatives of the Forests Department, the Department of Industrial Development, the CSIRO, the Institute of Foresters, the conservation groups, the Tree Society, and the Timber Workers' Union. All in all hundreds of manhours were involved not only in the attendance at meetings, but also in the visits and in the compilation of various reports.

I would like to express appreciation to the Minister for Forests, the Minister for Works,

and the Minister for Industrial Development who extended such ready co-operation. The Minister for Industrial Development attended one of the sessions of the committee and that he should have taken the time to do so is to his credit. The visit was appreciated.

The discussions were frank and unfettered and there were no reservations by the officers when they put forward the points they wished to make. All in all it was a very useful exercise. The series had the effect of making for a better informed Opposition which I am sure will make for a more meaningful debate in this Chamber.

I would say that the Opposition would have liked more time to discuss the matter with other bodies. We had several more listed on our agenda, but it was just not possible as the Bills had been introduced and there was some haste and pressure for a final recommendation and report to Caucus which had established the committees.

I would like to place on record a summary of each of the individual tours and meetings or committee sessions because they provide some of the most authoritative information available at the present time.

The visit to Alcoa was in the nature of a tour and the members of the SPLP undertook this, which was the first of the series, on the 2nd March last year. This indicates that the investigation goes back a fair time. A full day, from 8.30 a.m., was required to visit Kwinana, the mining sites at Jarrahdale and Del Park, and the reforestation areas of the Pinjarra and Wagerup refineries. The members of Alcoa staff were most helpful and hospitable and certainly went out of their way to make available information which was sought of them. It would have been too much to expect confidential information, but the number of written reports and the time taken to compile them is a good reflection on the company, and it would be unfair of me not to mention this.

The responsibilities of the company under the existing agreement have been treated quite seriously. There is no criticism of the company as such.

The observations and conclusions from the minutes of this visit and from written answers to questions which a senior officer of the company provided, in addition to the published material should be recorded in *Hansard*; and the observations from the point of view of the company need to be appreciated and weighed up against those of other organisations not directly associated with the mining venture itself.

With your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I would like to have six observations incorporated in *Hansard*, perhaps even for the sake of posterity. They are—

- (a) Alcoa expressed confidence that no salinity problems could occur on the Western side of the Darling Scarp—i.e. West of a line running approximately North/South through Dwellingup.
- (b) There was no doubt that vegetative cover could be restored to areas currently being mined, but no consideration was given to the establishment of commercial forest. Water harvesting and recreational usages were the only immediate goals being set for the reforested areas.

I think this is accepted by most people at the present time, especially with reference to the commercial forest. To continue—

- (c) By the time operations were to be carried out in the more salt-prone soil profiles further to the East, the experience in re-afforestation and additional results which will be available for consideration should ensure safety of the operations in these more Easterly sections of the Darling Scarp.

There is no surety in that, as will be noticed. The next observation is—

- (d) Alcoa is prepared to have regard for the constraints of its mining operations which the existence of priority management and quarantine areas have created. However, Alcoa understandably feels that additional constraints on access to ore bodies by deferring operations to allow time to assess reforestation over the longest possible period before moving in an Easterly direction are not desirable.

I have no doubt that is so from the company's point of view. To continue—

- (e) Because of the effects of *Phytophthora Cinnamomi*, the future of the jarrah forest seemed very doubtful. The Company therefore raises the postulation that it could be considered preferable to allow mining to proceed unfettered, in the belief that the subsequent re-afforestation would result in a better quality forest environment.
- (f) The Company considers that the economic and other interests of the State could well be better served by a virile

mining operation than the existing forest. This rationale is supported by the contention that future water supplies and other forest uses would be better assured through re-afforestation.

There was a further observation on the improvement in the technique of handling the red mud lakes.

Two aspects of the contentions made by Alcoa do not agree with the contentions of other groups with whom the committee met. These are connected with salinity and reafforestation, and they must be regarded in juxtaposition to those conflicting views in summing up. The intention of Alcoa, as advised to the committee, was apparently based on the company's submission in connection with System 6 to the Environmental Protection Authority. It does not agree with the information contained in the Minister's second reading speech so to that extent it can be disregarded.

That was the situation as far as contact with Alcoa was concerned, and it will be appreciated that in the time available it was reasonably thorough. Discussions were held with Alwest which provided an opportunity to fly over the Alwest area and also the Alcoa area, and from that committee members gained a greater appreciation of the overall problem. I do not think the conclusions are of immediate consequence in this debate but they will have relevance to the next item on today's notice paper.

The Forests Department was represented before the committee by the Conservator of Forests and one of his senior research officers. The most important consideration raised at that meeting related to *phytophthora cinnamomi*—or, as it is more popularly known, jarrah dieback. The danger of spread of the disease and the history of techniques in handling it were discussed at some length.

It was not until 1965 that jarrah dieback was identified as the causative agent. The pathogen which takes its name from the cinnamon trees in which it was first located was not appreciated prior to the work of the CSIRO and the Forests Department. Since then a considerable amount of information has become available, and the further documents made available to the committee by the Forests Department included *Forest Focus* No. 19, which, for its purpose, is probably one of the best documents to which members could direct their attention.

The real spread of dieback came in the decades between 1945 and 1965. Heavy machinery had

been brought into use in the forest. This, conjointly with an expansion of roads by the Forests Department and local government authorities, created a sudden explosion of dieback infection, certainly through most of the northern jarrah forest; and while the research which is proceeding into jarrah dieback is hopeful at the present time, it does not offer any immediate solution to some of the problems found in the context of bauxite mining.

The trials at the present time are only at a laboratory stage. No field trials have been made to overcome the effects of using leguminous acacias in managing the environment, so they cannot be claimed to be a success in the field. However, hopefully the indication for improved management techniques, which will allow not only the curtailment of the disease but also the regeneration of affected areas, will become a reality in the course of time. At the present moment the prophylactic measures being used are not at all successful. The efforts are considerable but the results are not of any great significance at the moment.

There has been some suggestion in the Press by way of letters and replies that the spread of dieback in bauxite areas could well amount to a ratio on average of three to one. Certainly it would not apply in areas where an entire catchment is being mined, bearing in mind the water-borne nature of the spores of the pathogen. So if 60 per cent of an area is being mined, dieback cannot be spread in a ratio of three to one; but where an area is 2 per cent affected by dieback and a mining operation uses 10 per cent of that area, a much greater ratio than three to one results. It could be five or six to one. Having regard to the fact that mining is carried out on the ridges rather than in the lower reaches of the lateritic areas of the Darling Scarp, the spread is much more rapid. On the incline it could be restricted to something like a few centimetres a year.

However, in an area that is prone to flooding on the down side, water will carry the spores over a large distance in a comparatively short time, as we saw occur in the Donnybrook sunlands where the spread was most dramatic. So the spread of dieback in the jarrah forest is closely associated with the incidence of the disease. Bear in mind, too, that the richer deposits of bauxite are found on the higher ridges where the healthier jarrah grows, and the temptation for the company is to leap into those areas at the greatest possible speed. After all, it is a commercial venture, and healthy areas of jarrah forest are being mined at the moment. There is no gainsaying that fact.

To say that mining has been taking place only in dieback-affected areas is misleading, to say the least.

That contribution of the Forests Department was of considerable value to the committee in respect of determining the importance of the consequences of dieback.

The Department of Industrial Development was represented in the persons of the Minister himself and some of his officers. I have already indicated our appreciation of his gesture in this regard, and I might add that he made quite a contribution in his own right. However, the conclusions which arose from the discussion are rather interesting. They, too, have a bearing on the overall decision the Government has taken. I would like to indicate those conclusions because I feel they illustrate once again the lack of detailed knowledge to which I have made earlier reference.

The department considered the expansion of the bauxite industry in Western Australia would benefit the national and State economies in a number of ways. Firstly, it would increase employment opportunities, and the figures quoted in the Minister's second reading speech—and which I have reiterated—bear witness to the fact that this is indisputable.

Secondly, the expanding revenue of both the State and Federal Governments was evident in the finances as they were explained by the Minister, and also in the annual report of the department. The revenue occasioned to those Governments through company tax, royalties, and payments to local governments are recognised as being a significant contribution.

Thirdly, the department considered the industry would be of benefit by stimulating the economy through activity generated for associated industries, especially in the construction stages. If this is going to mean 380 jobs in the 15 years of construction, this too is a point that is incontestable; and when we have regard for the fact that Alcoa has paid wages of \$35 million, that money must flow into the economy in a significant amount.

Fourthly, the industry will enable a measure of decentralisation from the metropolitan area to be achieved. Occasionally opportunities for decentralisation present themselves, and this is one of them.

The fifth reason is the possible establishment of new industries. It was here that the Minister made reference to the opportunity to venture into smelting and, from that stage, into the production of manufactured aluminium goods—in the main consumer goods; or that seemed to be the direction

of thought. From that, when the size of the operation is sufficient, we could have the manufacture of certain products such as chemicals. This could be undertaken when the volume and capacity enabled a throughput to make the manufacture of chemicals economical. It was in this context that the production of caustic from Western Australian salt was suggested.

Sixthly, the opportunity to expand the bauxite industry may not necessarily be available to us indefinitely. This is a fact of life. It is possible that overseas competitor countries may develop their own deposits to meet the projected world demand. This is the sort of situation that arises frequently in a commercial venture.

If a venture is conducted in the open commercial field, it must be understood that such will always be the case. It was suggested, too, by the officers of the department that it is possible excessive delay in expansion of the industry in Western Australia could result in capital establishment costs escalating to a level which would render bauxite mining uneconomical.

Those were the points that were made; and they did depend to some extent upon the provision of natural gas from the North-West Shelf as a source of fuel, initially for smelting, and subsequently for the other operations.

That leads me to conjecture on the remarks made by the Premier in the 1969 debate when he questioned seriously the economics of natural gas as a fuel. This is part of the overall development, and the Minister is aware of the costs to which I referred. The Premier suggested at the time the cost per unit of the power required would be five mills, and this would be something like four times the cost of power required in a place like Bahrain. He also made a comparison with New Zealand and Tasmania. That, again, is an area about which we do not have full details.

Sir Charles Court: I think you know there is a completely new outlook throughout the world now. Those countries that were not attractive for power are now attractive, and vice versa.

Mr H. D. EVANS: The situation has changed to some extent, and I will remind the Premier of his remarks at that time and give him the opportunity to answer several specific matters that arise. This is an important matter because it is a line of argument the Government will take up in an endeavour to justify what is precipitate action.

Sir Charles Court: I am sure the Minister will deal with that, because it is very pertinent to the whole exercise.

Mr H. D. EVANS: It certainly is. As the matter has appeared in the Press and we have been told that three refineries will require something in excess of 50 per cent of the output of the State Energy Commission, then the economics of that commission will depend heavily upon a customer of that size. At the moment we have little information, and that is the point I make. This is another area in which we are deficient in specifics and cannot find the answers to questions that arise.

We still do not know whether the use of North-West Shelf gas is purely conjectural at this stage. We have only a series of Press reports and other statements to go on, without any specifics having been presented. As I said, the matter should be more closely regarded, as it will be in a moment.

The three CSIRO doctors who made the effort to attend a committee hearing were most helpful. Not only did they provide some excellent specific information on the day, but the references they provided were also worthy of study.

The role of the CSIRO was described as one of pure research, providing factual information to all those organisations and bodies requiring it. The work of the CSIRO is viewed as an appreciation of land management, of which bauxite mining is a part, a single issue. So, CSIRO paints a broad canvas; it does not confine itself to one aspect of land use, and it is on that basis that research has been carried out.

The main work of CSIRO is to supervise the analyses of the work of Government departments, such as the bores which have been drilled at various points in the metropolitan area, and evaluating the results produced by the committee concerned with that subject. CSIRO also examines ways of establishing management formulae and preventing salinity, and the prediction of the effect of various uses of land, especially in regard to salinity.

A number of points were raised, salinity in mining areas being one about which we were most anxious. When asked on a number of specific occasions, the CSIRO indicated that, on the western scarp and following about the 46-inch isohyet, there was no danger of salinity occurring, even if clear felling took place, and even if the land were converted to farmland. That was very reassuring.

The CSIRO is an organisation of great stature, held in great regard as being an authority on many matters, not only in Western Australia but also nationally.

The CSIRO considered the matter of turbidity as purely one for correct management procedures. It has not studied the subject, and was not able to give any data on the problem.

I think I should make a few comments about the model used by the CSIRO in its research, upon which much has been said and many conclusions drawn. The model should be seen in its true light, because it can apply with scientific certainty only to the areas where it was actually tried out by the CSIRO. This point is made very clear by the organisation. There is a great variation from situation to situation throughout the Darling Scarp and the conclusions drawn from research based on the model constructed by the CSIRO do not necessarily apply throughout the scarp area.

I refer now to a letter written by Mr Malcolm Hollick, a lecturer in engineering at the University of Western Australia, published in *The West Australian* on the 29th March. It states as follows—

The studies reported in the CSIRO magazine *Ecos*, were aimed at finding out just how large these effects might be.

He was referring to the effect of agricultural clearing on streams in the area. His letter continues—

To do this a computer model was used, but it would be a mistake to accept the results uncritically.

So, while the contents of the *Ecos* article to a large degree are acceptable, some aspects of it cannot be regarded in a completely uncritical vein. Mr Hollick then went on to describe the shortcomings of such a model. I am not voicing a strong criticism of the methods used or the conclusions drawn by the CSIRO. However, a model of that kind does have limitations of the sort suggested by CSIRO officers, and the conclusions of the organisation should be regarded in that light. I believe it was pertinent to make that point to ensure it was clearly understood.

Another of the conclusions reached by the committee, after talking with the CSIRO, was that the nature of bauxite mining would result in an increase in the rate of *phytophthora cinnamomi*; that point has already been made by the Forests Department and the Institute of Foresters. The CSIRO also makes the point that this possibility cannot be disregarded or excluded from the considerations of the overall project.

As I have already said, turbidity was not seen as a major problem; if policing of existing management techniques is carried out, there should not be any real query in that regard.

Four members of the Hunt steering committee addressed the SPLP committee on the 5th April, this year. Members would be aware of the genesis of the Hunt committee; it goes back to the 21st May, 1973, when a decision was taken to bring together representatives of the Departments of Development and Decentralisation, Mines, Forests, Public Works, Metropolitan Water Board and the Environmental Protection Authority to examine fears which had been voiced about possible problems resulting from bauxite mining in the Darling Range. The committee was well selected and represented, and it liaised with the CSIRO. The manner in which it has gone about its duties is most reassuring, and it is a body in which the people of Western Australia can have some confidence. It is a great pity we do not have before us the updated report of the committee.

The salinity line—of vital consequence in any expansion of bauxite mining—was discussed at the meeting of the 5th April, and the question of how it was established was raised. The Hunt committee touched on an historical review of the physical effects, the drilling studies which had taken place and the study of salinity in the base flow of streams, pointing out that the line itself was related very closely to the 1 150 millimetre isohyet—or, the 46-inch isohyet to which I referred earlier. The committee tabled its report in 1976 and its updated report now is in the offing, but is not yet available to members.

A further meeting was held with representatives of the Campaign to Save Native Forests group and on the 12th April they were given the opportunity to express their point of view.

The organisation has been active in voicing its views and concern throughout the community and indeed a broad-sheet has been circulated which explains the areas of anxiety which its members feel. The general aspects of the environment are the areas about which the Campaign to Save Native Forests expresses its worry.

The Tree Society again was an organisation which had similar fears and it made no pretence that its members were experts. I admire them for that. They simply claimed to be—and indeed I know them to be—to a large extent intelligent, concerned people but with a very genuine interest in the environment. They impressed the committee with these very qualities. They pointed out that their membership was widespread. The society was not spectacularly active but it held the view that it sought further inquiry before there was any expansion of the bauxite industry and wished to see more expenditure on dieback research in Western Australia.

That was the contribution of the Tree Society and it was a view shared by the Western Australian Timber Workers' Industrial Union which organisation was represented by the secretary, Mr Caimanos. He of course was taking a somewhat different reasoning but arriving at the same conclusions as had the Tree Society. In summation his view would have been that short-term profits should not jeopardise long-term investment by way of timber production, environment, water catchment, and all the other things associated with a forest that is managed on a multi-use basis.

Mr Speaker, you will appreciate the divergence of views brought before the committee which were representative of the entire spread of the areas of anxiety which was felt. When considering the managerial and environmental aspects alone, the conclusions of the Campaign to Save Native Forests are of considerable interest and I think those people expressed the views held by many people. Their conclusions were that in Western Australia when plans for industrial and mining development proceed it is essential, because of the very harsh and marginal nature of our climate, that extreme care should be taken.

That group went on to offer further suggestions on how the operations of the company could be modified to give greater protection, but it is sufficient for our purposes to explain that this was an area of genuine environmental concern shared not only by this organisation but also others and to which we had full regard.

Probably the most interesting and certainly not the least authoritative of all organisations who have the right and indeed have a duty to express an opinion is the Institute of Foresters of Western Australia. The institute is composed of the professional officers of this State and I understand that other parties received a copy of their statement on bauxite mining put forward by the institute and received only within the last day or so. So no-one can disregard the concern that the institute expressed and no-one can feel completely sanguine when those views have been disregarded in the way they have been by this Government.

The institute expressed dismay in its letter to *The West Australian* that an environmental impact statement had not been compiled. That is first and foremost. It was suggested in the same letter that three months would be needed for anyone, including members of Parliament, to evaluate the issues contained in an environmental impact statement of the kind involved. That is a view about which I think there should be a little more thought.

It could well be that if that were so and an impact statement were produced by the Institute of Foresters all members of this House might come down in complete favour of the proposal to expand bauxite mining. It could be that that is the case; however, there are reasons to believe it would not be the case, but we will not know because we were not given such statements although we wanted to have them.

The concern of the Institute of Foresters as land use managers is a very deep one. Their concern in one area is that the nature of the jarrah forest is not understood. I do not suppose we could say that foresters would have a vested interest in this; if anything went wrong they would not be out of a job as they would have an increased amount of work trying to restore whatever went astray if reforestation could not be completely undertaken. So bearing that in mind, the foresters themselves as land use managers are worried that the nature of the forest is not known generally.

The institute representatives canvassed the advantages of an expanded bauxite industry in terms of revenue, economy, employment, recreation, and water supply. This is fair enough. Then they turned to undesirable consequences which are probabilities; not possibilities, but probabilities arising from an expanded bauxite industry.

First among these was removal of the jarrah forest and the further destruction of the jarrah forest by dieback. I indicated earlier the correlation between dieback and bauxite mining in the ratios that have been put forward. The institute member representing production forestry—and he is also a member of the Sawmillers' Association or the Forestry Workers' Association as it is more latterly known—pointed out the State's ability to produce hardwood from depleted forest sources, which is a reality. How it measures up in comparison when weighed against a bauxite industry in terms of the economy is difficult to say without further information and research.

It might be asked, "Why did we not do that?". The opportunities available for research by Oppositions are limited and there is no doubt a good argument exists for a research assistant for Oppositions. The amount of time is not available firstly, and secondly, the manner in which information can be elicited is not readily available to Oppositions and so it is that such questions as the relationship and the balance between production forestry and the alumina industry are not fully appreciated.

The problem of salinity is one that has to be resolved before mining around the eastern scarp is undertaken. This is the whole crux of the issue.

It was anticipated that it would be longer than 10 or 12 years before mining would be directed into the eastern area, but it appears from the Minister's statement that this is not so. When the expansion takes place the crunch will come; the decision must be taken as to whether or not the mining can be extended into the saline areas of the eastern scarp. Unless these areas can be revegetated quickly and successfully there is a danger of salinity; and no scientist worth his salt in Western Australia, or in Australia for that matter, can give an assurance that successful revegetation of those areas is possible. They just will not give that assurance. When the time comes someone will have to make the decision as to whether mining will be extended into the east or whether the operation will cease and the final research will be carried out. That will be the decision that will have to be made. That is the crunch and it is a gamble. It is a problem to which no-one can provide the true solution. If the people of Western Australia are called upon to gamble with their heritage in this way they should know it and they should know the stakes; but they do not know them at the present time.

It was also pointed out that the danger of glut and recession, typical of the mining industry, will be increased if bauxite mining is allowed to develop in the way in which it is intended. The question of relocating the unemployed does arise and I hope it would be a concern of any Government, including this one; but the Government does not seem to have taken much account of it up to this time.

With regard to the re-establishment of the forests, to replace the jarrah forest is a problem to which there are no sure answers. There is no way to do this at present. No-one can say it is possible to re-establish forests on the western scarp, let alone on the eastern scarp.

The areas can be revegetated and covered, and the attention which Alcoa has given to this aspect—the vigour of the saplings it has re-established is surprising—of course, demonstrates, up to this stage, a very healthy attitude on the part of the company. However, a mature forest is a totally different proposition. It is one thing for four-inch saplings to grow. With the techniques which have been adopted in the bauxite pits, with the stored topsoil being

replaced, deep ripping being undertaken, and seedlings being planted, the growth has been surprisingly vigorous, as I have already said.

However, it is a different story when mature trees are involved. The stress they place on a mining-deprived site is a totally different question from the stress placed by a four-inch sapling, and this has already been demonstrated.

With regard to pines, none have been planted since 1971. With regard to the tallow wood—*eucalyptus microcorys*—it was shown that these developed surprisingly in the early growth and then died. This has occurred not only in this State, but in other places also. It is a common occurrence. The percentage of pines around Nannup which have died in the last dry summers is surprisingly high and if one stands back and looks at the pine-covered hills one can see the areas of dead growth indicating the areas in which pines have not survived the summer stress.

The same thing has occurred in Hawaii where the *eucalyptus robusta* grew to a height of 40 feet and then suddenly keeled over. This was due to the ravages of a small beetle, but it occurred even after that length of time. Therefore no-one can say for certain that it is possible to grow a mature forest along the Darling Scarp, bearing in mind that what is to be replaced is a tree which has surprisingly adapted itself to the area. If we look at other countries of the southern hemisphere on a similar latitude, we find that they comprise deserts.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.04 p.m.

Mr H. D. EVANS: I have outlined the areas of concern with regard to the expansion of this industry. I would now like to refer to the approach taken by this Government, and the haste with which these agreements have been introduced. Not only the Opposition, but the people of Western Australia generally have just cause to be concerned about what has happened with regard to this matter, and the total disregard for the public.

The Premier indicated that these Bills were introduced out of necessity. A statement attributed to the Premier, published in *The West Australian* of the 19th April, stated the Premier said it was necessary to get such legislation passed so that the formal procedures such as environmental management programmes could proceed.

The Premier also said in this Chamber last week that the agreements had been ratified to enable the companies to proceed with the raising of capital. That is so much nonsense; it is

utter rubbish. Environmental reports and management programmes are being prepared at this very time. Alcoa is compiling an ERMP, and Alwest has engaged Maunsell and Partners to update the previous report which that company had undertaken. So much for the need for the introduction of this legislation. The reports are under way and in train, irrespective of whether or not the Bill was before us.

As far as the raising of finance is concerned, this matter is already in hand in the case of both companies. From queries I raised in the course of discussions with representatives of the companies, that is my understanding. There is an absence of reports. There are five which should be available not only to the Government, but also to everybody else in the Chamber. Those reports should have at least been brought in.

In question 88, of the 16th March, 1978, I asked whether the Government would require an environmental impact study on the effects of bauxite mining in the Darling Range. The Minister answered, "No", and said that was not the case; rather, the Government allowed the companies to present their own ERMP. It seems to me that to allow the companies to do that is an abrogation of responsibility, not only by this Government but also by the Commonwealth Government.

There seems to have been an arrangement to accept ERMP reports from the companies in place of environmental impact statements. I seem to recall some arrangement between the Prime Minister and the Premiers—going back some time—that neither the Federal Government nor the State Governments would have direct involvement. To me that is nothing short of irresponsibility.

The evaluation of the System 6 report of the EPA, again, is a gross infringement. The lack of knowledge and lack of information available to this House are serious deficiencies, to which I have referred. Those reports in my view are paramount. On the 5th April, 1978, I asked the Premier a question regarding the Stanford Institute report, to which he gave the following answer—

- (1) The Stanford Research Institute has been engaged by the Government to carry out a study with the following terms of reference—

"(1) Examine existing Government procedures for planning for multiple use of land within the Darling Range;

- (2) review existing and potential conflict between different land uses;

- (3) recommend appropriate machinery to develop an optimum land use planning system for the area."

The study will not therefore be examining the effects of bauxite mining, as implied in the member's question.

The report is expected to be completed by the end of May.

When I asked the Premier whether the Stanford report would be tabled, he replied that it was a departmental report. How could the Stanford report possibly be dissociated from bauxite mining when the mining involves one of the greatest land-use problems in the entire area? The reply given to me verges on the ludicrous.

The updated report of the Hunt committee would have been of great value in the absence of anything else. It seems more than passing strange that the Government is not prepared to accept any of these reports; it will not even allow them to come in, let alone opt for an environmental impact statement. That verges on the unforgivable, and it probably will be unforgivable in the eyes of the people of Western Australia.

The only logical and reasonable answer that can be given to the attitude of this Government is that of desperation. Unemployment has reached the astounding figure of 35 000 in Western Australia alone and the Government is prepared to try to do anything to stimulate the economy, no matter what the risks. The gamble is that to which I have already alluded. The attitude of "jobs at any price" is something which cannot be condoned. No-one is more concerned about unemployment than is the Labor Party. However, we are certainly not concerned to the stage of complete desperation to overcome the position at any cost, irrespective. I do not think that can be described as responsible government. There is no sanity in that sort of gamble. The result will face perhaps not this Government, but a future Government one day and the responsibility will be sheeted home to this present Government.

Although assurances have been given that work will not be completed until satisfactory reports are presented to the Government, that has not been the case. I do not know whether there will be an opportunity for public discussion and public involvement of any sort. The Premier has already indicated that the ERMP may not be available for debate or public scrutiny. So, once debate is finished in this House the opportunity for public debate will be gone; it is as simple as that.

The only reason I can offer for the debate terminating the issue, so that it will not be debated

publicly, is the desperation of the Government with regard to its handling of the economic situation. Our number plates tell us we are in a state of excitement, but it is more like a state of desperation.

I have made an observation on the need for an environmental impact statement from the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth Government, in section 5 of the Environmental Protection Act of 1974, set out the conditions under which an environmental impact statement needed to be made. There is the "out" that the Government can have the environmental impact statement carried out on its behalf. On this occasion, both the Federal and State Governments have abrogated their responsibilities to the extent of allowing the companies to present for evaluation an ERMP. I have already indicated my feelings towards that.

I would like briefly to convey the position which has transpired since the first bauxite Bill was introduced in 1961. There can be little doubt in anybody's mind that at the time bauxite mining was seen as a moderately small industry. That has changed dramatically. I will draw attention to the debate which took place at that time when it was suggested that 25 to 30 acres would be involved each year. It was never envisaged that the tonnage would reach 9.5 million or 10 million tonnes. At that time it was seen as a fairly modest industry of 150 000 tonnes. At that time the Premier was asked a question and he gave the following reply—

It is anticipated the total clearing for the first year would be in the order of 30 acres; and for subsequent years, and so long as the company was on an output of 550 000 tons per annum, 25 acres.

That was the impression conveyed, and that is the reason the then Conservator of Forests concurred. He could not be seen as standing in the way of progress. He could not be seen to be standing in the way of the industry being established. He would have looked churlish and he was in an unfortunate position. It was rather prophetic that the former leader of the Labor Party in this House asked—

Are these people allowed to write their own agreements?

The then Minister, the present Premier, stated—
... we have written a satisfactory agreement, and have achieved for Western Australia a major industry that was very nearly not available to us.

And Mr J. T. Tonkin said, "The sky is the limit". That statement has proved to be completely prophetic. Subsequently in the same debate the then Minister made it clear by more than implication that it would be a small involvement. He had this to say—

If huge areas were going to be laid waste, then there might be some argument that the water-shed problem would be accentuated; but in view of the fact that there will be comparatively small areas treated throughout a whole year, it will be appreciated it will not have any real effect on the water-shed problem.

Those were his words, and members will be aware of the implication they carried at the time. He went on to say—

There is the planting of pines; and this has been taken care of bearing in mind that the total acreage is not large against the total areas involved in water-shed areas.

I would like to quote the comments of the General Manager of the Forest Products Association when he had this to say in a letter to the Minister—

In an exchange of correspondence in 1961 when bauxite mining commenced in the Jarrahdale district you advised that:

"for the next decade it is most unlikely that bauxite operations will extend beyond a comparatively limited area in the Jarrahdale district";

also that:

"it is understood that only twenty-five to thirty acres will be involved."

So the implication was perpetuated and nobody in this Chamber at that time—15 years ago—would have envisaged an industry with a 10 million tonnes capacity being canvassed rather than an industry of the very modest scale that was suggested at that time. It has now reached the stage where it is not only a question of the expansion of the industry, but also the investigation of the industry itself.

At the time of the debate in this place on the amendments to the agreement—that is, in 1969—it was not possible even then to obtain a true indication of the areas likely to be involved. So an air of secrecy has surrounded the whole industry, and by implication the Government was attempting to placate the people of Western Australia. It is there in the record, and it is available for anyone to see.

Sir Charles Court: Are you going to complete that story by telling us about the amendments introduced in 1972?

Mr H. D. EVANS: What about them?

Sir Charles Court: When you were the Minister and you were in Government.

Mr H. D. EVANS: What about it?

Sir Charles Court: What did you do about environmental matters in that agreement?

Mr H. D. EVANS: The whole agreement was established.

Sir Charles Court: Then how are we able to bring forward an amendment now with stricter environmental conditions?

Mr H. D. EVANS: I have explained that. The Premier was concerned to have an open-ended agreement. As John Tonkin said at the time, "The sky is the limit." The Premier is not game to do anything else. By implication and subterfuge—

Sir Charles Court: You were the Minister who opened the whole thing up to the Parliament in 1972.

Mr H. D. EVANS: But there was an agreement already written by the then Minister.

Sir Charles Court: There still is.

Mr H. D. EVANS: And what we have before the House now is a modification of that agreement.

Sir Charles Court: You are just doubling back in your tracks. You never mentioned this in the amendments in 1972 when you were the Minister.

Mr H. D. EVANS: There is an existing agreement.

Sir Charles Court: There still is.

Mr H. D. EVANS: The Premier did not give a true account of what was expected. If he is referring to the fact that an environmental impact statement was required and the Tonkin Government was not able to fulfil that provision, I point out that four years has elapsed since that time, and nothing has been done about it.

Sir Charles Court: I have been talking about 1972 when you were the Minister. I am sorry to have embarrassed you, but I thought your colleagues should know.

Mr H. D. EVANS: The Premier is not embarrassing me.

Mr B. T. Burke: That is six years ago; you are getting old!

Several members interjected.

Mr H. D. EVANS: The need for environmental impact statements—

Mr B. T. Burke: Of course some environmental safeguards were not even devised then.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The member for Warren.

Mr H. D. EVANS: The Tonkin Government introduced legislation—

Sir Charles Court: For environmental protection.

Mr Bryce: And we applied it to the Pacminex project.

Mr H. D. EVANS: —but there was no way around it; there is no upper limit on the agreement.

Sir Charles Court: Then how are we able to bring in an amendment?

Mr H. D. EVANS: Because public pressure has forced the Government and the company to have a second look at it.

Sir Charles Court: Don't make yourself look more stupid; just look at your report in tonight's issue of the *Daily News*.

Mr H. D. EVANS: I would like members to look at some outstanding reports. There is the environmental review and management programme of Alcoa and of Alwest, the report of the Hunt committee, the report of the Environmental Protection Authority on System 6, and the report of the Stanford Institute. The Government has not waited to see these. I have referred already to the lack of information. Why is there this secrecy? Why not let the public become involved in something which is of such vital concern to them? No environmental impact statement has been required, nor has any examination of the industry been sought. Yet the industry has changed completely from its original intention. Both the Federal Government and the State Government are abrogating their responsibilities to the community, and it is my intention to move for the setting up of an Honorary Royal Commission to examine the question before the second reading of this Bill is passed.

Amendment to Motion

For that purpose I move the following amendment—

That the word "now" be deleted with a view to inserting other words.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warren has moved to delete the word "now" from the motion, "That the Bill be now read a second time." For the benefit of members of the House,

I point out that with a debate of this type Standing Orders provide a time limit of 20 minutes for each member who contributes to it, and the debate must be confined to the strict question of the removal of the word "now". I will not allow any debate that diverges from the question before the Chair.

MR MENSAROS (Floreat—Minister for Industrial Development) [4.23 p.m.]: I listened with great interest, as did all members of the House, to the speech of the member for Warren. It was a well prepared speech, quietly delivered, and it contained a great deal of information almost all of which was reasonably factual.

If one listened to the speech and followed the argument, the most illogical step after such a speech was the amendment presently before the Chair. The honourable member did not elaborate on his amendment. He did not say why he wanted an Honorary Royal Commission, and he did not indicate the terms of reference he would seek. It is quite clear that his amendment is simply a political exercise which he has resorted to out of desperation because the Labor Party has probably decided that it does not dare oppose the measure before the House. Such a move would rebound on the Labor Party and rebound on it very dangerously. However, at the same time it was desperate to utilise this artificially created public opinion, and this was the move decided upon under our Standing Orders.

The Opposition's main speaker presented no argument to support his amendment to delay the second reading of the Bill. He gave us no indication of what a Royal Commission should do. All he sought was delay for delay's sake, and the amendment was moved because the Opposition could think of no other solution.

Mr H. D. Evans: Would you like me to read the second part of the amendment which you obviously did not hear?

Mr MENSAROS: I presume this is to the effect that a Royal Commission be appointed.

Mr H. D. Evans: Yes, I moved the amendment with a view to inserting the following words, "after an Honorary Royal Commission has examined the effect of bauxite mining on the Darling Scarp and reported to this House".

Mr MENSAROS: That may be written there, but the member for Warren did not say it. I am very proud that I am considered such a good debater that my remarks draw constant interjections.

Several members interjected.

Mr MENSAROS: Even the further amendment which the honourable member wishes to move does not give any indication of the terms of reference. Mr Speaker, with your experience, can you imagine a Royal Commission which could even start any deliberations on this information? Can you imagine a learned lawyer as a Royal Commission—

Mr H. D. Evans: I said an Honorary Royal Commission; you would not give us a Royal Commission.

Mr MENSAROS: —accepting a task based on the terms of reference given by the member for Warren? The amendment was designed purely to delay the measure, and obviously I moved the second reading of the Bill because we wanted to give the company the security of such legislation, and a framework upon which it can further develop.

Mr H. D. Evans: They don't need it and you know it.

Mr MENSAROS: It is not true to say that no agreement is needed or that we should wait for five or six reports because that would be a better solution. Everybody knows the policy of the Western Australian Government—a policy that has been maintained during our four years in office—has been to draw up an agreement between major developmental companies or joint venturers and the State.

Bankers and financiers know our policy, and they expect such agreements to be drawn up as they have been in the past, long before the actual development takes place. In this way the company involved in the development has security, it has a piece of paper in its hands so that in advance it can prepare to organise finance as well as many other matters which are necessary to proceed with development. Some of the things which are necessary are connected with the environment and more effective results can be achieved—and with some incentive I might add—if the framework of the security which spells out the obligations and rights of the company is ratified.

Mr H. D. Evans: That is complete and utter twaddle.

Mr MENSAROS: Otherwise, how can a company—

Mr H. D. Evans: It is going on now.

Mr MENSAROS: —either with substantial resources or less substantial resources—put a great deal of effort into environmental studies, spending a great deal of money and time without having security from the Government that it can

proceed if it can prove successfully that the development will not endanger the environment?

Nobody will take these risks and, knowing the business world, that is the reason the Government's policy has been developed this way. So, unless we say that we do not want this development, it is very important that the Bill be read a second time now, because that is the security for the company.

In his speech the member gave no explanation for any delay. Let us take some of the points he brought up when dealing with the negative of the proposition that the Bill should be read now. He said that we should wait for six reports to be concluded. But some of them are not perhaps meant to be concluded because they are ongoing reports, and some of them will take a considerable time. If we were to follow this argument logically we would stop all development because nowadays the State Government and the Federal Government require environmental submissions of various kinds with regard to every development, even a small factory.

Does the honourable member advocate that the Agnew nickel mine should not have been built because its environmental system of inquiry will probably come up some time later? Does the honourable member advocate that we should do nothing before all these system studies are concluded? I do not think he does. Therefore, his argument—and particularly the amendment that the Bill shall not be read now—is absolutely wrong.

I remind the honourable member—as did the Premier by way of interjection—that when the Labor Government wrote the amending agreement in 1972 there was not a single study. The only study which the Labor Government initiated, as opposed to the five initiated by this Government, was the Hunt report.

It is quite interesting to note that the honourable member asked with tremendous righteousness for public scrutiny. Was the Hunt report made public when the Labor Government initiated it? It was not made public and it was not meant to be made public. That was the only report which the Labor Government initiated but it did not mean it to be made public. So, I should like to see some responsibility from the Opposition. Now that the Labor Party is sitting on the other side of the House it should display the same attitude that it displayed when it sat on this side of the House. No publicity was given to the Hunt report and it was the only report initiated by the Labor Government. All the other five were initiated by us.

Is it the argument that the Bill should not be read now because we have initiated various reports and studies? It is to our credit that we have done so. Most of these studies will be ongoing and we can only learn from them. If we take the attitude of the member for Warren that because there are problems and risks involved we should not act now and should not read the Bill a second time now, we might as well all go home and go to sleep forever because there will always be problems. But if we have enough self-confidence, which this Government has, we can confidently say that we will solve these problems; and solve them we will.

May I just digress for a moment to a subject which has a great bearing on the amendment before the House. Does the Opposition know that we have this tremendous offshore deep-water exploration? If the companies find oil there, they do not know how to exploit it today.

Point of Order

Mr JAMIESON: Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. I should like to draw your attention, Sir, to the fact that the Minister is now a long way from the word "now" when he is dealing with offshore oil rigs. I think he should be confined to what you suggested, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I have listened very keenly to the speech by the Minister and he has made constant reference to the amendment that is before the Chair. I will admit that in talking about offshore oil he has perhaps strayed a little from the amendment before the Chair and I ask him to do what he has done up till the recent moment; that is, confine his remarks strictly to the amendment.

Debate (on amendment to motion) Resumed

Mr MENSAROS: I endeavour to do so and have so endeavoured in the past, but in any speech one exemplifies to show one's arguments. All I was saying is that problems can be solved. We do not have to push things away because there are problems. In effect this amendment is saying, "Push it away; do not solve the problem because something might happen later." The only reason I referred to this example is that hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent on exploration at a time when we do not know the final solution, but the companies are confident it will be found if oil can be found. This is the analogy.

The Government and the companies are very confident that the problem can be solved. But even if it is not solved we do not have to delay the Bill because the Bill itself, in enacting and ratifying this agreement, provides only the indication

of the Government, the Parliament, and the State that we want this development provided the environmental requirements are satisfied. Therefore, all these studies have to go on. They will go on for some time and will come down with interim or final solutions.

The environmental management plan has to be submitted and unless it is accepted by the respective authorities who will make recommendations to the Government, according to the legislation which was brought down during the time of the Tonkin Government the company could not go ahead. But I emphasise that we have to read the Bill a second time now to give this possibility to the company and to encourage it that it is worth while spending preliminary moneys and preparing itself to undertake this development.

The company is taking the risks. It might have to spend all this money and time in vain if in the end the State is not satisfied that the ERMP can be accepted. That is the reason that the Government has to violently oppose this motion. It is nothing else but delay for delay's sake. It is also a very convenient way out of the problem for the Opposition. The Opposition is saying, "If we allow the Bill to be read a second time now we might be accused of not being a vigorous enough Opposition." But we should not forget that the member for Warren very rightly pointed out the immediate economic flow-on which would result from the development and the potential later economic flow-on. These may not necessarily be negated but would very probably be negated if we did not read the Bill a second time now.

They could be negated for the very reasons that the honourable member brought up himself because he pointed to the fact that other countries are competitive today. He was not factual when he said that other countries have stricter environmental measures because it is acknowledged that they do not. Nevertheless, he pointed to the fact that so many things can happen which might not make it attractive for a company to invest further in this State's economic development. If this is the reason for the delaying tactics, the Opposition should say honestly, "We do not want this development." But it dare not say that and, therefore, the tactics are delay for delay's sake.

What would the Opposition achieve with the delay? The answer is: Nothing. Even if the member for Warren could work out proper terms of reference, what would he be achieving? An Honorary Royal Commission could not do a better job than all these investigations. An

Honorary Royal Commission could not achieve miracles. An Honorary Royal Commission could not answer in three months, six months, or three years something which we know could only be answered in possibly 10 or 15 years.

The salinity problem of the eastern escarpment cannot be solved quickly. That is the reason we want to have the Bill read a second time now. We want to progress with the Wagerup refinery so that the company can be alleviated from mining the parts which it can quite legitimately mine now because the existing agreement entitles it to do so. If this happens mining can be concentrated in other areas and the opportunity would be given to conduct tests there. But who will conduct the tests if the company is not allowed to carry on its business and make a profit, no matter how dirty a word that might be to some people? The results from the necessary studies will flow from the fact that the company will be able to spend money and effort on doing what it is required to do.

Therefore, it is quite illogical to move this motion. It has nothing to do with the argument that the member for Warren built up. It is something to which the Opposition has turned in desperation. Perhaps it turned to it because it expected some support from other sources. But it is entirely illogical and irresponsible. This amendment should be equated with a vote for no development, and the Opposition will have to bear with the results when it goes to the people, particularly the people in the south-west.

MR BRYCE (Ascot—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.43 p.m.]: We on this side of the House are just a little surprised and more than a little concerned to hear the Minister say that the Government is violently opposed to the proposition that was put before the Chair by the member for Warren. Unlike the Minister, I listened with great care to my colleague and I believe that he demonstrated to this House very, very clearly why there is a basic case to submit the proposed expansion of this particular mining operation to an investigation before a Royal Commission of inquiry. The Minister has indicated that his Government is violently opposed to an inquiry.

Mr Mensaros: To the amendment.

Mr BRYCE: To the inquiry. The Minister said—and *Hansard* will certainly reveal—that he said that the Government was violently opposed to a Royal Commission of inquiry. In saying this he suggests to us that there are no grave question marks. As one member of an Opposition team that worked for hundreds of hours looking

into numerous aspects of this question, I can say that it is simply not true to say that there is no substantial case for a Royal Commission of inquiry into the effects of bauxite mining in this part of the scarp.

I sincerely hope the Minister does not leave the Chamber altogether, because it is my intention in the next few minutes to point out to him precisely why we believe this to be so. If the Minister has spoken for the Government, and his violent opposition means the Government will not support the proposition, it is in fact retreating from the fundamental responsibility which the people give to a Government when that Government is elected. Perhaps I can remind the Premier that part of that fundamental responsibility is to take very seriously the long-term interests of the people of Western Australia. The Premier ought to recognise that the people of this State are his master and not a particular company with a particular vested interest.

May I suggest to the Premier that the best short-term interests of a particular company, in this instance Alcoa, are clearly not synonymous with the best long-term interests of Western Australians, because there are many question marks. It is not a normal venture.

If this bauxite deposit was located on the Zuytdorp Cliffs up in the Murchison River area; if it was located in the Kimberley as is the Mitchell Plateau; if it was located somewhere in the backblocks beyond Telfer; if it was located in the Nullarbor Plains; or if it was located in any one of a list of other places in this State some of these serious questions would not arise.

Mr Mensaros: It could not be located in Telfer, because you want a national park there.

Mr BRYCE: There are two particular questions which must be borne in mind. Of this vast State of ours, covering nearly one million square miles, there is something in the vicinity of only 6 per cent covered with forest. But the more significant aspect is 90 per cent of the people of this State live in the very close vicinity of that forested part of our State. It is very serious indeed that the water supplies originating from this particular part of the State and which are of such tremendous importance to the people who live near those forested areas, constitute a very sound reason for the Government delaying this particular proposition at this stage and looking into some of the ramifications.

Because he did not seem to pick up these facts from the speech made by the member for Warren, the Minister asked why the Opposition believes this particular proposition should not be proceeded

with now, and why in fact a Royal Commission ought to be asked to look at various aspects of bauxite mining on the Darling Scarp.

Let me suggest that quite apart from the list of four significant sets of reports which are not available to the people in this State—and the people are entitled to the information that is in them—there are other factors involved. I shall repeat the reports. They are: the Environmental Management Programmes of Alcoa, the report of the Stanford Institute—the Minister suggested in this House that because this Government established these reports there is no reason for it to wait on the recommendations—

Mr Mensaros: I said that we established reports and you did not.

Mr BRYCE: The Minister, having established these reports, having given a brief, is suggesting there is no need to wait for the work to be done and the information to be provided; in fact the reports touch on very important questions. The third report is the upgraded report of the Hunt Committee, and the final one is the report of the Environmental Protection Authority into System 6. These reports have been mentioned many times.

We suggest this is the sort of information that should be available. Information from these sources should be available to a Royal Commission of inquiry. I remind the House that a dozen members of the Opposition spent a great deal of time on this subject and we are of the opinion that much of the information we needed to conclude our inquiry into this matter was not available to us, because it lies in the body of those reports to which I have just referred.

I should like to touch on three specific questions that the Minister seems conveniently to have forgotten. They justify our contention that this Bill should not be read now, but in fact should be delayed pending the outcome of a Royal Commission of inquiry. The Minister seems to have forgotten the great thirst of this capital city of ours over the last couple of years. I sincerely believe that one of the reasons the Government is hell-bent on proceeding with this legislation now is the fine hope that the people of this vast metropolis will forget the thirst of 1977 and 1978, because the drought years we have just experienced have brought into sharp focus the precious nature of Western Australia's very limited water supplies.

I am the first to acknowledge that as far as the south-west is concerned one of the deleterious effects of a limited water supply is, of course, felt by industrial development in that area. This

is apart from the effect it will have on the water supplies for Perth. The question of water supplies is one of the facets of this problem to which the Minister did not even refer. That is one of the principal reasons that further studies should be carried out. Many experts presented a viewpoint to our committee but they could not provide conclusive evidence that our water supplies would not be threatened in some way if mining operations were to enter the eastern regions of the scarp.

The SPEAKER: That seems to be getting away from the matter before the Chair.

Mr BRYCE: That is the essence of our case for arguing this Bill should not be read at this particular stage. One of the essential features of the evidence presented to our committee was that pressure will build up for the company to move eastward. If the amount of capital invested is allowed to proceed unlimited at this particular stage with this project, a time will arrive—and it was referred to in the Minister's second reading speech—in 10 or 15 years hence when there will be tremendous pressure, because at that time hundreds of millions of dollars will be invested in that particular industry according to the trends at the present time.

More people will be employed in the industry and the pressure will then be applied—the moral and political pressure—to the Governments at the turn of the century to allow this particular company to go into the eastern region irrespective of whether the problems have been solved. The pressure to do this will be very great.

This is why we believe we ought to pause, not for a period of years, but for a period of months. We are talking in terms of months; it may take six months, nine months, or it could even take 12 months, although it may be solved somewhat sooner. We are dealing with the question of the destiny of the water supplies of Western Australia. It has very great significance over a long period of time. However, we are told we cannot have a few additional months to study the situation, because this particular project may be teetering on the edge of viability.

Might I suggest that the extent of the reserves and the quality of the reserves of this company means there can be practically no doubt as to its viability. Even if there were a six-months or 12-months delay while we looked into some of these serious questions, this expansion would continue.

We have seen, and it was amply illustrated by my colleague, the member for Warren, that the actual scope of this development is a far cry

from the size of the development that was first mooted. There is no doubt whatsoever also that practically everywhere in the world where plants of this nature have been established, the capacity of the refineries has been dramatically increased. Plants which were built to cope with two million tonnes or three million tonnes are pushing through additional tonnages, because of the nature of the industry, the demand for the product, and the capital that is invested in it.

I am not knocking it. I am simply saying we have to delay this decision if we are to reach it in the most informed manner. That is a specific reason the Minister seems to have overlooked altogether.

The second reason which was certainly highlighted to our committee by numerous people was the spread of dieback. This is not an ordinary mining venture. It is a mining venture in the middle of unique native forest and that native forest is under serious threat from the spread of *phytophthora cinnamomi*. The statistical evidence and the tables that were presented to our committee amply illustrated to us that the principal dieback areas in our forests are to be found in the lowlands and the valleys. The bauxite is essentially located on the upper part of the hills; not on top necessarily, but near the caps.

The very action of mining operations going through valleys up into the uninfected parts of the forest can conceivably accelerate the rate of the spread of dieback. Conflicting evidence was presented to our committee about the veracity of this particular claim. I, for one, would like to know a great deal more about it. With respect, I suggest that I and a few of my colleagues have probably spent a great deal more time on this particular subject than a number of other members and there are many question marks.

How wrong can the Government be to turn to us and say that it is violently opposed to the idea of a Royal Commission to look into these sorts of things? It concerns also the whole reforestation programme.

My colleague, the member for Warren, illustrated to the Minister in great detail the very grave concern he holds as a former Minister for Forests and as an individual in this Parliament who has no peer for his knowledge and involvement in the forestry industry. He quite clearly indicated, in line with much of the evidence presented to our committee, that there are very grave doubts indeed about the possibility for the long-term survival of the reforested areas.

Mr Mensaros: Does this apply only to the new project?

Mr BRYCE: That particular doubt applies to the whole question. It is the whole question.

Mr Mensaros: If this is a good argument, why do you not introduce a Bill that all bauxite mining should be stopped? That would be logical.

Mr BRYCE: Those are precisely the sentiments the Minister would like to attribute to me. He knows it is intellectually and politically dishonest for him to say that. We are confronted with a reality that we have a bauxite industry and it is making an important contribution to the economy of this State. Therefore, we cannot accept the suggestion from the Minister that if we are concerned about future problems with the expansion of the industry, we must back track the logic and apply it to the existing industry.

I have indicated that as far as the Opposition is concerned our leading speaker on this subject, the member for Warren, clearly illustrated to this Chamber that there is concern for Western Australia's water supply—as I understand it about 80 per cent of which comes from this particular area—because of the spread of dieback. A great deal of conflicting evidence was argued and presented to our committee, and because of the doubts about reforestation there is a very real need at this time in the development of our State to take a much longer look at the situation.

Our committee has spent hundreds and hundreds of man-hours looking into this matter. We are in a position to say there are some very real question marks. We have the right in this place to challenge the Government's timetable. Why has the Government insisted on an adjournment of only one week on the second reading debate? Inconsequential legislation has been on the notice paper for a month. We have seen other pieces of inconsequential legislation remain on the notice paper for many months and they have then been stood over for the winter recess. If that period of time is necessary, and presumably it would be to accommodate our particular proposition, we believe it would be the right and the decent thing to do to give the public of our State the opportunity to participate in the deliberation of this matter and to enable them to be better informed by allowing the opportunity and the scope for a Royal Commission to be set up to inquire into the effects of bauxite mining.

I have a great deal of pleasure in seconding and supporting the amendment which was put before us by the member for Warren.

MR SKIDMORE (Swan) [5.00 p.m.]: I rise to support the amendment, the purpose of which is to make it possible for an Honorary Royal Commission to be held prior to our proceeding with the second reading debate on the Bill.

Perhaps we should be a little mindful of the fact that the environment means different things to many people. Let us consider the view of a forester. He regards a forest from a commercial point of view. He considers the gain which can be made from the forest because of the timber required for homes and industries. He wants to ensure that in no way is the forest jeopardised for these purposes.

When we were speaking to the officials of the Forests Department on this issue it became quite clear they were greatly concerned because they could not be specific regarding the effect of bauxite mining on our commercial forests. On that aspect alone, surely we must realise that the present reforestation programme has very little chance of succeeding, to the stage where a mature commercial forest will be re-established.

When I realised this I was rather surprised because having made an inspection of the areas which had been subject to a reforestation programme, I was astounded at the growth of the trees, as the member for Warren mentioned. However, the problem arises when it is necessary for the trees to grow for 20 to 25 years. This time must elapse before we can say there is any reasonable chance of a forest reaching maturity. The officials of the department certainly have grave doubts as to whether these forests can reach the stage where they would be of a commercial value similar to that which exists at present in our forests.

This made me come to the conclusion that an Honorary Royal Commission was necessary in order that we might establish whether or not what the officials of the department are saying is true.

The Tree Society has considered this matter closely and has submitted its attitude on bauxite mining, and we must take this into consideration. The Tree Society states—

The jarrah forest and its ecosystems in southwest Western Australia are unique, occurring nowhere else in the world.

One might say to the members of the Tree Society, "Bully for you". Their attitude to the forests is different from the attitude of the forester. The members of the Tree Society wish to be able to enjoy the forests in their own way; that is, by wandering through the forests and observing the flora and fauna, all part of the ecological system.

They believe that bauxite mining will create a disturbance to the forests which will encroach upon their right to enjoy them in their own way.

I tried to ascertain whether or not any valid attempt had been made by any Government instrumentality to carry out a study of the fauna which will be disturbed by mining operations. It appears no such study has been made and that the fauna in the forests does not count. It is of small consequence and is part of the deal. It is felt that this aspect should not matter, but it matters to me and certainly to members of the Tree Society. In its submission the Tree Society indicated that the conservation of wildlife should be considered. But, as I have said, nowhere can I find evidence of any such consideration having been given to this aspect. This is an area which could certainly be studied by an Honorary Royal Commission.

As the member for Ascot has indicated very adequately, our water catchment areas in the forests will be affected by bauxite mining. I want to make some pertinent remarks following the comments of the Minister when he tried to convince the member for Ascot that because we are of the opinion that this aspect must be taken into consideration in regard to Alcoa, it applies equally to the Alwest project. I think that was what he said.

Mr Mensaros: No. I said you should move to stop the present mining if it applies to the present mining as well, because that is what the member for Ascot said.

Mr SKIDMORE: At the moment we are dealing with only one agreement.

The SPEAKER: We are dealing with the deletion of the word "now".

Mr SKIDMORE: Yes, but when considering the deletion of that word we are dealing with only one agreement, not two. I am well aware of the narrow field available to me in my discussion of the amendment and I am considering the Alcoa agreement and the effect the Bill may have, and that is what an Honorary Royal Commission would consider.

The Tree Society submitted 10 items concerning the conflict involved and also its policy on bauxite mining. I believe that its submission should be studied because it contains a point of view which so many people overlook. It stated, amongst other things, that there should be no additional bauxite mining in the southwest until a detailed assessment of the forest and a full study of both direct and indirect costs and benefits had been undertaken, to provide a complete understanding of the effects of bauxite mining.

The society referred to several other matters, but because of the short time available to me, and because I want to indicate the great concern those on this side of the House have on the issue, I would like now to deal with some other matters which have caused me concern and have made me consider that an Honorary Royal Commission is the only way we will get subjective answers to all the questions which are troubling us.

We interviewed representatives of the Campaign to Save Native Forests. I have heard these people referred to as "ego-nuts", "eco-nuts", and all sorts of "nuts", but I believe that even those "nuts" have a place in this community. I do not use the term; others have. They have as much right to express an opinion as anyone else has, and I will listen to them. I hope Parliament will not cease to listen to "eco-nuts"—to use that term—because they are the people who have studied the matter and can make us realise we are too damned stupid to understand what is being taken away from us in the interests of mining pursuits.

I wish to refer to some of the problems they envisage regarding the environment and bauxite mining. They raised the question of salinity. We all know that on the western scarp there is no great problem in this regard, but we must consider the totality of the mining project. I understand a lifetime of 20 years is involved on the western scarp at the moment. However, from statements made by the Minister it appears that lifetime has been reduced to some 10 to 15 years. I do not know how much further it will be reduced, but to me the time factor is very important because we have very little time left in which to establish that more and better tests should be carried out to ascertain the effects of bauxite mining on salinity on the western scarp.

It might be true to say that an Honorary Royal Commission would not ensure this, but at least the establishment of such a commission would put a brake for the present on any further escalation of mining by Alcoa.

The Campaign to Save Native Forests is concerned about dieback and its effect on our forests. If we consider the disastrous effect of dieback we cannot help but believe that anything which could spread dieback should be studied with a great deal of concern. If it is at all possible for us to halt the spread of dieback we should aim to do it. Because dieback can be spread as a result of mining, this aspect should be studied closely.

I do not suggest for one moment that mining alone has been the major cause for the spread of dieback in our forests. This is not so. However, it is a means of spreading it and therefore is causing great concern to many people. It has been argued that because the jarrah forests are so heavily infested with dieback we would be better off having a different type of forest. This would mean that the company should go ahead and mine. I am not sold on that idea because if we were suddenly to discover a means by which we could overcome the spread of dieback and its effect, we could rehabilitate the jarrah forests or perhaps they could rehabilitate themselves in their own way. However, if we allow the areas to be mined, I wonder whether the jarrah will regenerate itself in the way we would like. I doubt this very much.

When we asked the foresters about the reafforestation of those areas severely affected by dieback, we received varying answers. They are not too sure what will occur.

Trees do not grow to a scientific pattern. They have a propensity to do their own thing in their own way. We can merely conjecture in this regard in a rather loose scientific way by studying statistical data and observations in connection with forests. We do not know what the situation will be in 10 to 15 years' time.

This aspect is of great concern to the Campaign to Save Native Forests which is a small group with little resources. However, small groups should be heard by Parliament because surely that is what Parliament should be all about. Parliament should look after the interests of all people, and not just the big people in the world who can easily look after themselves.

I will conclude by saying that the effect of bauxite mining is a question which has worried me ever since it was first brought to my notice. Over the last six weeks I have listened to experts on the subject and I have been driven over the mine sites of various companies. I have studied the reafforestation aspect and I have tried to understand the problems of salinity, turbidity, and dieback, as well as reafforestation.

No-one has been able to satisfy me on these aspects. No-one has been able to reassure me on the salinity problem; no-one has been able to reassure me that we will be able to carry out a successful reafforestation programme in order to regenerate commercial forests; and no-one has been able to reassure me that we will overcome the problem of dieback.

We consider that there is no need for haste. The bauxite can stay in the ground from now until doomsday and it will do no more harm in the next 20 years than it is doing now. If we delay we will be able to ascertain the true situation.

What is the matter which is troubling the people of Western Australia in regard to their forest? If the Honorary Royal Commission is held away from the parliamentary area, where we probably tend to become oriented towards "them versus us", it would be better for the people of Western Australia.

I support the amendment. I think an Honorary Royal Commission should be appointed to look into the areas of this question which my colleagues and I regard as doubtful.

SIR CHARLES COURT (Nedlands—Premier) [5.16 p.m.]: I rise to oppose the amendment for a number of very good reasons. When the member for Warren reads *Hansard*, I think he will find that in moving the amendment he did not go on to complete the reference to the words he intended to add. We assume he is asking that the word "now" be deleted and the words relating to an Honorary Royal Commission be added at the end of the motion which is at present before the House. He has subsequently confirmed that by interjection and added some other words in regard to an Honorary Royal Commission.

The presentation by the member for Warren was, to say the least, in very low key. One gathered there was a certain amount of reticence on the part of the Opposition in facing this issue.

Mr Pearce: Rubbish!

Sir CHARLES COURT: Having laboured long and hard, having failed to come up with a genuine reason to oppose the legislation, and having made an appreciation of the fact that it would not be good tactics, anyhow, to oppose the legislation, members of the Opposition have decided on an old ploy; that is—to use the "commo" tactic—"keep them talking"—

Mr B. T. Burke: We do not have much trouble with you.

Sir CHARLES COURT: —hoping people will get sick of it and either let it drop or give in. I tell members opposite that as far as the Government is concerned it has considered this matter very carefully over a long period. It is satisfied all the precautions which should be taken have been taken and are written into the legislation. It is bringing to the House a Bill giving strength to the Government in terms of environmental control, which did not previously exist. Therefore

we would have thought the Opposition, knowing the worth of the industry, would be ready and willing—perhaps with some reservations which have rightly been stated here—to embrace the legislation and the amending agreement.

The member for Warren was almost apologetic. He just sneaked in his little bit at the end as though he were hoping people would not hear him. We are at a loss to know just what he wants, because my understanding is that an Honorary Royal Commission, which he is now seeking, is usually the product of a Select Committee appointed by this House which runs out of time and has to be converted to a Royal Commission at the discretion of the Government of the day.

Mr H. D. Evans: A Select Committee would hardly get started.

Sir CHARLES COURT: If the honourable member means a Royal Commission the commissioners of which will not be paid—if there is such an animal, and I am not saying there is not because I do not understand the Constitution and related Acts that well—I remind him that first of all it appears the Opposition does not want anybody of great note or achievement to undertake the job—in other words, it would be a perfunctory kind of thing—and secondly, if a Royal Commission, be it honorary or paid, is appointed it is entirely in the hands of the Government of the day.

Several members interjected.

Mr Bryce: Just regard this as a subtle suggestion to the Government of the day.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I remind the honourable member who moved the amendment and his colleagues that the further one considers the amendment and the proposition they have put forward in the context of the remarks made by the member for Warren, one must come to the conclusion that the Opposition was bereft of a way to oppose the amending agreement and therefore decided on this old ploy of delay in the hope that something would turn up.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to the fact that he and others had spent hundreds of hours—he first said “weeks”, and then “hundreds of hours”—

Mr Bryce: Hundreds of man-hours.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Bully for him and his colleagues! That is what they should be doing anyhow. There is no great virtue in it; it is their duty.

Mr Bryce: It is a pity some of your members did not do it. You might be prepared to support a Royal Commission.

Sir CHARLES COURT: It is a reflection on members opposite if, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition says, 10 of them have laboured hard and long and could not come up with a policy other than to ask for an Honorary Royal Commission.

Mr Skidmore interjected.

Sir CHARLES COURT: If the member for Swan wants to play to the gallery, let him.

Mr Skidmore: I am not playing to the gallery.

Mr B. T. Burke: The years are creeping up on you.

Several members interjected.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The SPEAKER: Order! I say to those members of the public who are in the gallery that if they interject or in any way interfere with the debate going on in the Chamber I will have no alternative but to ask that the gallery be cleared. It is something I do not want to do because I applaud people coming along to see Parliament in action. However, if they do interrupt I will have no alternative but to clear the gallery. The Premier.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition made great play of the fact that he had spent hundreds of hours over a period of weeks—

Mr Bryce: And his colleagues.

Sir CHARLES COURT: —and his colleagues; and he nominated 10 of them who had worked so hard and long. The member for Warren paid tribute to the Ministers for the assistance they have made available through having competent officers talk to them. He admitted they had talked with great candour. Then members of the Opposition have the hide and the gall to come along today—

Mr H. D. Evans: The officers did not know the essential answers.

Sir CHARLES COURT: —and say they cannot make up their minds. So all they can think of is an Honorary Royal Commission, in the hope that something will turn up and someone will find a way to get them off the hook.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition also said I should remember the people are my masters. I happen to be one who acknowledges that to the full. As I have said over and over again, it is time Governments got back to governing; it is time leaders led as they should lead; and the people will decide at the next election whether the Government has performed responsibly and well.

I notice that Mr Mosley of the Australian Conservation Foundation does not believe in the old-fashioned theory that the people should decide. He debunks it. I hope members on the other side will read what he said. He does not believe in the "old-fashioned democracy".

Several members interjected.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the particular member in the gallery who just then interjected kindly to refrain from doing so. The Premier.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I accept without question that the people are the masters of all of us in this Chamber; and we as a Government, having studied this legislation, having studied the circumstances leading up to the amending agreement, and having satisfied ourselves about the protection included in the Bill and the amending agreement, are of the opinion that we are quite prepared to face up to our masters in respect of this legislation when the time comes.

In his anxiety to give support to the member for Warren, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to the eastern regions and used this as one of the reasons that the word "now" should be deleted and more time should be allowed, with more studies and more loss of effort so far as the State is concerned.

Mr Bryce: Because your officers have told us they have not got the answers.

Sir CHARLES COURT: If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition stops to think for a moment and is prepared to study the agreement before him objectively, he will realise one of the great protections of the agreement is that it gives the Government of the day, for a long time to come, the necessary time to ensure there is no premature mining in the eastern regions. The member for Warren shakes his head in disbelief. Apparently he does not believe in the legislation the Tonkin Government was prepared to put on the Statute book, because he denied the effectiveness of that legislation this afternoon. He does not understand what is in the agreement, and it is not to his credit or to the credit of the Opposition. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition comes up with this argument about the eastern regions—

Mr Bryce: Do you know the answers?

Sir CHARLES COURT: Again I repeat that if the Deputy Leader of the Opposition studies the agreement he will see the amending agreement which is to be ratified by this Bill protects the people, protects the area, and protects the Government, so that there is machinery for the Government, if necessary, to deny for all time the

development of the eastern regions. But if the House defeats this Bill and the amending agreement, that will not be the position at all, because under the existing agreement which was endorsed by the Tonkin Government in 1972, the company will not have to do what it must do under the amending agreement by way of the greater environmental protection provisions which are written into the Bill.

Mr Pearce: Why don't you wait for the report of the Royal Commission?

Sir CHARLES COURT: I repeat that the Government has negotiated an agreement which the member for Warren admitted the Tonkin Government was not capable of negotiating in 1972.

Mr H. D. Evans: It was not a question of that at that stage.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Tonkin Government brought an agreement to this House—the old agreement, with an amendment, which had nothing at all to do with the environment—and I remind the House that was at a time when the environmental issue was at its height. The then Government was boasting about the fact that it had brought in an Environmental Protection Bill which, it said, had some teeth in it. Members of the then Government said the legislation of the Brand Government did not have any teeth. Here is a man who brushes that aside and says the Tonkin Government could not have amended the agreement in 1972. Of course it could have. The honourable member knows that the Tonkin Government in desperation negotiated deliberately to expand the Pinjarra project, and as an inducement to expand it quickly and provide some employment the Tonkin Government gave a 12-year moratorium on the Mitchell Plateau—eight years immediately and four years by the mere asking.

So it makes nonsense of the whole business that members opposite, having laboured for weeks—100 man-hours—

Mr Bryce: I said hundreds of man-hours.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I was going to say 100 man-hours by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition himself—and they will not give us a policy in respect of bauxite. What does the policy amount to? "Let us have an Honorary Royal Commission."

Mr H. D. Evans: If you want to go for a complete Royal Commission we will support you.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Government believes the Opposition has not a policy, is desperate to get itself off the hook, and is not prepared to

come out and oppose the legislation; so it comes up with this ploy of having an Honorary Royal Commission and hoping something will happen in the meantime to get it off the hook. We oppose the motion.

MR B. T. BURKE (Balcatta) [5.30 p.m.]: There are very few people who appear not to acknowledge the gravity of the decision we are making, but this Government is prepared to attach to that gravity only a very indecent haste. What hypocrisy! The Government's position is best illustrated by referring to the Minister's contribution to this debate when he told us that the company needs the security of Parliament's decision. The security that is needed will be twice essential if the company goes ahead as a result of our decision to spend its capital only to find later on that the environmental studies mean it cannot proceed.

However, that will not happen, of course. We all know that it will not happen because if the environmental studies do indicate that the Government has made a mistake, they will not be made public. The Government will allow the company to continue because it is seeking to give the company the security that it talks about.

We are today witnessing something that is tragic and has the potential for great disaster. We have seen a Premier, on whom the years have advanced, desperately trying to regain some of the reputation he thought he once had when during the 1960s he sold up so much of this State. We are witnessing his Minister defend the Government's action by comparing the area of operation of this company and of the proposed Alwest project, with the area of operation of the Telfer goldmining company; and if that does not show an abysmal—

Mr Mensaros: Your deputy leader has done that.

Mr B. T. BURKE:—lack of concern on the part of the Government for some of the very delicate issues involved in this legislation, then I do not know what it does. At the same time we had the Premier very vividly illustrate to us just how his thinking proceeds when he spoke of an Honorary Royal Commission and said we would not get anyone decent unless we paid him. What sort of attitude is that? What sort of ignorance does that display of the great things that have been done by unpaid and dedicated people throughout the centuries?

Of course, by the Premier's yardstick we get only what we pay for; he does not count people's brains and people's hearts and their commitment, or the things that have value.

If this Government sees fit to initiate so many studies into the environmental aspects of this proposition, why will it not wait for the results of those studies? How can the Minister justify thinking something is important enough to be inquired into, authorising such inquiry, and then proceeding with his decision-making without waiting for the results of the inquiry? If the Minister can justify that sort of attitude, I would be pleased to pause to allow him to do so.

Mr Mensaros: We have not done anything decisive. We have only written an agreement. The decision comes after the environmental management programme.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Minister has said his Government has done nothing decisive, and that is true. Nothing decisive will be done until we give this Bill a second reading, and when we have done that, on the Minister's own admission, we will give the company the security it needs to expend its money. Is the Minister now telling us that if the environmental studies contradict the decision the Government is forcing on this place today, then he will tell the company that it is unfortunate but he was wrong in telling it that it had the security to proceed? Of course he would not do that.

The Minister will do what Governments have done since time immemorial. He will hide his mistakes and we will lose one of the most valuable natural assets this State possesses.

It was interesting also to hear the Premier talking about the low key attitude of the member for Warren. The Premier varies greatly in his wild flights of fancy. If we oppose anything outright we are irresponsible; if we want an inquiry we are low key, and not only that, but we are looking for ways in which to oppose the measure. That is just not true, and it is not true to claim as the Minister did that public response has been manipulated. The Minister has accused the Australian Labor Party of manipulating the Tree Society, of manipulating the Australian Conservation Foundation, and of manipulating the Campaign to Save Native Forests; but that is not the most galling thing, because the Minister claims we want to manipulate the National Country Party. I cannot think of one good reason for wanting to manipulate that nondescript bunch in this House.

Mr Old: Good for you!

Mr Blaikie: You are performing better in front of an audience than you usually do.

Mr O'Neil: It is the only reason he is performing.

Mr B. T. BURKE: If I were as is the member for Vasse, then I would be frightened of an audience, too.

Mr Sibson: He is an "ego-nut", not an "eco-nut".

Mr Pearce: There is more dead wood in the Government back benches than there is in the forests.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Premier also spoke at great length of the power of the Government of the day to influence the progress or the size of the operation of this company once the legislation was passed and the operations began. But, of course, the Minister knows, the Premier knows, but neither saw fit to mention, the difficulty that Governments have in compensating giant companies which have invested tens of millions of dollars. If the Premier is willing to tell the House that he would be courageous enough to persist in the face of this compensation, and in the face of the operations he has authorised, I am very much afraid that we on this side of the House would not accept that sort of assurance.

The simple facts of the matter are these: The Government has authorised environmental studies because it was pressured by the public into conducting the studies. Having authorised them, the Government has allowed them to continue and has now said publicly that regardless of the result the decision will be taken before the information is known.

Mr Mensaros: That is not so.

Mr B. T. BURKE: That is exactly what has happened. No matter which way the Government runs or hides the fact of the matter is that it has commissioned studies which it is now prepared to ignore; and not only is that the truth, but it is also true that it is irresponsible of the Government to talk about giving security to the company to expend millions of dollars only to find out later that the environmental impact studies and their results possibly are not favourable, and that the effort of the raising of capital has all been to no avail. What sort of security is that?

Sir Charles Court: Did you spend hundreds of man-hours leading up to this study today? We are hoping to get some ray of sunshine in respect of the policy of the Labor Party.

Mr Pearce: Why don't you wait for the results of your own inquiry?

Mr B. T. BURKE: Mr Speaker, the frailties of age are sometimes quite tragic.

Mr Spriggs: Especially in boys.

Mr B. T. BURKE: However, we will move on to the Premier's vaunted boast that he assisted the Opposition in its inquiries by making available senior officers. The truth is that when the Department of Industrial Development was approached the senior officer spoken to turned to gibberish, dropped the phone, and it was the Minister who turned up to give us the briefing; not only that, but the Minister managed to influence other Ministers to attend. The Opposition is grateful for any information that was provided, but let us not pretend that the Minister did not insist that he attend personally.

Sir Charles Court: Why should he not?

Mr Mensaros: That is my job.

Mr Jamieson: I wouldn't go if I were in that position.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The other thing that is interesting and the other thing that frames this whole motion into its proper context is the apparent unwillingness of the company to give the sorts of guarantees the Government is so pleased to promise on its behalf. I would not pretend to be as competent as the Premier or the Minister for Industrial Development on these matters; nor would I pretend to be as competent as the lowliest of their minions. However, I was present at Alcoa's Pinjarra complex when members of the Opposition were briefed on the company's plans. I do remember asking the company's spokesman whether the company would guarantee to stay on the western side of the scarp, in the high rainfall area, in the area that was severely affected by dieback, and the company's spokesman said, "No".

Sir Charles Court: It will have to under the ERMP, if that is what is recommended.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Then why not wait for the ERMP and satisfy ourselves that is what is going to happen?

Sir Charles Court: And then, when we get that, you will say, "That is no good, let us have a Royal Commission." It is the old trick.

Mr B. T. BURKE: If that happens, the Premier can again use his numbers to bulldoze through this House any measure he thinks appropriate. We know about the boy who cried wolf and said, "This might happen and that might happen"; let us wait and see what the reports tell us to do. Then, and only then, we can weigh up the reports and adopt a sensible course of action. We will do the right thing.

Sir Charles Court: If the reports recommend what you do not agree with, you will ridicule them and want something else.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Our policy to adopt them is not sustained by the numbers in this House. So, if the Premier wants to be reasonable on this occasion and refer this matter to an Honorary Royal Commission, he can use his numbers later if it becomes clear the Opposition is being irresponsible in not accepting the environmental studies and their recommendations. But of course, the Premier will not do that, either. He is not interested in anything that is determined by the environmental impact studies. In fact, he is ashamed to face his multi-national colleagues and tell them a delay may occur because of some need to look at questions relating to the environment. That is the truth of the matter.

Sir Charles Court: We have undertaken a commitment which your colleague said he could not accept in 1972.

Mr B. T. BURKE: If my colleague said that in 1972, more fool him; I do not mind that. It is 1978 now. I will answer for what I say in this place, not for what was said years ago. The Premier so often talks about what happened in 1952, on some electoral matter or other. However, he must answer for himself now, and he cannot absolve his own sins by referring to the sins of others.

Sir Charles Court: I will be glad to answer for myself.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I know the Premier will be, but we do not have the time!

Sir Charles Court: Nothing would suit us better if you oppose this measure, if we were looking at it from a purely political point of view. But we are not; we are interested in the development of the State.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Premier by interjection has admitted that the impact statements could well result in a dramatic change of policy by the present Government. He has admitted that in the House, yet he is prepared to say, "We will not wait until those results are known, and embody their purpose and meaning in legislation; we will go on with the second reading now." Why cannot the Premier wait until the impact statements are ready?

Sir Charles Court: You are just making a fool of yourself. Any Government which attempts to embody those things in legislation would be quite foolish. We will have the protection provided by this legislation for the future, not just for now.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The trouble is that the Premier so often talks before he thinks. The truth is he excuses his omissions by talking about it being time for leaders to lead, and by going to

Sydney and giving pretentious lectures about the world's road to recovery. I am amazed he is even slightly concerned about bauxite mining in Western Australia when he is so busy leading the world's economic recovery. He has closed down the iron ore industry and he has not started anything, and now he is trying to bulldoze through this House the second reading of this Bill.

The amendment devotes itself entirely to the precipitate fashion in which this Government has introduced this legislation and is now trying to ensure its passage through this House. The Government has said it realises there may be changes in the terms of the legislation as a result of the environmental impact statements, but it is not prepared to say those changes should be accommodated by the deferral of this legislation.

What has the Government to hide? The Opposition has nothing to hide; it supports the establishment of an Honorary Royal Commission of inquiry to investigate this entire matter, and the Government's opposition to our proposal is clear proof of its insistence that its activities be carried out behind closed doors. I support the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Debate (on motion) Resumed

MR MENSAROS (Floreat—Minister for Industrial Development) [5.45 p.m.]: Mr Speaker, despite the fact that during the intermediate debate we dealt with a lot of matters, according to Standing Orders I must relate my remarks to the immediate question before the Chair. However, partly out of courtesy and partly out of necessity, I should like to go through some of the points raised by the member for Warren when leading for the Opposition in the second reading debate. He did not tell Parliament or the people of Western Australia of his party's attitude to this matter.

One question he asked was, "Why is it that one refinery is viable with a production rate of 800 000 tonnes while another needs two million tonnes to be viable?" I do not think the honourable member properly understood the answers he received. No doubt Alcoa said it would be fully profitable and businesslike only if it could raise the capacity of the Wagerup refinery to two million tonnes.

It was also mentioned that the figure of 200 000 tonnes initial capacity was a non-viable operation, which was factual. However, that does not mean to say both refineries would not be viable in the Western Australian context—taking into consideration the cost structure for the construction

and operation phases of the project and for harbour and transport development and the technicalities of mining—with a production of 800 000 tonnes or one million tonnes.

If a company has capital invested, it wants to have optimum viability. Therefore, the production figure at which a reasonably profitable operation could be expected—commensurate with the capital involved—has been struck at about two million tonnes. The member for Warren knows that Alwest also wishes to expand its capacity in the same manner as Alcoa.

The member for Warren said that the Environmental Protection Authority does not decide on the ERMP, but that it was for the Government to decide. I do not intend to deal with this at great length. However, as the Premier mentioned, about 1970 a Liberal-Country Party Government introduced environmental legislation. When the Tonkin Government took over, it said our legislation had insufficient teeth, so it was amended to strengthen it. It is the Tonkin Government's legislation upon which we are acting now, and which prescribes statutorily that the EPA shall advise the Government. So, the member for Warren had no argument, quite apart from the fact it had no bearing on his argument to delay this legislation.

The member for Warren made great play of the fact that the company prepares the ERMP, and not the State. However, as he mentioned himself, the only example of the State preparing an environmental statement—and that was only an impact statement, as opposed to a management plan for the future—was in relation to the wood chip industry.

During his and our Government, the companies themselves prepared the environmental statements. This is quite logical because it is in the companies' interests that they appreciate what may happen to the environment. This does not mean the statement is taken lightly. The member for Warren knows it is examined closely, and the EPA says to the Government that it is either good or bad, and recommends a certain course of action.

When a company makes certain proposals to the Government—the member for Warren knows all agreements are built on these proposals—they are examined by the respective authorities and discussed with the company. The company is told, "Look, this has not been done properly. We want you to do this." Accordingly, the proposal is amended. The Environmental Protection Authority and the Department of Conservation and Environment adopt precisely the same procedures.

However, I remind the honourable member that the Commonwealth legislation—which personally I have my doubts about because of its constitutional propriety; I do not think it is a Commonwealth matter—talks about the "proposer" which in every case is the company.

In all past cases an environmental study has been prepared by the company. This happened in regard to Goldsworthy, Marandoo, Agnew, and the rest. So I do not think that is an argument.

Another interesting comment made by the member for Warren was that he said he realised the Government in 1961 could not have cared very much about dieback because at that time it was not known. But towards the end of his speech, having in the meantime asserted that he was an expert on the matter—which I would not doubt—he said that around 1965 information about dieback started to be available and from that time on people were more aware of it. I again reiterate that his Government had a chance to incorporate, by way of amendment in the existing agreement, any provision regarding dieback or any other environmental matter when amending the Alcoa agreement in 1972, which of course it did not do.

In fact, it was the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and not I, as the member for Balcatta who always distorts facts has said, who referred to remote areas where he said—and I think I properly understood him—it would not matter so much if mining operations were carried on. He referred to Telfer. In fact the opposite happened during the term of the Tonkin Government because, instead of encouraging the Mitchell Plateau project which is remote and away from people, the Tonkin Government encouraged the purchase of bauxite by AMAX from the Pinjarra project. We have done exactly the opposite.

Under the present statutory provisions Alcoa of Australia is entitled to mine wherever it wants to mine at whatever time it wants to mine from the total of its mineral resources which are consolidated in the agreement. There is no limit on this. It can expand from the Pinjarra refinery as far as it wants and it can build a new refinery without any restrictions. That is the present situation.

That situation has prevailed ever since the Pinjarra agreement was written. There was no attempt by the Tonkin Government to change the situation. I am not saying that it should have changed it unilaterally because I am more objective than some members of the Opposition and I know they would not have wanted to pull down the reputation of a Western Australian Government, of whatever political colour, by unilaterally changing an agreement which was written by a

Western Australian Government elected by the people. But the Tonkin Government could have negotiated, which is precisely what we have done.

We sat down with the company and said, "Times have changed. There is the opinion of the public who are our shareholders." Therefore, we re-negotiated the agreement. The result is that if this new agreement is ratified the situation will change drastically. Alcoa will not have the right to unlimited bauxite mining. It will have the right to establish a refinery only after the ERMP has been accepted and then only to two million tonnes after which it needs another ERMP, not to speak of the interim reports, the 10-yearly plans, the three-yearly plans, and the yearly reviews.

The company has to do this and as a consequence the situation will be exactly the opposite to what happened in 1972; that is to say, the Wagener refinery, not the Pinjarra refinery, will be expanded. Therefore, automatically in the foreseeable future mining will occur in the areas where even the Opposition claims there is not much danger. If we had not negotiated this agreement and if we had not brought it in "hastily", as the Opposition accuses us of doing, then clearly as a matter of good business the company would have mined the eastern escarpment, which it has the right to do. That would have been better business because it is nearer to the existing refinery and the company would not have to spend money in building a new one. It could have just added to the present capacity, which would be infinitely cheaper.

That being the situation, I emphasise that our move is not for expansion of the mining but for a reasoned and normal restriction of it so that it can go ahead normally, allowing development by the company as well as ensuring as much environmental protection as we possibly can.

Undoubtedly the environment is important, but it is interesting that not much mention is made about the other side of the coin, which has been scarcely pointed out. The member for Warren acknowledged my statement in the second reading speech regarding the economic flow-on. He acknowledged even the possibilities which I explained at a meeting of a Labor Party committee. I must say that I regard as flattering the accusation that I took the trouble to go to the meeting of the Opposition's committee, because I think that is the job of a Minister and I should like to see the time—and some members of the Opposition agree with me—when instead of word slinging, which is the only capacity of the member for Balcatta, we can work together and see where the interests of the State lie. That was the spirit

in which I went to the committee meeting of the Opposition which neither the member for Balcatta nor the member for Welshpool attended. The member for Balcatta talks nothing but hot air. The members who were there were not hostile to me and neither was I hostile to them. It was an amicable, quiet, and reasonable meeting, as should be the case with members of Parliament. I know that the member for Welshpool said that I do not trust my officer. I hired the officer and I trust him more than anybody else.

Mr Jamieson: I do not think I said that but I will take the blame for it.

Mr MENSAROS: I heard that the member said it; if he did not say it, all the better. I want to come to the certain economic consequences of the Bill. It has been readily admitted by the Opposition that, despite the nation-wide situation with regard to unemployment, we are far better off than anyone else in Australia because our economy is based on resource development. Yet when we say that here we have an opportunity to increase employment, to give confidence to people, to provide a decent growth in industry, and to build a harbour not in Fremantle but in Bunbury, that was mentioned in only half a sentence by the Opposition.

The Opposition may or may not know that the State Energy Commission has to give a decision to the joint venturers in the North-West Shelf project by September this year as to whether it accepts this quantity or another quantity of gas. If there is a Royal Commission for six months or nine months it cannot give a decision. The commission would be irresponsible if it said, "We will take the bigger quantity", because it might be that the pipeline is not economic to build and we will be without the gas and the economic flow-on from this development.

These are the positive things. These are the things which we build up parallel with our care of the environment. So, there is no question that the Opposition has misjudged the situation. Members of the Opposition should have stated honestly where they stood. Unless they are controlled by this iron clad discipline—and I am not complaining about that—some of them could have said, "We are against it" and some of them could have said, "We are for it." When I drove to Parliament House today I saw a car sticker which said something like, "If you want more jobs vote Labor". The attitude of the Opposition today did not bear out the message on the sticker. This sort of thing has been done before and will be done in the future, but people know that jobs are created from the policies we have on this side of the House.

Because the adjournment of the House is near I do not have much time to expand on the arguments presented and so I will conclude with these comments: I believe we have covered all aspects of the Bill during the second reading speech and the ensuing debate by the member for Warren who I thought gave a very reasonable speech.

I emphasise again that, firstly, we have not expanded mining willy-nilly; we have restricted it in an orderly fashion by negotiating this agreement. Secondly, the quicker we can commence with this agreement the better it will be. The Government will be on the back of the company to go ahead and do the job and start the construction of the new refinery as early as possible so that the economic flow-on will commence.

The impact this agreement will have both now and in the future was commented on very objectively by the member for Warren. The company will have an opportunity to build a smelter using cheaper electricity and there will be a possibility of cracking chemical substances from the gas which could be used as feed stock. There is a possibility of having combined electricity generation from access heat. This will all help create additional jobs and help the further development of the State.

In closing I apologise to the outside world; to the investors; to those we want here to develop this State for the sad attitude of the Opposition. The Opposition is part of the Western Australian Parliament and I apologise to the whole world for its attitude, which is absolutely shameful.

Mr Jamieson: Do not be stupid.

Question put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 29

Mr Blaikie	Mr O'Connor
Mr Clarko	Mr Old
Sir Charles Court	Mr O'Neil
Mr Cowan	Mr Ridge
Mrs Craig	Mr Rushton
Dr Dadour	Mr Sibson
Mr Grayden	Mr Sodeman
Mr Grewar	Mr Spriggs
Mr Hassell	Mr Stephens
Mr Herzfeld	Mr Tubby
Mr Laurance	Mr Watt
Mr MacKinnon	Mr Williams
Mr McPharlin	Mr Young
Mr Mensaros	Mr Shalders
Mr Nanovich	

(Teller)

Noes 19

Mr Barnett	Mr Harman
Mr Bertram	Mr Hodge
Mr Bryce	Mr Jamieson
Mr B. T. Burke	Mr Pearce
Mr T. J. Burke	Mr Skidmore
Mr Carr	Mr Taylor
Mr Davies	Dr Troy
Mr H. D. Evans	Mr Wilson
Mr T. D. Evans	Mr Bateman
Mr Grill	

(Teller)

Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Mr P. V. Jones	Mr Tonkin
Mr Coyne	Mr T. H. Jones
Mr Crane	Mr McIver

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

The SPEAKER: I inform the Leader of the Opposition that normally the Minister would move that I leave the Chair and for the House to form itself into a Committee. However, there is provision in the Standing Orders for other steps to be taken.

Reference to Select Committee

MR DAVIES (Victoria Park—Leader of the Opposition) [6.05 p.m.]: I want to move that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee and I believe it is at this stage that this step should be taken before any other move is made to go into Committee or to take any other action to process the Bill. Am I correct, and if so do I have your call, Mr Speaker?

The SPEAKER: There is such a provision in Standing Orders and the Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Mr DAVIES: I move—

That the Bill be referred to a Select Committee.

In replying to the debate this afternoon the Minister gave no answers to any of the very many questions which were raised by the member for Warren when he so capably replied to the second reading speech on behalf of the Opposition.

It was quite apparent that the very large gaps in our knowledge remain, and they remain despite the great efforts that have been made by members on this side of the House to inform themselves. The Premier tried to ridicule the work that had been done by members on this side of the House

in an endeavour to research the Bill and in an effort to inform themselves. Indeed, members on this side of the House were trying to find a way they might be able wholeheartedly to support the Bill. The Premier ridiculed these efforts and spoke of the apparent uselessness of talking to the heads of these various branches, including the Department of Industrial Development. The Premier gave no indication whatsoever that members of the Government had tried to inform themselves. He gave no indication that members of the Cabinet had tried to inform themselves. We know how Cabinet works. We know that information is taken by the Minister responsible to Cabinet and that members are able to discuss at some length the various implications of the proposed measure; but there is no indication to us that any single member set out particularly to inform himself on this question outside Cabinet.

In the absence of such advice we can only assume that in the party room members opposite have been told they have to support this measure, whether they like it or not. It is a matter of great concern to me that in the Government ranks members of the two branches, the National Country Party and the Liberal Party, have made no effort whatsoever to inform themselves on this question. It has been widely known—

Mr Sibson: How would you know?

Mr DAVIES: This is the opportunity for members opposite to tell us and that is precisely why I am moving this motion.

Once again let me mention to members opposite the people with whom we have had contact. They are: The Department of Industrial Development, the Forests Department, the Hunt Committee on Water Supplies, the CSIRO, Alcoa, Alwest, the Campaign to Save Native Forests, the Institute of Foresters, the Tree Society, the Timber Workers' Union, as well as individuals.

Mr Jamieson: And we have others lined up.

Mr DAVIES: The Minister seemed a little distressed that the member for Welshpool was not present on the day that he attended. I can say the member for Welshpool was distressed also, because he was home in bed under doctor's orders. But despite the fact that we went to all this trouble and had further speakers lined up to inform us on this measure, we have been unable to complete the gaps in our knowledge and we are looking for a period of time during which we can do that.

The Premier said that he did not want an Honorary Royal Commission. He seemed to belittle it, because he suggested that members of such a

commission would be working without payment and, therefore, their findings might be a little suspect. Alternatively, he suggested, if they were not paid, they were not of a sufficiently high standard capably to conduct a Royal Commission. Of course, that is a slight on the members of the House who would be taking part in such an Honorary Royal Commission.

In the event of that having been defeated, in view of the fact that the Government was not able effectively to reject the suggestion which had been put up, and bearing in mind the fact that there is no evidence that Government members have made any attempt whatsoever—not necessarily strenuous attempts, but any attempts—to inform themselves, I believe we should give them the opportunity to do just that. If we have a Select Committee we will be able to choose members from this House who will have the right to call for papers and witnesses and who will be able to conduct an inquiry within the next fortnight; that is, by the 11th May. This would enable us to complete the gaps in our knowledge and the committee would present a report to the House.

Members know that a Select Committee can operate only while Parliament is sitting. If the Government wants to have a Select Committee, then it must get it over and done with within the next 2½ weeks; otherwise the Select Committee will have to become an Honorary Royal Commission.

I believe when we get together as a Select Committee we will be able to tell members on the Government side of the House where our knowledge is lacking and they will be able to support us and tell us whether they know the answers or whether they feel we should call witnesses to provide the answers.

We can then look for a way in which we can support the Bill. It is ridiculous to suppose the Opposition does not want jobs. If there is a good, safe way to support the Bill we will do just that. The work of the Select Committee can start immediately with that end in view.

I believe that is the best way sincerely and honestly to provide an avenue for every member of the House, outside Cabinet of course, to be privy to all the information the various departments are able to supply. I believe that is the only way we can move effectively in this direction at this stage. I have much pleasure in moving accordingly.

Question put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 20

Mr Barnett	Mr Hodge
Mr Bertram	Mr Jamieson
Mr Bryce	Mr McIver
Mr B. T. Burke	Mr Pearce
Mr T. J. Burke	Mr Skidmore
Mr Carr	Mr Stephens
Mr Cowan	Mr Taylor
Mr Davies	Dr Troy
Mr H. D. Evans	Mr Wilson
Mr Harman	Mr Bateman

(Teller)

Noes 26

Mr Blaikie	Mr Nanovich
Mr Clarko	Mr O'Connor
Sir Charles Court	Mr Old
Mrs Craig	Mr O'Neil
Dr Dadour	Mr Ridge
Mr Grayden	Mr Rushton
Mr Grewar	Mr Sodeman
Mr Hassell	Mr Spriggs
Mr Herzfeld	Mr Tubby
Mr Laurance	Mr Watt
Mr MacKinnon	Mr Williams
Mr McPharlin	Mr Young
Mr Mensaros	Mr Shalders

(Teller)

Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Mr Tonkin	Mr P. V. Jones
Mr T. H. Jones	Mr Coyne
Mr T. D. Evans	Mr Crane
Mr Grill	Mr Sibson

Question thus negatived.

House adjourned at 6.16 p.m.