

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I move an amendment—

Page 8, lines 27 to 29—Delete all words after the word "amended" down to and including the passage "for," and substitute the following:

- (a) by adding immediately after the word, "lodging" in line six of subsection (1), the passage, "whether the refusal is at or about the time when the food, refreshment, liquor or lodging is sought or at the time when it is sought to make a reservation in advance"; and
- (b) by substituting for the words, "tariffs for", in line four of subsection (3), the passage, "the nature of, and tariffs for,".

This is somewhat of an afterthought. I have some files here to which I would like to refer, but I do not want to be asked to table them, for a very good reason.

On one occasion I telephoned a hotel which had a publican's general license, and inquired whether a meal booking for a number of persons on a Sunday could be taken. The person answering the phone said the hotel did not take telephone bookings for meals on Sundays. Assuming that a person did not make a telephone booking, but arrived at the hotel on a Sunday with his friends, and was told by the licensee that he could not serve lunch to so many people, then the licensee would have it both ways. He could say that with such a large number of people a booking should be made by telephone. It is a case of "Heads I win, tails you lose."

Previously I related the occasion when I went to a hotel in the country on a Sunday and asked for a meal to be served. I was told that the hotel did not provide meals on Sundays. On that occasion I felt that I should have dealt with the person concerned, because what he did was contrary to the spirit of the Act. He refused me a meal, but he did not refuse to supply me with beer.

By agreeing to the amendment we will tidy up the situation, and a hotelkeeper will not be able to refuse a booking over the telephone or a personal request made at the hotel. The wording of the amendment will ensure that a hotelkeeper will not be able to refuse a meal. When a hotelkeeper is given sufficient notice he should be obliged to serve a meal.

The Hon. J. DOLAN: Would the Minister clarify this point? A person with a grudge against a hotelkeeper could make a booking over the telephone for 12 people to be served lunch on a Sunday, but the party obviously would not turn up. That could happen on one or two occasions. On the third occasion, when a genuine booking is made, the hotelkeeper might refuse it, in view of what transpired previously.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: That position exists now, and there is nothing to stop a practical joker from making a telephone booking. The amendment will not be able to alter that position, but the law will deal with such offenders if they are caught.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 18 to 26 put and passed.

Title—

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Members are satisfied, I am sure, that the second reading stage and the Committee stage have been completed. It is to be understood that I will move that the third reading—

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (The Hon. F. D. Willmott): That will not be necessary. The adoption of the report will be considered at the next sitting.

Title put and passed.

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 10.58 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, the 13th September, 1967

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (16): ON NOTICE CONTAINER CARGOES

Storing and Handling Facilities at Fremantle

1. Mr. FLETCHER asked the Minister for Railways:

Since it is reasonable to assume—

(a) that Melbourne and Sydney will initially handle the preponderance of container traffic;

(b) that overseas shipping companies may later see advantage in quick turnaround by offloading containers at Fremantle for rail transport to Eastern States;

what provision is now being made by the Railways Department, the Fremantle Port Authority, and private enterprise to cope with the storing and handling of container goods at Fremantle for—

(i) this State's requirements;

(ii) the requirements of the Eastern States after the opening of the broad gauge line?

Mr. O'CONNOR replied:

The Fremantle Port Authority is initially constructing one modern

container berth with ship loading and unloading facilities at the inner harbour.

The berth will be available for use by the two overseas shipping consortia which are presently proposing to operate an international container service. It will also be available to any other groups that decide to enter this trade in the future, and to Associated Steamships which for three years has operated the vessel *Koorunga* on a coastal container service between Fremantle and Melbourne. Supporting this facility, the Australian associates of the overseas consortia will operate terminals immediately adjacent to the berth which will receive and consign full containers. In addition one organisation will operate a depot at North Fremantle which will provide for cargo consolidation and container packing and unpacking. The other organisation will in the initial stages use its terminal adjacent to the berth for this purpose.

The container berth presently being constructed makes provision for both 3 ft. 6 in. and 4 ft. 8½ in. gauge tracks, but a decision has not been taken as to when these will be connected to the W.A.G.R. system.

Discussions are under way between shipowners and exporters and importers to determine which cargoes will be containerised and how the resultant transport task will be best accomplished. When these are completed we will be in a better position to judge the rail requirement.

The Government has under study the situation in which some international container shipping services may wish to use Fremantle as their only Australian port, using the broad gauge line to the Eastern States for the remainder of the container journey. In the event of such approaches, and the study showing the scheme as economically viable, we will certainly consider providing appropriate facilities and, in conjunction with other broad gauge systems, appropriate services.

2. *This question was postponed.*

CHIROPRACTORS ACT *Amending Legislation*

3. Mr. SEWELL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:
Is it the intention of the Government to amend the Chiropractors Act during this session?

Mr. COURT replied:

An amendment to the Chiropractors Act is being considered by the chiropractors board, but it is probable that it will not be implemented this session.

INSPECTOR OF MINES

Additional Appointment at Kalgoorlie

4. Mr. EVANS asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:
(1) Is it intended to appoint a further inspector of mines at Kalgoorlie?
(2) Is any regrading of the inspectorial staff at Kalgoorlie contemplated?
(3) If the answer to (2) is "Yes," would he outline what is planned?

Mr. BOVELL replied:

- (1) Yes.
(2) and (3) The matter is to be discussed with the Public Service Commissioner.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Pensioners: Increased Weekly Payments

5. Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Labour:

As the Department of Social Services means test was varied as from the 27th April, 1967, to enable a pensioner to receive income apart from a pension, to the extent of \$10.00 per week in the case of his being single and \$17.00 per week if married, could the effect of amending orders recently made by the Workers' Compensation Board in respect of pensioners in receipt also of reduced weekly payments of workers' compensation in consequence of the aforesaid be made retrospective to the aforementioned date?

Mr. O'NEIL replied:

So far as is consistent with Department of Social Services requirements, all of the orders referred to have been made at the rates, and as from the dates requested either by the workers themselves, or their duly appointed agents.

The Workers' Compensation Board has power pursuant to section 29 (2) of the Workers' Compensation Act, 1912-1966, to reconsider any matter, and will do so in proper cases.

EDUCATION INSPECTORIAL STAFF

Non-employment of Wives as Teachers

6. Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Education:
(1) Is it the policy of the Education Department not to employ, or con-

tinue to employ, the wives of members of the teaching staff promoted to the inspectorial staff?

(2) If so—

- (a) what is the reason for such an attitude;
- (b) can this be reasonably sustained while there continues to be a shortage of teachers, particularly in some categories?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Answered by (1).

STRATA TITLES ACT

Gazettal of Regulations, and Implementation

7. Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice:

With reference to my question of the 8th August, 1967, regarding the Strata Titles Act, can he advise—

- (a) When the regulations will be gazetted;
- (b) When it will be possible to deal in strata titles?

Mr. COURT replied:

- (a) The regulations will be gazetted in the first week of October.
- (b) The Act will be proclaimed to come into operation on the 1st November, 1967, and the necessary procedures for registration can then follow.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Overseas Assignments: Leave of Absence

8. Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Education:

- (1) How many persons have been given leave from the Education Department over each of the last five years to provide instruction in technical education in Asian countries under the Colombo Plan, I.L.O., or similar schemes?
- (2) What was the duration of the leave of absence in each case?
- (3) How many instructors are currently absent on such work?
- (4) Does the department favour assisting in this type of scheme?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

- (1) Ten.
- (2) Varying from three months to three years two months.
- (3) Nil.
- (4) When an instructor can be spared the department is happy to assist.

LAND

Inkpen Estate: Releases

9. Mr. GAYFER asked the Minister for Lands:

- (1) How many blocks are to be released in the immediate future in the Old Berry Brow or Inkpen Estate?
- (2) How many applicants have applied for these blocks?
- (3) What are the sizes of the blocks?
- (4) When is the Land Board due to start sitting to allocate these blocks?
- (5) Will all applicants be interviewed?
- (6) If not, why not?
- (7) Are the applicants to be interviewed in alphabetical order or by ballot?
- (8) What are the professions of the members who will comprise the Land Allocation Board?
- (9) What area is considered to be an economical farming unit in this type of country?
- (10) After this allocation—
 - (a) how many blocks remain to be released within the estate;
 - (b) what area of land remains to be allocated for farming purposes if the survey has not been completed;
 - (c) when may it be expected that more releases will be made?

Mr. BOVELL replied:

- (1) 22 locations were made available for selection in the Inkpen Estate on the 16th August, 1967.
- (2) 725.
- (3) Areas range from 154 acres to 1,256 acres.
- (4) The Land Board will commence hearings on the 2nd October, 1967, at 9 a.m.
- (5) All applicants will be given the opportunity to be interviewed by the board.
- (6) Answered by (5).
- (7) In alphabetical order.
- (8) Mr. E. E. O'Brien, Chairman, former Chief Inspector of Lands. Mr. N. G. Ranson, Chief Inspector of Lands, Lands and Surveys Department.
Mr. S. J. Stokes, Chairman of Crown Lands Tribunal, former Assistant Surveyor General.
Invitations were extended to the shire presidents of Northam and York, but both invitations were declined.
- (9) It is considered that the size of an economical farming unit in this locality is dependent on soil

classification and good farm management. General information is included in brochure, which it is requested be tabled.

- (10) This release completes the land available for selection in the Inkpen Estate, except for three groups of small lots which are not scheduled for release at present. The remaining land within the estate is within the Mundaring Weir catchment area and it is not proposed to release this land for selection.

The brochure was tabled.

RAILWAYS

Overway at West Midland

10. Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Works:

- (1) Has a decision been made regarding the location of a bridge over the railway at West Midland?
- (2) Is the site of the new bridge to extend over Byers Road?
- (3) Have residents and business houses been advised of the bridge proposals?
- (4) Where can plans and information—if prepared—be sighted?

Mr. O'CONNOR (for Mr. Ross Hutchinson) replied:

- (1) Preliminary proposals have been formulated for a bridge over the railway at West Midland and an approximate location recommended.
- (2) No; but if the proposals are accepted the approach embankments will cross Byers Road.
- (3) No. Discussion has been held with the Midland Town Council.
- (4) Preliminary sketch plans are held at the Main Roads Department office. Arrangements can be made for the honourable member to see these.

BRIDGE OVER HELENA RIVER

West Midland: Site and Commencement

11. Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Works:

- (1) Has the site for the bridge over the Helena River at West Midland been finalised?
- (2) If "Yes," when is it expected the bridge will be built?

Mr. O'CONNOR (for Mr. Ross Hutchinson) replied:

- (1) Yes, but formal resumption action has not been completed.
- (2) Subject to completion of formalities, construction will be completed over the summer months of 1967-68.

BEVERLEY-BODDING LAND PROJECT

Releases

12. Mr. GAYFER asked the Minister for Lands:

Referring to Crown Lands Tribunal fourth interim report, Beverley-Bodding project, of the 24th January, 1962—

- (1) Page 5, paragraph 12, refers to an area of 6,400 acres being made available for selection subject to the removal of timber and to the provision of necessary roads. How much of this land has been made available for agricultural selection?
- (2) Page 6, paragraph 13, on plan 342/80, refers to an area of 14,800 acres being made available for general subdivision subject to a design for subdivision and provision of necessary roads. How much of this land has been made available for agricultural selection?
- (3) Page 7 refers to vacant Crown land south of Reserve 14581 and comprising approximately 92 acres being made available for selection by adjoining holders only. Has this been allocated?
- (4) Page 9 refers to a portion of item 9 coloured yellow on plan 342/80 and extending onto plan 379/80 of about 10,200 acres.
 - (a) how much of this land has been thrown open to adjoining holders;
 - (b) how much of this land has been allocated to persons not adjoining?

Mr. BOVELL replied:

- (1) and (2) The Forests Department was asked to remove timber by the 30th June, 1967. The position is now being reviewed and in due course the area will be designed for subdivision. However, this land will be included in the overall State plan for land releases for agricultural development.

That is to say, with the overall plan we cannot give preference to any particular areas, and when this land can be included in the overall plan it will be developed. I cannot give the honourable member any undertaking when it will be made available for selection.

(3) Yes. A conditional purchase lease of this area was approved on the 2nd August, 1963.

(4) (a) Five applications by adjoining holders, totalling 2,470 acres, have been approved.

(b) None. However, approval has been given for future land released to be made available for general selection, as distinct from the previous restriction to adjoining holders only.

SCHOOLS

Murchison District: Ceiling Fans

13. Mr. BURT asked the Minister for Education:

- (1) Has the department arrived at a decision concerning the provision of ceiling fans in Government schools in the Murchison district?
- (2) If so, what action is to be effected?
- (3) Does the Government subsidise the installation of ceiling fans in private schools in the north-west and Murchison districts?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) A survey of requirements is being conducted and a decision will be made when this is completed, probably by the end of October.
- (3) No.

RAILWAYS

Murchison Area: Transport of Iron Ore

14. Mr. BURT asked the Minister for Railways:

- (1) Has any decision been reached concerning freight rates and costs of upgrading the existing railway line between Cue and Geraldton to enable iron ore to be railed from the Wilgie Mia deposit to Geraldton for export?
- (2) In view of the tremendous benefits to be derived from the establishment of an iron ore mining operation in the Murchison, will the most careful consideration be given to the economics of every aspect of the transport side of this project?

Mr. O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) No decision has yet been reached, but enough work has been done to arrive at an approximate freight rate and capital cost of upgrading.

(2) Yes. The particular problem under consideration is the provision of the large amount of capital required. Discussions in regard to this are still in course.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES

Underground Mains: Attitude of S.E.C.

15. Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Electricity:

- (1) Is it a fact that the State Electricity Commission refuses to agree to electricity mains being placed underground in an area, even if the developer is prepared to meet the entire cost of underground cables, or the difference in cost between underground and over head mains?

(2) If so, why?

Mr. NALDER replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Because—

The commission, in line with other major electricity authorities in Australia, is undergrounding where this is economically justified, and simplifying its overhead system where undergrounding is not justified.

Whoever finds the large amount of capital required for undergrounding, the consumer eventually pays.

Poles are necessary for street lighting, and if poles and underground street light mains were charged to street lighting, the cost to local authorities would increase.

Any available capital can be better utilised in overcoming the shortage of housing and other essential community requirements.

Corrigin: Connection to S.E.C. Supply

16. Mr. GAYFER asked the Minister for Electricity:

- (1) When is it proposed to connect Corrigin to State Electricity Commission line power?
- (2) Where will this line run from?

Mr. NALDER replied:

- (1) 1968.
- (2) Bruce Rock.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

ORD RIVER SCHEME

Commonwealth Financial Assistance

Mr. RHATIGAN asked the Premier: Reports in tonight's paper indicate that he has discussed with the Prime Minister certain projects in Western Australia. Did

he have the opportunity of discussing the availability of further finance from the Commonwealth Government to the State Government for the greater Ord River project?

Mr. BRAND replied:

Yes, I did discuss this matter with the Prime Minister. I think it will also be found that it is a subject that was considered at the Press conference held this afternoon. However, the Prime Minister assured me that so far as he was personally concerned, he was open to be convinced concerning the need to finance the second stage of the Ord project. He was awaiting the report of the Minister for National Development who, incidentally, accompanied him on this occasion. This will go forward at the end of this cotton season. Incidentally, as already publicised, the State Government is bringing up to date its case so that the latest information resulting from the last crop and the last season will be available to the Commonwealth Government. I feel sure it will give favourable consideration in the light of this new evidence.

BULK HANDLING BILL

Third Reading

MR. NALDER (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [4.44 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR. GAYFER (Avon) [4.45 p.m.]: I rise on one point of interest. At the end of the second reading debate the Minister mentioned that the loss generally in grain overseas was 10 per cent. In Western Australia we run out at an outturn of .5 per cent. loss, which is about one-twentieth of the loss quoted by the Minister as a worldwide loss. This is a good reflection on the standard of bulk-handling within this State.

I might add the .5 per cent. is within the regulations which are attached to this Bill and also well within the Canadian standards from which we obtained the original data by which Co-operative Bulk Handling could work.

Mr. Nalder: I think I added that the figure in Western Australia was very much lower than 10 per cent.

Mr. GAYFER: Considerably less.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr. Lewis (Minister for Education), and transmitted to the Council.

STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION

Oil Purchases: Motion

Debate resumed, from the 23rd August, on the following motion by Mr. May:—

Having regard to the wording of section 20 of the State Electricity Commission Act, No. 60 of 1945, wherein it is set out—

(1) The Commission shall furnish the Minister with—

- (a) all such reports, documents, papers and information as are required by Parliament, pursuant to any Act or pursuant to any order or resolution of either House of Parliament, and
- (b) full information on all business of the Commission to enable answers to be made to all questions asked in Parliament concerning the Commission or to enable the Minister to furnish any returns required by Parliament or which he himself requires.

It is the opinion of this House that the Minister should inform it of—

- (a) the name of the company from which oil is being purchased for use in the State power stations, and
- (b) the price per ton that is being paid for such oil, and

should lay whatever agreements have been made, as are in operation at the present, on the Table of the House for the information of Parliament.

Point of Order

Mr. NALDER: Before speaking to this motion I would like to ask your direction, Mr. Speaker, as to the extent to which you will allow me to proceed in what I have to say. In the terms of the motion, the honourable member practically confines the point to one question; namely, the price of oil be made public. As I interpret this, it means I would be practically confined to the details of the State Electricity Commission Act.

Will you allow me to discuss the situation at Collie in regard to coal production?

Speaker's Ruling

The SPEAKER: The matter raised by the Deputy Premier is something I have considered. I wondered whether I should

have restricted the member for Collie to the terms of his own motion. However, in view of the fact that it was his own motion I think this would have been an unwarranted restriction. I think I can say that since the member for Collie went so wide in his initial remarks, it can reasonably be expected now that any field he covered should be the subject of further debate.

Debate (on Motion) Resumed

MR. NALDER (Katanning—Minister for Electricity) [4.49 p.m.]: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My opening remarks will be word for word those of the member for Collie when he said that the matter under discussion was not meant to be personal or to throw any reflection on me as Minister for Electricity. I say the same thing. What I have to say is no reflection on the honourable member because all of us in this House have a very high regard both for him and his representation of his electorate. As the Minister responsible for electricity to the Government of Western Australia, I want to make it quite clear that in my opinion some of the points raised by the honourable member need to be answered.

First of all, I would remind the House of the motion, and the wording of the Act to which the honourable member has referred. That wording is in section 20 of the State Electricity Commission Act, and reads as follows:—

- (1) The Commission shall furnish the Minister with—

I want the House to remember exactly how this wording is couched in the Act. To continue—

- (a) all such reports, documents, papers and information as are required by Parliament, pursuant to any Act or pursuant to any order or resolution of either House of Parliament, and
- (b) full information on all business of the Commission to enable answers to be made to all questions asked in Parliament concerning the Commission or to enable the Minister to furnish any returns required by Parliament or which he himself requires.

Then the honourable member has added the main point of his motion, which reads as follows:—

It is the opinion of this House that the Minister should inform it of—

- (a) the name of the company from which oil is being purchased for use in the State power stations, and
- (b) the price per ton that is being paid for such oil, and

should lay whatever agreements have been made, as are in operation at the present, on the Table of the House, for the information of Parliament.

The Act, which was passed in Western Australia in 1945, is very similar in wording—almost exactly the same—as the Act which is in operation in Victoria. The Victorian Act is dated 1958, but it was brought up to date during that year from an earlier Act.

I want to read a portion of the Victorian Act, because it is almost identical with our own Act. The reason I am reading this is that I want to make a point a little later on. The situation in Victoria is as follows, and I quote from clause 4 (1) of the sixth schedule:—

4. (1) The Commission shall furnish the Minister with—

- (a) all such reports documents papers and minutes as are required by Parliament pursuant to any Act or pursuant to any order of either House of Parliament; and
- (b) full information on all business of the Commission to enable answers to be made to all questions asked in Parliament concerning the Commission or to enable the Minister to furnish any returns required by Parliament or which he himself requires.

(2) For the proper conduct of his public business the Minister shall be entitled at all times to put himself into direct communication with all officers and employees of the Commission and also to see all documents papers and minutes which he requires either for Parliament or himself and to be supplied with copies thereof, and also to avail himself of the services and assistance of any officer or employee.

If any member wishes to take the time to check that wording with the provisions of our Act, he will find they are almost identical.

I think the Leader of the Opposition during the debate on the Address-in-Reply commented on the position in the Eastern States. I have not read his comment in *Hansard*, but I understand this was the position, and if I am wrong I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to correct me. I understand he said that in the Eastern States the electricity commissions must supply—or did supply—the actual price of coal or oil which is used.

Mr. Tonkin: I said that, and at the time I understood that to be the position. However, I have since found it not to be so.

Mr. NALDER: Thank you. I wanted to be quite fair, because I understood that was the position. I wanted to say here that the position is contrary to what had been stated, but the Leader of the Opposition has now cleared up the point, and he has also cleared up what has been published in the Press.

The Electricity Commission of New South Wales, the State Electricity Commission of Victoria—and I quoted from the Victorian Act because it is almost word for word with

our own Act—and the Electricity Trust of South Australia do not—and I emphasise “do not”—disclose the price of their fuel, be it coal or oil.

The situation is a little different in Western Australia, and criticism was made because of the fact that the price of coal in Western Australia is disclosed. In my opinion, there is a very valid reason for this and I think if the member for Collie was asked at this stage to estimate the cost of coal to be supplied to the commission, if tenders were being called, he would almost be able to work out a price. He would be able to do this because of his knowledge of previous costs and the increased costs which the companies have been asked to bear. I repeat, the member for Collie would almost be able to estimate the actual cost of the coal to be supplied by the two companies if tenders were called. The price is worked out on a definite basis, and I understand it is processed from time to time during the period which elapses from the granting of the original tender until tenders are called again for succeeding years.

So there is no argument here to say that because the Collie coal companies make public their contract price, the same thing should apply to an oil company. I say there is no connection whatever. Because the coal prices have been negotiated and made public in Western Australia, it does not mean that oil prices should automatically be made public. There is a different set of circumstances completely and the price agreed on with the company involved in the contract in Western Australia has been based on a different set of circumstances completely. So, in my view, there is no basis to argue that the price should be made public. I will read to members the two sections of the Act, and no doubt the difference in the wording will be understood by all members.

Mr. Hall: Why not reveal the price of oil now?

Mr. NALDER: Section 58 of the Act reads as follows:—

The Commission shall prepare an annual report of its proceedings and operations during the preceding year which report together with copies of the balance sheet and statements of account then last prepared and audited and the Auditor General's report thereon shall be laid by the Minister before both Houses of Parliament as soon as practicable in each year.

In this case, the commission shall prepare an annual report which must be laid on the Table of the House. However, section 20 provides that the commission shall furnish the Minister with certain information, but there is no obligation on the Minister to supply that information to either House of Parliament. If it had been stated—and no doubt Parliament at that stage had given full consideration to this situation—in the legislation that the

Minister should give this information to the House, then it would be a completely different situation. However, it is not the position, and it is not the situation in other States.

So this is the reason I say I have no obligation whatsoever, either for the Government or on behalf of the Government, to make available the price of oil to anyone in Western Australia—or anywhere else. I use this argument as far as this Government is concerned, but the same situation exists in the other States. We have an obligation to the business concerns to honour agreements which are negotiated with the commission. For this reason the Government feels obligated at least to support the views of the commission in this matter.

Mr. Hall: Why not reveal the price.

Mr. NALDER: I now want to make some comment with reference to the situation at Collie. The Government has done a considerable amount for the Collie area—for the township of Collie and the district surrounding it—

Mr. May: By pushing the workers out of the industry.

Mr. NALDER: —in the same way as it has for many other districts in the State, and I am certain there are many people in Collie who are appreciative of what the Government has done. It is establishing a \$35,000,000 240 MW station at Muja which will be operated as a base load station, and it will remain a base load station for many years to come. The benefits to Collie from this will be many. In the first instance the station is and was a boost to the economy of Collie due to the presence of many construction workers during the construction of the power station, and the workers who are employed there permanently. At one stage the work force was 450 men, and the station will be a continuing support to Collie's economy due to the presence of approximately 150 men who work at the station permanently.

The Muja station establishes the future for the coalmining industry because it will remain, as I previously said, a base load station for many years to come.

Mr. Davies: What do you mean by a base load station?

Mr. NALDER: There are many other towns in the State of Western Australia which would like to have the same guarantee that Collie has with regard to its future. I refer to some of the mining towns on the goldfields. What would have been the position if the Government of the day had said to the people of some of those towns, “We will guarantee the situation of your town for a period of 30 years, and for many years after that”? Members know what the people of those towns would have said—people in towns like Menzies, Leonora, and Big Bell, and

we can even go as far as Meekatharra. Those people would have been very happy indeed to have had such a guarantee.

I repeat: There are many people in Collie who are happy about what the Government has done for the town of Collie, and for the people of that area. The Government has guaranteed a situation under which Collie can continue on an even keel because the supply of coal to the Muja power station is guaranteed.

The Government by its coal contracts for the railways and the State Electricity Commission has remained Collie's major customer; in fact, it is practically the only customer for coal as it takes approximately 50 per cent. of the more expensive deep mine coal at Collie, which means that the requirements of the railways and the S.E.C. are contributing to the economy of the district to the extent of approximately \$1,500,000 per annum.

I want to give certain figures which indicate the position, because these figures show how the use of Collie coal by the Government has increased over the past few years. The figures are as follows:—

	Tons
1950	681,000
1955	725,000
1960	818,000
1963	835,000
1964	942,000
1965	962,000
1966	1,038,000

Mr. Kelly: Labor produced 1,000,000 tons of coal, too.

Mr. NALDER: Members can see how production is increasing at Collie.

Mr. May: Will you tell the House why you want oil?

Mr. NALDER: Yes. In the period to which I have just referred, the percentage of Government orders used by the State Electricity Commission rose from 46 per cent. to 82 per cent.

A few moments ago the honourable member interjected regarding the numbers of people who, he said, were being pushed out of the industry—he used words to that effect; I did not quite catch the interjection. We know the situation that has developed over the last few years; and it is not my intention to refer to this matter, as it has been dealt with in the House previously.

Mr. May: You want to skip over that aspect?

Mr. NALDER: No; that is not the reason at all. I am prepared to stand up and speak for my full time if the honourable member would like me to continue for that long. I am only saying the Government has made every effort to help the situation at Collie. When it was necessary to find alternative employment the Government made every effort to do so, and, only last year, as the honourable member well knows, rather

than retrench 46 workers, the Government agreed to allow the men to stay on until the time came for them to retire or they decided to leave the industry. The Government made a decision that those men were not to be retrenched.

Mr. May: I gratefully acknowledged that.

Mr. NALDER: The Government agreed that the State Electricity Commission should purchase an extra amount of the more expensive deep mine coal at the rate of 46,000 tons per annum for the express purpose of preventing the men involved from being thrown out of work. The reason for this is that some of the people had homes in Collie; they had lived there all their lives, with their families, and we considered that rather than that the men should be retrenched, they should be given the opportunity to continue in the industry.

From what has been said anyone would think the Government was ruthless, and that it was slashing hither and thither, ruining the situation. It is as well to remind members what the true position is.

The decision to build the 480 megawatt station at Kwinana was based on the following factors:—

- (a) The capital cost would be \$16,800,000 less than if a similar sized plant was established at Collie.
- (b) The delivered cost of power in the metropolitan area will be less than that brought from Collie. Ninety per cent. of the demand for power is in the metropolitan area and the elimination of long distance high voltage transmission lines will greatly increase the security of supply.

I heard yesterday, or today—I do not know whether anybody else heard the same news item—that daylight saving is to be introduced in Tasmania. I understand, also, that the price of power in Tasmania is to be increased. What is the reason for this? It is because Tasmania has only one type of power generating plants—hydroelectric. Now, because of a dry year—almost a drought year—the lack of a supply of water has made it necessary for the electricity commission in Tasmania to restrict the supplies of power.

How wise is the commission in this State in advising that, for a number of reasons, it would be better to have an alternative supply of fuel or source of power. In my opinion no argument can be put forward against the proposal that the commission in this State has adopted. I believe it to be a sound proposition, and it is designed to ensure that the public of Western Australia, both in regard to domestic and industrial power, will be assured of future power supplies under all circumstances.

This proposition has been adopted because other countries are experiencing situations similar to that now being experienced in Tasmania. I do not blame the authorities in Tasmania; as a matter of fact, the commission in Tasmania is already taking action to overcome a situation which it knows is likely to be repeated in future years. That commission knows from experience what is likely to happen, and it is taking steps to remedy the situation. In Tasmania an oil burning generating station is to be established.

Mr. May: Because they haven't got the coal.

Mr. NALDER: I do not know whether the authority there took its cue from the commission in Western Australia, but I give it credit for taking immediate steps to remedy the situation. That is why I think the commission in this State is doing the right thing. The position at Collie is not being depreciated; as a matter of fact, as the Premier will bear me out, at the opening of the Muja power station—and the honourable member will probably be able to support me in this remark, too—

Mr. May: I was not there.

Mr. NALDER: It was stated there is every possibility that in the future—and provision has already been made for this—additions will be made to that power station if it is found necessary and profitable for them to be made. One of the main difficulties, as I will outline in a moment, is that of water. The Kwinana station will have access to unlimited quantities of sea water for cooling purposes. Although at Collie there is a supply of water available from the Wellington Dam, as the honourable member knows only too well, this supply is limited; and, although an investigation has been under way for some time, no other suitable supply of water has been found.

To prove to the House that this is not just a matter of statement, but a matter of fact, I would mention that this investigation has already cost \$450,000, and by 1969 it is expected the search for suitable water will have cost a total of \$700,000. Surely members must know that a determined effort is being made to cope with a situation that is likely to develop. If we are in a position in two or three years' time to go ahead with further necessary expansion in the generation of power for this State, and there is an adequate supply of water at Collie, I am positive the commission will give serious consideration to where it will build the extensions.

The security of supply dictated the fact that an alternative source of fuel had to be found, and I think it would be extremely unwise to base the whole of the State's economy on the one area. The capital cost of establishing a nuclear power station is considerably higher than for a conven-

tional type, and as adequate reserves of natural gas are not available, the only alternative fuel was fuel oil.

We are not unmindful of the need to plan for the future, and in the next few weeks, I understand, a group of people from Europe is coming to the State to discuss with the commission the present position in regard to nuclear power, and the progress being made in this field. Who knows what the situation in the future is likely to be? We may have sufficient natural gas that we can harness for our power requirements for the future. We cannot sit down and say we are not going to do anything; if we do we will not be ready to meet any situation which may arise in the future.

From time to time we are losing industries from this State because we are not in a position to supply power at the cheapest possible figure, or one which is equivalent to that being charged in the other States.

Mr. May: The cheapest in Australia at the present time.

Mr. NALDER: I have already mentioned that electricity authorities in three other States do not disclose their fuel costs, or the costs of generating electricity; and, apart from that, they are at pains to see that this information is not made available to the general public. I really do not believe the general public is interested two hoots in the price of fuel oil.

If one had listened to the member for Collie, one would have thought Western Australia would live or die on the question of whether the price of oil is made public. When this controversy was at its greatest height I made a point of asking 40 citizens in different parts of the State what their opinions were on the question, and not one of them was interested in the price of oil. Invariably they said, "We are not interested in the price of oil. You have a State Electricity Commission and the Government is in control of the situation and we expect the Government to obtain power at the cheapest possible price." That is what the public of Western Australia is interested in; in obtaining power at the most economical price possible.

Mr. Graham: You move in funny circles!

Mr. NALDER: If the price of electricity were to rise by 1c per unit we would have many complaints. It is a long time since any price rise occurred in electricity charges in Western Australia. In fact, there has been a decrease in the charges for power in Western Australia. When the contract for fuel oil was negotiated there was a clear understanding between the suppliers and the State Electricity Commission that the price charges would remain confidential. The Government believes it must honour its word and it is not prepared to disclose the price or the

terms of the negotiations entered into. It does not necessarily mean that because the price of coal is known the price of oil should also be made known to the public.

As I have said, the members of the general public are not interested in the price the Government is paying for fuel oil. They do not want to know. Anyway, if they did know, how would they properly assess the situation? I cannot accurately assess it myself, and I am sure there is no honourable member in this House who could do so, either; so why worry about that situation? All the Government is interested in is in obtaining power at the most economical price, and I am certain that the general public adopts the same attitude.

Mr. Graham: Why tell the public anything? What do you think you are; a secret society?

Mr. NALDER: As I have already mentioned, there is no competition between the suppliers of coal; and the fact is that negotiations continue, and if one knew what the price of oil is likely to be when the next tenders are called—

Mr. Jamieson: What competition is there between the suppliers of oil? It is all obtained from the one source.

Mr. NALDER: I do not think there was any mention made in the House—although there may have been—but I think some mention was made in the Press, that the price is a dump price. It was also mentioned that the Government is, in a way, selling Western Australia out to foreign interests by purchasing fuel from outside Australia. I could argue this point. We have business negotiations with other nations; we trade with other nations; they buy our wheat, wool, meat, dairy produce, fruit and, in fact, anything we have to export. The fact is that it is essential we should trade with these other countries.

From what has been said, anyone would think the Government was entirely in the hands of one company or one nation in regard to the supply of our fuel. What would be the position in Western Australia if fuel became unavailable to us? For the moment I am not thinking merely of the power required for the generators at Kwinana. I am thinking of our various modes of transport. What would happen to our railway system? You, Mr. Speaker, have had a keen interest in transport for many years. I can recall when you were a member on the back benches you debated the subject of transport for quite a long time. So I ask you: What would happen to our transport system if we could not get available supplies of fuel? What about the private motorist, the truck driver, and the whole transport system? When one considers these questions one realises how much we depend on

fuel oil in one way or another for our mode of transport.

The furnace fuel oil we are discussing is more or less a by-product of the oil refining process. This can be used economically, so why should we not take advantage of supplies that are made available? The Government would be recreant to its duty if it did not take advantage of the situation that has been presented to it. This fuel oil is a by-product of the oil that is refined in Western Australia itself and it is a cheap fuel. I do not know how many men are employed, either directly or indirectly, in the refining of oil, but no doubt there are hundreds employed in this industry.

Mr. Graham: But what is the price?

Mr. NALDER: Look, put it to music! Sing it! What is the price of fuel?

Mr. Graham: What are you ashamed of?

Mr. NALDER: I am not ashamed of anything.

Mr. Graham: Why don't you disclose something of public interest, then?

Mr. NALDER: Ordinary business transactions of this nature are not made public. Let the honourable member go down into the city and inquire how many businessmen will divulge the prices of the products in which they are dealing!

Mr. Graham: You have forgotten your responsibility to the public.

Mr. NALDER: As a Government we have to honour an agreement entered into with this company—an agreement between the State Electricity Commission and the company in question.

Mr. Graham: You have a responsibility to the public. Mark you that!

Mr. NALDER: Yes; and the Government is carrying it out under the provisions of the Act. If the honourable member wishes to alter the position so that conditions of an agreement and the price of the oil can be made known to the public, he can take steps to have the Act amended.

Mr. Graham: What have you to hide?

Mr. NALDER: Who originated this Act? This Act was agreed to by Parliament; that is the situation! I have given sufficient reasons to the House to show that this motion should not be agreed to. If both Houses of Parliament consider it necessary to amend the Act to make it obligatory for the Minister and the Government to divulge this price, it is up to Parliament to do that; but, under the provisions of the Act at present, there is no obligation on the Government or the Minister to divulge the price, and it is not the intention of the Government to do so. Therefore, I oppose the motion.

Mr. Graham: A little dictator!

MR. TONKIN (Melville—Leader of the Opposition) [5.23 p.m.]: The Minister has said the Government has no obligation to disclose the price. At the moment perhaps it has not. But I would remind him that if the House carries the motion the Government will be under such an obligation, and make no mistake about that! That is the purpose of the motion. The Minister is quite entitled to deal with the matters he did deal with because he was more or less replying to the member for Collie. I propose to restrict my remarks to the purpose of the motion, which asks the House to declare that we should be informed of the price of the fuel oil to be supplied to the Government.

I would have shown greater appreciation if the Minister had endeavoured to give some cogent reasons other than the one he did—and he gave only one—that we should not know the price of fuel oil. The only reason the Minister gave was that the Government had entered into an agreement not to disclose the price and it would honour the agreement. It might be germane to remark at this stage that last night I heard the member for Perth indicate that, irrespective of any agreement, Parliament had the right to direct things to be done in abrogation of any agreement entered into by the Government. So it is well that we should keep that point of view in mind.

Mr. Rowberry: He did not know what he was saying.

Mr. TONKIN: I regret very much that when I was speaking on the Address-in-Reply debate I made a statement which, at the time, I believed to be factual, because I was acting upon an assurance which had been given to me from a knowledgeable source that the price of oil was disclosed in other States. Shortly afterwards I made it my business to telephone the Premiers in certain States to find out for myself if this were so. I learned an extremely valuable lesson that I should have learned long ago, I suppose, and that is that if one wants to be certain of what one is saying one should find out for one's self and not rely on information obtained from any other source.

However, I agree that other States do not disclose the price of oil, contrary to what I said during the debate on the Address-in-Reply. This is the first opportunity I have had to explain the situation. I would have explained it much earlier had an opportunity afforded itself, but it did not, and I now apologise to the Minister for having made an incorrect statement in the House. It is surprising to hear a Minister for Agriculture keep on advocating that Government policy should always be, "Buy in the cheapest market." I know many people who want to buy margarine because it is cheaper than butter. Many families want to buy margarine, but the Minister agrees to a policy in order to

protect the dairying industry, and for no other reason than that.

Mr. Nalder: You would support that, too.

Mr. TONKIN: That is nothing to do with the argument I am submitting at the moment.

Mr. Nalder: Of course it is! It is exactly the same reason.

Mr. TONKIN: The Minister's argument is that the Government is buying oil for fuel because it is cheaper than coal.

Mr. Nalder: And Agricultural Ministers in your Government did exactly the same thing.

Mr. TONKIN: The Minister's argument is that the Government is buying oil because it is cheaper than coal, but he will not permit the people to buy margarine because it is cheaper than butter, for the reason that he wants to protect the dairying industry, and I agree absolutely that that is correct policy. However, I do not agree it should be restricted to the dairying industry and should not apply to other industries.

In Australia we could buy much cheaper sugar than that which we use. Why does not the Commonwealth Government agree that the people who want to import cheaper sugar should be permitted to do so and sell it on our local market?

Mr. Nalder: We could also buy cheaper coal if we so desired.

Mr. TONKIN: The simple reason is that the Commonwealth Government realises that the sugar industry is an Australian industry which must be protected, and therefore the question of price is a secondary and not a primary consideration. If those are not sound principles—and without the slightest hesitation I say they are—why should we not apply the same principles to other industries? The Minister for Agriculture administers the Marketing of Potatoes Act. There are producers in Western Australia who want to produce potatoes and sell them to the people, and if they were permitted to do so they could sell them at a price which is much cheaper than the housewife is paying at the moment, but the Minister will not let them.

Mr. Nalder: Only on some occasions, you must admit.

Mr. TONKIN: The Minister will not let them. In this case the cheaper price is not the consideration at all; the consideration is the welfare of the industry. Surely at times something other than the price of the commodity needs to be considered! There are numbers of other factors.

This is no new problem, although it is a new one for Western Australia, but the same problem has exercised the minds of members of Governments in other countries for many years. I have before me a report of Commissioner MacDonald who was appointed a Royal Commissioner to inquire into this very problem in British Columbia

many years ago. Included in the terms of reference was this: To examine the comparative value of coal and petroleum products in their economic uses, and in relation to the public welfare. In directing himself to this problem he had to consider all aspects, such as relative prices, the basis upon which the prices were determined, whether there was any unnecessary cost involved, whether there was any dumping, and whether the costs were loaded. He had to consider all these factors in order to determine the course to be followed.

Before I quote some of the findings of that Royal Commission, I want to refer to the provisions in the State Electricity Commission Act. The Act which set up the commission was introduced and passed by a Labor Government. It was intended that in regard to the commission the Parliament of this State should be fully informed. That was the obvious intention of the legislation; if Parliament desired to have information it should be made available through the Minister.

Let us examine the phraseology of the Act to see if we can come to any other conclusion. I refer to section 20 which states—

The Commission shall furnish the Minister with—

So it is obligatory for the commission to do that. What would be the purpose of making it obligatory upon the commission to furnish the Minister with all information, unless it was intended that the Minister should be in a position to disclose that information if Parliament wanted it. To continue—

(a) all such reports, documents, papers, and information as are required by Parliament pursuant to any Act or pursuant to any order or resolution of either House of Parliament; and

(b) full information on all business of the Commission to enable answers to be made to all questions asked in Parliament concerning the Commission or to enable the Minister to furnish any returns required by Parliament or which he himself requires.

That is all-embracing. It was envisaged that Parliament might by resolution, such as the one we are now discussing, request certain information; and under the provision I have just read the right exists for Parliament to do so and to obtain that information by so resolving.

Further, it was intended that answers to questions asked in regard to the operations of the commission should contain full information to enable the Minister to supply it to members. One of the questions asked in this Parliament was: What is the commission paying for oil? The Minister refused to disclose the information on one ground alone; that is, the Government had entered into an agreement with an oil company not to disclose the price, so the

Government would not do so. In my opinion that is contrary to the intention of Parliament when the Act was passed.

The Act also provides that no contract exceeding \$10,000 may be entered into by the commission without the approval of the Government. So it is perfectly obvious that the agreement in question could not have been entered into without the full knowledge of the Government, and, I would hope, without full consideration by the Government of the various implications involved in the agreement.

I understand the agreement is for a period of five years, with the right of renewal. It is obvious that the company, the other party to the agreement, is the only one refining petroleum in Western Australia. Like all refineries, it has a large residue of oil which it has to dispose of at any price. Just what hope has coal to compete with oil in those circumstances?

This refinery, as with all other refineries, must get rid of the oil supplies, so it sells the oil at any price it can obtain. In order to replace coal, the oil refineries sell oil at below the price of coal. That is what the Government is getting at. It does not matter how efficient the coal-mining industry becomes, how much the coal companies cut their profits, or how much the workers speed up production, the coal companies will not be able to compete with oil, because the refineries will sell oil to the Government at a price below the price of coal. One can see what a hopeless proposition this is, if the Government regards the matter only from the aspect of getting the fuel at the cheapest possible price.

Let us see what happened in British Columbia. All the various aspects of this matter were gone into very fully in order to determine whether the competition from oil was fair or unfair. I quote from volume III, chapter 9, section 2 of the report of the Royal Commission, as follows:—

The third conclusion is that if coal and heavy fuel-oil both are sold at economic delivered prices (by which we mean prices based upon reasonable costs of production, marketing and distribution, with reasonable profit on necessary capitalization included), coal should have a distinct advantage over heavy fuel-oil.

Further on this is stated—

The fourth conclusion is obvious, particularly in the light of the first three mentioned, viz., that coal being produced in British Columbia, while crude-oil (from which heavy fuel-oil is derived) is not, is the logical and economic fuel to be used in this Province wherever it is at all suitable for use. To hold otherwise would be to advocate a policy of economic suicide. We are glad to be able to say that one of the leading, if not the leading firm

of Fuel Testing Engineers on the American Continent, the Commercial Testing & Engineering Company of Chicago, has expressed itself to us in the following terms:—

"We are in thorough sympathy with your efforts to show the basic importance and superiority of coal and desirability of developing a native resource which means so much to your district.

It is good engineering and good economics to so design steam plants as to use the fuels nearest at hand, and we follow that policy wherever possible in our contact with such problems."

On the next page of the report we find the following:—

We quote from a statement made during the hearings by Senator J. W. deB. Farris, K.C., Special Counsel for Canadian Collieries (Dunsmuir), Limited.

"I think it was felt certainly by myself, and those I represent that when this Enquiry started the primary object of this Enquiry was directed to the problem involved in the general provision as to the situation that is known to exist in this Province—where a foreign commodity is invading the fuel in the shape of fuel oil and is threatening the complete destruction of the native industry and means the wiping out of some very prosperous cities and towns in this Province."

Further on—

We quote also from the notes of a verbal presentation made by Imperial Oil, Limited, to The Economic Council in 1934.

"In a verbal presentation it was pointed out (by Imperial Oil, Limited) that in the refining of petroleum there is a large amount of fuel oil that must be marketed and will be marketed regardless of cost."

So there is the crux of the matter. In the refining of oil there is a considerable quantity of fuel oil which must be marketed and will be marketed regardless of cost. What hope has coal in competition with fuel oil?

Let us examine what takes place. There is a growing use of the motor vehicle which consumes refined spirit. Motor vehicles do not run on coal, nor do aeroplanes; but motor vehicles and aeroplanes provide the means of transporting goods, and the cost of transport is a large basic cost in all industries.

If an oil company is in a position to charge what it likes for oil in those parts of the energy market where it has an intrinsic advantage over coal, then it can sell its product regardless of price where

it has no intrinsic advantage over coal, and will have to undersell coal by being lower priced. If it is right and proper that the Government should get cheap oil for the power station, it is right and proper that shipping companies which need oil for ships' bunkers should get it at the same price and so be able to reduce their freights, which would benefit the fruit-grower, the wheatgrower, and the wool-grower, because freight is a very large item in cost.

But the Government is not concerned that the loss that is made by the company in selling it cheap fuel oil for the power station will be made up on the oil for ships' bunkers. It is not at all concerned about that aspect of the matter. Nevertheless, it is a vital factor in the consideration of this question.

These oil companies are not philanthropic institutions; they are there to make profits. If they sustain substantial losses by selling fuel oil to the Government below the price of coal, they have to make up those losses from some other source, so what do they do? They load the losses onto the price of fuel in those parts of the energy market where oil has an intrinsic advantage over coal, and they make it up by what they charge the railways for diesel fuel; by what they charge the motorists; and by what they charge the contractor who has contracted to cart goods long distances by road.

Mr. Norton: The State Shipping Service.

Mr. TONKIN: They also make it up on the shipping companies which need oil for ships' bunkers. Therefore, is it not a pretty shortsighted policy to allow this to go on? That is the very question which received consideration by the British Columbia Royal Commission which made very substantial recommendations that Governments should not fall in with oil companies in this plan.

Already this matter has, on a number of occasions in Australia, been the subject of Tariff Board inquiries. The Tariff Board has drawn attention to this very question and has pointed out the difference in the price of oil for ships' bunkers, which it knows, and the price which the oil companies get for residual oil sold to power stations. The Tariff Board has pointed out the danger in allowing this policy to continue unchecked.

But it is worse than that here because the Government is actually going out of its way to encourage this type of policy. Why should the Government adopt this attitude with regard to coal and oil and have an entirely different outlook with regard to agricultural products where price is not the factor at all but where the welfare of the industry is the prime consideration? The very basis of Tariff Board policy in Australia, which presses very heavily upon the primary producer,

is that price is not the only consideration. The preservation and encouragement of Australian industry must have prior consideration, and we apply that principle very generally.

If farmers were permitted, without interference by the Tariff Board, they could import machinery and a lot of other things they require, and get the benefit of cheaper prices; but Governments say to them that price is not the only factor, and duty is imposed on the items which the farmers could buy more cheaply, and so the cost is raised. In this way they are obliged to buy the Australian commodity, not because price is the factor which should attract, but because the most important consideration is the preservation and development of Australian industry.

We have the town of Collie which has been subjected to one kick after another. The town has been built upon the production of coal, and during the war period, when we would have been in dire straits if we had not been able to get from that town the fuel we so badly needed, it made a tremendous contribution towards the welfare of the State. Collie has been adversely affected by large forestry reservations around it. Although there is particularly good soil at Collie, the town has not had the opportunity of developing in the way other towns would have developed with the same natural advantages. In the interests of forests conservation and water conservation, and in the interests of the public generally, the development of Collie has been more or less limited to the production of coal; and so it seems to me that the town is entitled to special consideration with regard to the commodity which it produces. The Government should have regard for these aspects, and its policy should not be conditioned solely by the getting of the cheapest possible fuel.

The Minister made a statement which I thought might have caused the Minister for Industrial Development to have a seizure. He said we had already lost industries because of our inability to provide cheaper electricity.

Mr. Court: That is true.

Mr. TONKIN: I would like to know what the industries are.

Mr. Court: You know one very important one we could not get because we could not match the Victorian or New South Wales price for fuel.

Mr. TONKIN: I would not accept, without more information, that that was the only reason we did not get that industry.

Mr. Court: It was the only reason. If we could have made power available at .5c per unit, we would have had the industry.

Mr. TONKIN: Did the industry get the power at that price in Victoria?

Mr. Court: Yes, and it is available in New South Wales at that price, too.

Mr. TONKIN: I have heard these stories before. We have been told that we have lost this industry because of so-and-so, and some other industry because of such-and-such. It is so easy to give an answer like that when the real reason is something else.

Mr. Court: Have you not read of the Alcam negotiations in New South Wales of recent times, and why that company is going to New South Wales? That does not affect us, but it did affect another State; and it is getting cheaper power than it could in Tasmania.

Mr. TONKIN: There are many other reasons which would determine whether or not a company is to be established in a certain place.

Mr. Court: I agree, but I am saying that power is a vital consideration for smelting industries.

Mr. TONKIN: I know it is, but I very much doubt whether it is a factual statement to say that we have lost industries because of our inability to supply cheaper power.

Mr. Court: Well it is worse than that, because we are currently not able to complete negotiations for one industry for the reason that we cannot supply power at the right price.

Mr. TONKIN: That is a different question.

Mr. Court: It is nothing of the sort.

Mr. TONKIN: If I may be permitted to continue—

Mr. Court: It is—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. TONKIN: If I am permitted, I will go further and say that unless the Government pulls its socks up in this regard it will be in a far worse mess than it is now with respect to meeting the demand for power; but that is a matter of quantity of power, and not the price.

Mr. Court: This is not a question of quantity.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think the Leader of the Opposition is going too far.

Mr. TONKIN: I am pleased to have got it in.

Mr. Court: Even though it may be incorrect.

The SPEAKER: No-one can say that I am not generous.

Mr. TONKIN: I would offer the invitation to the Minister that I am ready to debate this question with him at the first opportunity he will provide.

Mr. Court: I shall make some comments on this on the Estimates, if they provide the first opportunity, and will demonstrate how the price of power is vital.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. TONKIN: Power being vital is a different question from the price of oil; and what I am trying to emphasise to the Government is that price should not be the only criterion. If it is with regard to oil, so it should be with regard to a lot of other things, including margarine and butter; but I do not for one moment agree that price should ever be the only consideration.

Let us consider for a moment what happened in Victoria when the commission there wanted to enter into a contract to purchase some conveyor belting from Japan at a very much lower price than it was possible for anyone else to supply it. Why did the commission not purchase that belting—it meant a saving of some tens of thousands of dollars—if price is the consideration in the production of power? Surely one would think there would be no hesitation in Victoria about buying this belting from Japan; but it was not bought, and the explanation given was that there was currently before the Tariff Board an application on behalf of the Australian manufacturers of belting for a duty on imported belting.

If Victoria had purchased the Japanese belting, that would have been a very strong argument in support of the application before the Tariff Board; and if the Tariff Board had, in the circumstances, then imposed a duty upon the Japanese belting, that would have adversely affected the establishment costs of Mount Newman and other iron ore companies in the north. So, taking the long-range view and wishing to have available to those companies in the north the cheaper Japanese belting, the Victorian consumers had to pay more for theirs. That was a case where the Government took the long view, and its policy was not determined by the sole criterion of buying in the cheapest market.

So a number of aspects of this question obviously have received scant or no consideration at all by the Government; and I believe that the Parliament ought to ask the Government what it is paying for oil. The members of the public to whom the Minister spoke had no interest in the price of oil. I could tell the Minister of a number of other subjects they have no interest in either, but that does not say that members of Parliament, who are their representatives, should not have any interest in them. If we are given the price of oil, of course there will be a pretty kettle of fish, because then the shipping companies, the bakers who use fuel oil, and many other users will be asking why they pay three, four, or five times as much for the same commodity, and they would have a very legitimate argument. That is the reason for this agreement. It is an arrangement that the price will not be disclosed.

There is no possible competition amongst oil companies, because there is only one refinery in Western Australia. Ordinarily

the Government would be called upon to call tenders for the supply of oil. However, the Government made no attempt to call tenders either in Western Australia or in other States. The Government simply entered into an agreement with the company, which has a large quantity of residual oil that it must get rid of regardless of cost. In other words, it has to dump it. Would we stand dumping with other industries? What would happen to a number of industries which in the initial stages of development struggle to get established if action were not taken to protect them against dumping? It is an age-old method of wiping out a competitor.

The oil companies are not concerned with the continuance of Collie. They leave that sort of thing to the Government. If the Government is not concerned, why should the oil companies worry about that aspect? Therefore they will dump their surplus product irrespective of cost.

I do not know whether you, Mr. Speaker, know the price of oil, but I am sure, Sir, that you would be astonished if you did. I say that advisedly. Anyone who knew the price at which the Government gets this oil and who compared it with the price paid by shipping companies for oil for ships' bunkers would be absolutely astonished. This aspect needs examination.

As the member for Perth said last night, it is within the province of Parliament to use its constitutional powers, irrespective of agreements. Let us use our power here and, by resolution, declare that we want to know the price of oil. It will not be any skin off the nose of the Government. The Government has entered into this agreement not to disclose the price; but it had no right so to contract against the wishes of Parliament.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition has another five minutes.

Mr. TONKIN: The Government had no right to do that, because Parliament is entitled to know all things about the commission that it wishes to know. I think we should indicate to the Government that this is one thing we do want to know so that we can make our own calculations, or have them made for us by competent people, in order to determine whether this policy is consistent with the welfare of the people of the State.

Mr. Rushton: If you were in government, would you disclose this, despite the undertaking of the S.E.C.?

Mr. TONKIN: I suggest the honourable member put that question on the notice paper.

The SPEAKER: That would not be allowed.

Mr. Nalder: The Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Electricity at one stage.

Mr. TONKIN: The member for Dale is showing a very desirable inquisitiveness. I hope it extends far enough to permit him to support a motion to know the price of oil. Of course, that is far more important than the question he asked me. I hope that I can look to him for some support on this motion for that reason, if for no other.

Mr. W. Hegney: You can look in vain.

Mr. TONKIN: Surely Parliament is entitled to make up its mind as to whether or not this is a wise decision of the Government. Unless we are given the information which is sought by this motion, we will not be in a position to make a decision in that regard.

In conclusion I say that Parliament has every right to this information, irrespective of any agreement made by the Government or anybody else. If Parliament determines it wants this information, then the Government is under a direct obligation to supply it and dare not withhold it. I support the motion.

MR. HALL (Albany) [6.5 p.m.]: To my mind, what I have heard this afternoon concerns the very deplorable action of a Minister who is trying to explain himself to the House, but who instead has shown an incompetency to justify himself on the question of the price of oil. Revealing the price should have been very clearly in the Minister's mind, and there is no justification for his hiding behind verbal attempts at evasion.

The member for Collie is defending a town, its people, and an industry. There is no doubt at all about the magnitude of the proposition which has been moved by the member for Collie. If his motion were agreed to, it would be to the benefit of everyone in the State.

Members must realise that some problems must be faced and one of them is that we must have natural fuel. I see no reason at all why the Government should want to destroy an industry. There is no purpose in the Government's attitude in trying to destroy an industry which is stabilised and which has functioned satisfactorily for many years.

Mr. Nalder: The Government is not endeavouring to destroy an industry.

Mr. HALL: Unfortunately, the Minister's comment cannot be substantiated, because members of his own Country Party have very strongly opposed the action. They are sorry to take away this natural industry and to take away part of the fuel resources of Western Australia. In my opinion—and I cannot say this strongly enough—the Government is destroying an industry which it has no right to destroy.

Mr. Nalder: We are guaranteeing its life. Apparently you were not listening when I spoke.

Mr. HALL: The Minister is guaranteeing it at the Government's price. I argue very strongly that an industry already exists which should be supported, but we find the Government is selling out a substantial industry which has natural fuel resources. This cannot be denied, and the wording of the motion is very clear.

The Minister will find, in his own following, enemies—if one might call them that—who resist the action which has been taken. The member for Collie has moved the motion in all sincerity.

Mr. Nalder: I do not doubt that.

Mr. HALL: On the eve of his retirement, he finds he has to fight terribly hard for something he has fought for, for so long. Nobody can dispute the fact that the Minister was labouring deplorably tonight when he spoke on the motion. I would not like his job under any circumstances.

We must face up to the substantiation of an industry and of a town which needs some support. Collie has suffered for a long time. The opportunity exists for us tonight to decide the future of Collie. Members on both sides of the House should support the measure which is before us now, because it is so very serious. In fact, if the motion is not passed it could be devastating to the town of Collie.

The member for Collie has aptly named his motion. I have said before in the House that power houses could be built in other portions of the State and I have advocated, and still continue to advocate, the transportation of coal by pipeline. The motion should be supported.

Members must fully consider the seriousness of the situation. This has been borne out quite recently in the crisis which occurred in the Middle East and which affected shipping through the Suez Canal. There was a chaotic mess in connection with oil, and Britain was going to introduce restrictions on fuel consumption. This only bears out the view that we should very solidly support our own industries.

The member for Collie is to be admired because he has brought a motion before the House which, if passed, will guarantee some solidarity to our own industries and our own towns.

Do we have to import the products of other people's employment? I do not think we do. Indeed we are exporting the products of our employment by the exploration of iron ore and its shipment overseas.

A very solid industry and a very solid town exist at Collie, but the action on the part of the Government will run both the industry and the town to the lowest possible ebb. The town must be considered, and the natural fuel which is available at Collie should be used to a maximum advantage.

I have said all I wish to say on this measure. It would be tragic if we allowed the situation to continue. We should resolve to get down to facts and utilise our natural resources to the full instead of importing the resources of other countries.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) [6.12 p.m.]: It is obvious the oil which is being supplied at the present time is being dumped, despite the fact that the Minister says it is not. When one examines the situation, one appreciates that it is obviously being dumped from the one company; that is, the company which is producing and refining oil in this State. The obvious reason for this, and to substantiate what I have said—and members will appreciate this if they examine it closely—is that doubtless it would be quite expensive for the company concerned to transport it away in the quantity in which it is produced. The alternative of being able to pipe it to the S.E.C. and supply the fuel for the power house would, of course, be an attractive one. Even if the company were losing beyond reasonably economic limits, it would probably still be a better proposition. With the quantity of oil that is produced, it would, even if it were sold at half the cost of production, probably be a better proposition than having to truck the oil away and make special provision to ship it out of the State and sell it either in the Eastern States or overseas.

As a consequence this becomes an obvious dumping process which is being indulged in. The main issue that the Chamber should consider when making a decision on such an aspect is whether we should be the dumping ground, through a Government instrumentality, to the detriment of any natural commodity which is available. In this case the commodity is coal.

The Minister also made reference to the situation in Tasmania. I read the report of the committee that was set up by the Legislative Council of the Tasmanian Parliament. I am of the opinion that a recommendation was made that the thermal station should use coal, but information was not available as to whether the coal supplies in the northern section of Tasmania would be sufficient for the demands of the large thermal station.

Mr. May: That is the position.

The SPEAKER: Before I leave the Chair, I would remind members that a film will be shown this evening after dinner.

Mr. J. Hegney: Is it free?

The SPEAKER: The honourable member can pay me later.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. JAMIESON: I am no expert in thermal power stations, but it seems quite apparent that two essentials are required to produce thermal power. It is first necessary for there to be some form of combustible fuel to provide the heat; and, secondly, in the opposite direction some form of cooling procedure—this would probably take the form of water.

The Minister did say that many tests have been carried out on the underground

water supply at Collie, and that this had not been sufficiently proved as yet. My experience of Collie and the surrounding districts is that the mine workings become too difficult to maintain because of the abundant supply of underground water. Only recently was this manifested when the Hebe deep mine ran into an experimental bore, which resulted in its having to close down because it was quickly flooded.

I do not know what is being used to find water in that area; perhaps the Government is using a water diviner or someone similar. There is no doubt, however, that there is an abundance of water in Collie, and it would be no problem for the Government to arrive at a decision in the matter.

Mr. O'Neil: It must be suitable water.

Mr. JAMIESON: While a small amount of water is used in the boilers, for the most part the water is only necessary for cooling purposes. So far as the foreseeable future is concerned—and I am now thinking in terms of 50 years, because one would have to be clairvoyant to try to see beyond that time—Collie seems to have an unlimited supply of the necessary fuel. The Minister was quoting an instance in Tasmania where apparently it was necessary to build a power station to maintain the supply because the existing system was subject to seasonal variations. Incidentally it seems rather extraordinary to use the expression hydroelectric commission when one is talking about thermal power stations. It is apparent that oil will not be used there extensively in the future, because once the other hydroelectric schemes are put into operation and connected to the grid—there is the Forth River scheme, and the one on the west coast—there will be little need for this fuel even as a stopgap. The only available fuel the commission could lay its hands on was a supply of oil to fire the furnaces of the thermal power stations.

As I said earlier, the Legislative Council committee that inquired into this matter strongly recommended the use of coal. It did have misgivings and felt there was insufficient information to say that coal would be available in sufficient quantities, and because of the urgency of the matter a decision had to be made. Accordingly the decision was made in favour of oil. That is the only reason that such a decision was made.

I feel there is a genuine obligation on the Government to maintain its interest in the local commodity—and I refer to Collie coal—bearing in mind that in the later stages of the development of Western Australia supplies of other fuels will not be as cheap or as readily available. Once we have used oil for our thermal power stations, and have renewed the contracts, to change the system would con-

stitute a tremendous financial undertaking, and we will just continue to pay for the oil rather than make a change. In the circumstances it is doubtful whether the Government's policy is a good one.

Mr. Nalder: That situation is not likely to arise.

Mr. JAMIESON: We cannot tell. We cannot be clairvoyant and see far into the future; we can deal only with what is happening at the moment. We know that in the Collie field there is an abundant supply of coal of a reasonable B.T.U. standard which is likely to last for a considerable number of years.

Apart from this, we must also show some appreciation of, and sympathy towards, decentralisation. The Government gives a great deal of lip service to the principle of decentralisation, but when it comes to its practical application the Government seems to be more in favour of centralisation. Because of the increasingly efficient mechanical methods being used, there is no doubt that coal is being produced more cheaply. I think the member for Collie interjected that it was possible to produce coal at Collie more cheaply than anywhere else in Australia. That is surely to the credit of Collie; and it deserves some consideration from the Government. There is a need for it to be kept going.

It seems to be the Government's attitude to provide heavy power stations in more centralised positions, rather than to decentralise them. That is possibly a very natural attitude for the Government's advisers to adopt, because they would want to make the supply of power available to the main consumers as cheaply as possible. This, however, is only a matter of policy; it does not naturally follow that it is desirable or in the best interests of the State.

We should try to maintain and extend the area of Collie, and to do this we must give it some consideration, because its main product is a thermal fuel. If and when other uses for this fuel become available, then perhaps some tailing off may be to the advantage of the consumers of electricity. On the other hand this may not be so.

A coalmine is not like a goldfield which leaves a ghost town behind when the gold peters out. The supply of coal from Collie has not ceased. Nobody knows the exact amount that is available, but there is no doubt there are huge deposits of coal in the area; and this is evident from the geological information already gleaned by the Government in the various surveys and tests that have been made.

So it is rather a matter of fundamental policy that we should maintain our interest in the local industry; that we should try to boost it wherever possible, and disregard the fact that there is a product available at a dump price.

Various speakers have indicated that we would not tolerate such a situation in other industries; that we would be prepared to protect an industry which was providing work and a decentralised build-up for the community. There is no doubt that furnace oil is certainly not doing as much for the State as is the coal industry at Collie. There is a great deal to be said for developing Collie still further. The policy of the Government appears to be to obtain cheap dump fuel oil for the purpose of generating electricity. We see from the accounts of the State Electricity Commission that considerable profits are being made by that instrumentality; and these profits will no doubt continue to increase in proportion to the vast number of consumers in the metropolitan area, and by the provision of multi-unit homes where most of the appliances used are electrical, because they are convenient and clean.

There would be 100 times more power used in the various areas of flat development than would be used by families living on quarter-acre blocks. So it would appear that with the increasing amount of power being distributed by the number of surplus lines which the State Electricity Commission has, the supply of electricity should become cheaper, and the Government should be able to afford to use coal from Collie to provide thermal power.

I support the honourable member's motion. I am sure his genuine interest in this matter is shared by others. Some members are prepared to be vocal on this matter while others are not. The member for Albany indicated that the Country Party in this State showed considerable interest a short while ago; though the interest of the members of that party appears to have waned, if the attitude of members here is any indication.

If the protection afforded to some of their primary products was at all in danger of being taken away, we would hear these same Country Party members hollering from the heights of Parliament House and asking members to protect their particular line of production.

Accordingly I see no reason why Parliament should not express concern and indicate that a first priority be given to the production of Collie coal for use in thermal power; particularly when we know that by comparison this coal is produced cheaper than it is in other coal-producing centres.

MR. DAVIES (Victoria Park) [7.45 p.m.]: It is somewhat ridiculous that we are debating this question because we already know—or at least the Leader of the Opposition already knows—the price that is being paid for oil. However, he is keeping it to himself.

Mr. Runciman: Why doesn't he tell the public this?

Mr. DAVIES: I would point out to the honourable member that there is honour on this side of the House; and if he will let me finish, I am about to say that the Leader of the Opposition is a man of honour and will not betray the trust given him.

Mr. O'Neill: You expect the Government to do that.

Mr. DAVIES: There is no trust as far as the Government is concerned. I think we have touched the Government on a sensitive nerve, because tonight the Minister displayed a temperament which we rarely see him display in the House. He raised his voice, and I am sure his blood pressure went up a few points. I am sure he realised, as we did, that he did not put forward a reasonable argument. We asked that the price of oil be divulged in accordance with the requirements of the State Electricity Commission Act.

Mr. Nalder: We are in a similar position to your description of the position of the Leader of the Opposition. We also have a situation where we have to honour an undertaking.

Mr. DAVIES: I do not think the Government can enter into any kind of an undertaking—

Mr. Nalder: It is quite legal.

Mr. DAVIES: Why is it a secret? Is there something dishonest about it? Is there some kind of trading going on which the Government does not want to disclose? Is there a *quid pro quo*? Where is the pay-off? What is the reason?

Mr. O'Neill: Do you know that the House could carry a motion requesting the Leader of the Opposition to make known the information he possesses?

Mr. DAVIES: If the House demanded the information, then under those circumstances the Leader of the Opposition would be quite entitled to disclose such information as he has. I invite the Minister for Housing—

Mr. O'Neill: I do not suggest that the House would move such a motion.

Mr. DAVIES:—to move such a motion. If this were done our difficulties would be over. The point I was trying to make is that the argument advanced by the Minister for Electricity, in answering the motion moved by the member for Collie, left plenty to be desired as far as I am concerned. I think he skirted around every facet of electricity supply and every major function of the commission; but he did not tell us the actual price of oil, which is the information we require.

You, Mr. Speaker, were generous enough to allow him to do that just as you were generous enough to allow the member for Collie to introduce extraneous matters. The only thing the Minister did not say—and I thought he would have said this—was that oil is a local product.

Whilst we acknowledge that, I am sure the House will agree with me there are some strange manipulations in regard to the local product of oil, particularly when one considers it is being shipped from Barrow Island to Singapore to be refined. Just what the economics of that are I have not been able to fathom. The matter was brought up in the Federal Parliament and the information that appeared in the Press reports left me as vague as I was before I read them as to why the oil was shipped to the Far East for refinement. This, as I see it, is the only possible excuse the Minister did not bring forward as justification for not disclosing the price of oil.

He drew attention to the fact that the State Electricity Commission Act, as it was brought before this Parliament in 1945, was based predominantly on the then Act of Victoria. This is not denied. If the Minister reads the debates of 1945—doubtless he as well as his secretaries and advisers, have done so—he will find that this was never denied at the time. There is no doubt that the Labor Government of the day felt it was a good and sufficient Act. This is the type of plagiarism that is often indulged in as far as this Government is concerned. The members of the Opposition in 1945 applauded the action of the Labor Government in basing legislation on the Victorian Act as it was at that time.

In looking through the debates in this Chamber and in another place, both during the second reading and the Committee stages, I could not see that any clause was challenged in any way. Similarly, I cannot find where section 58 was ever challenged in any way. I do not think there would be any need to challenge sections 20 and 58, because they speak for themselves; and I am certain any person with a reasonable education would be able to understand that they were included in the Act for the specific purpose of Parliament's being advised in regard to any information which may be required concerning the manufacture of electricity in this State, and the workings of the State Electricity Commission.

The Minister said that under section 58—dealing with the annual report of the commission—the Minister shall make certain information available to the public; but when he came to section 20—which is contained in the motion—he said the commission was making the information available to the Minister. He suggested that the section was in the Act so that the commission would advise the Minister, and it stopped there. What would it advise the Minister for? Would it be for the Minister's own administrative action? Would it be for his own self satisfaction? Or would it be that he was required to advise Parliament?

Mr. O'Neill: There is a proviso that information can be made available for the

Minister's own personal satisfaction. The honourable member should look at the last four words.

Mr. DAVIES: When I am speaking I am always delighted with the assistance I get from the other side of the House. I must make myself patently clear for certain members to be able to anticipate what I am coming to, as has happened on several occasions tonight.

If members read section 20 of the Act, which is included in the motion on the notice paper, they will find that it is practically as it appeared in the Victorian Act. I followed it through as the Minister read the Victorian Act, but for the life of me I cannot see how the Minister placed on it the interpretation which he did. It states that the commission shall furnish the Minister with full information, etc.; but if it is read, leaving out the verbiage with which so many Acts are cluttered up, these are the important points: The Commission shall furnish the Minister with full information to enable all questions to be answered in Parliament. Therefore the commission shall furnish the Minister with any information required to answer questions asked; but the Minister has the information and will not give it to us. It is not the commission that will not make the information available; it is the Government; and because the Minister is the Minister for Electricity he, therefore, must take the blame.

Mr. Nalder: We are acting under a legal interpretation of the Act.

Mr. Jamieson: From where did you get your legal interpretation?

Mr. Nalder: The Crown Law Department.

Mr. DAVIES: I think you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that one can get any legal interpretation one likes.

Mr. O'Neil: What Act obliges any Minister to answer any question?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. DAVIES: I will now return to what I consider to be the essence of the debate. I refer to section 20 of the Act. Leaving out paragraph (a) which deals with one section of information, and getting down to the point about which we are arguing tonight, the section says—

The Commission shall furnish the Minister with—

- (b) full information on all business of the Commission to enable answers to be made to all questions asked in Parliament.

The Minister, as I have said, is the Minister for Electricity; and the Minister is named in this section of the Act because he is the member of Parliament in charge of the Act. He is the responsible member of the Government, and the Act says that the information shall be made available

to the Minister. The Act does not say that information will be made available to a private member of Parliament, or to the Minister for Lands, or to the Premier; it says, "The Minister" and there is an interpretation of "Minister" in our Statute. So for the life of me I cannot see how the Minister for Electricity, the Minister for Housing, or the Government's legal advisers were able to arrive at the interpretation that has been given.

It looks to me as though the cat is now out of the bag. The Government has gone to Crown Law and asked, "Under section 20, do we have to give Parliament the answers to questions?" Obviously the advice given was, "No." Perhaps it might be worth while if someone took the matter to court, just as we had to do in connection with the electoral boundaries legislation and other issues in order to make the Government obey the law. The Government then said that the legal advice it received suited it. That is not good enough. Therefore I think it might be worth considering whether someone should take the Government to court over this matter so we could see what kind of judgment was given on the legal advice submitted to the Government.

I say this is just a subterfuge on the part of the Government. Opposition members are elected to this place by the people to do their best to run the State; but what do we find? We find that information which is required by some sections of the State is not available. It is not good enough for Ministers to say that nobody wants this information. If nobody wanted this information, we would not be debating this question in the House. This information is vital to a large section of the public and that section of the public is entitled to have it.

I do not think a contract of this nature—that must involve hundreds of thousands of dollars—should be made in secret, particularly when the future of one of our native minerals—coal—could be jeopardised. Unfortunately I do not remember the figures quoted by the Minister but he seemed to take great pride in the fact that the Government was taking an increasingly large percentage of the production of the Collie coalfields. As I understand the position, production is falling, and there are no other markets for this coal.

Mr. Nalder: That is not right. The figure has gone up and up from 600,000 tons in 1950 to over 1,000,000 tons last year.

Mr. DAVIES: I prefaced my remarks by saying that I was not able to absorb all of the figures, but I imagined from my reading that production was falling at the Collie coalfield. As the Minister has pointed out, this is not so, and the Government is taking an increasingly large percentage of the type of coal which is now

made available. I would point out that a lot of this coal is now more readily available because of the new methods of mining.

I am sure the Minister will remember that when the new contracts were being written, my colleague, the member for Beeloo, and myself, were nearly put in gaol over the application of a black ban on the Collie field. We had to appear before the Industrial Arbitration Court. It was in that moment of glory we were charged with applying a black ban. However, it did have the effect of finishing the strike within 48 hours of the black ban being applied.

As a result of the action taken at that time, there were vastly changed methods of winning coal; and this coal is now, in an increasingly large percentage, being made available by open-cut mining methods. This does not require the same amount of labour as does the deep mining; but for my part I think that is good. I hate to think of men working in the bowels of the earth to win coal, gold, copper, or any other mineral. It is far from being a pleasant job.

The fact that there is increased production does not mean there is increased activity on the Collie field. The member for Collie has told us there has been a wastage, or a drift away, from the town of Collie. The power station seems to be the only new industry, and that does not require a great number of staff, as most processes are automated. So the power station does not provide employment for a large number of people. Also, the new methods used on the coalfield do not require a large number of employees, so Collie is falling away. That justifies the remarks of the member for Collie and does nothing to back up the Minister for Electricity.

Mr. Nalder: Collie is not falling away. It has security for a period of over 30 years.

Mr. DAVIES: I cannot understand any Government being content to see a town remain stagnant and not expand.

Mr. Nalder: You were saying that the town was being sacrificed and it was falling away.

Mr. DAVIES: It certainly is falling away gradually, and I think it will continue to fall away.

Mr. Nalder: It will if people listen to your type of speech.

Mr. DAVIES: There is no additional employment for people in Collie, and the new methods of mining mean that no extra labour will be required on the coalfields. If the orders for coal cannot be expanded so that there is increased production, it is only natural that unless some other industry is established there, the town will gradually die. I am not satisfied to see it remain steady for the next 30 years; I want to see it expand. I want to know why our native coal cannot be used. The

Minister said we can buy coal cheaper elsewhere, and this may be so.

Mr. Hawke: It won't be cheaper by the time it is brought to Western Australia.

Mr. DAVIES: I wondered about that. I thought it was a pretty wild remark to say that coal could be procured cheaper elsewhere; although I am aware that increasing quantities of New South Wales coal are being shipped to Japan.

Mr. Nalder: I think you misinterpreted something I said. I do not think I said we could get coal cheaper to use in Western Australia.

Mr. DAVIES: I understood that what I said was correct, but if I misinterpreted the Minister I apologise.

Mr. Hawke: You didn't misinterpret him.

Mr. DAVIES: I thought it was in an interjection which the Minister made earlier when the Leader of the Opposition was speaking. The Leader of the Opposition said that sugar, farm machinery, dairy products and other products would be cheaper but for Government control.

Mr. Nalder: I said we could get cheaper coal if we had more open-cut coal and less deep-mined coal.

Mr. Hawke: No, you didn't say that, Mr. Minister.

Mr. DAVIES: I have a good backstop here who has been listening to the debate. We will not argue that any further. At this stage no-one is able to make a comparison between the relative value of coal and the relative value of oil as a fuel. Until we are given some hint of the price of oil, there is nothing which can be done.

I think the Government owes it to the people of the State, and the people of Collie, to let them know what the position is. The Minister said that the State Electricity Commission was to be commended for keeping down the cost of electricity to consumers. I agree with this, but I think we would have had reason to complain if the cost had risen, in view of the great technological changes which have taken place over the years and the apparently relatively cheap manner in which goods can be manufactured and the price for which they can be sold.

I would remind the Minister that although the charge has been reduced slightly during the past five years, a service charge of 10s. has been imposed. Incidentally, I did not check to see if there was any increase at the time of the change-over to decimal currency.

Mr. Nalder: There was a slight downward trend.

Mr. DAVIES: The Government is to be congratulated on this.

Mr. Rushton: Surely it is a credit to the S.E.C.

Mr. DAVIES: The honourable member must listen. I have already said it is to

the credit of the State Electricity Commission that it is able to keep the price of electricity down. I will repeat it again for the member for Dale. The fact remains that a service charge of 10s. was applied to every consumer. I think it was admitted during previous sessions of Parliament that this meant an overall increase for the small consumer of electricity. Of course, the large consumer soon absorbed the 10s. increase because of the lower charge per unit of electricity. We must keep this in mind when considering the price of electricity.

When the service charge was brought in it was stated that a service charge was applied in the other States. If my memory serves me correctly I made inquiries and neither New South Wales nor Queensland applied a service charge. It might have been introduced since, but it did not apply when I made inquiries. Here again, the State Electricity Commission will be the winner. If a person is absent from his home for three months and does not use one unit of electricity, he still has to pay the minimum charge for current and the service charge of 10s. There is no saving to the consumer as there was under the old scheme. I must admit it would be on only rare occasions that a person would be away from home for three months.

To get back to the motion, the member for Collie has asked that we be told the price which the Government is paying for fuel oil. The Government has given no reason, and it is not going to give a reason. The Minister dealt with a lot of aspects of electricity, as I have said, but did not give us any reason why he would not tell us the price.

Mr. Nalder: The Leader of the Opposition did admit that I gave one reason.

Mr. DAVIES: I am sorry but I must have missed that reason. I could not see any real, sane reason advanced by the Minister for the Government's attitude on this occasion. I still say its actions are suspect. The actions must be suspect if on a matter such as this the Government is not prepared to divulge, either in confidence or in public, just what it is paying. It should state its reasons singly or collectively. We can only say there is something fishy going on here, and that is how it looks to me.

I suggest that if the Government has had Crown law advice that section 20 of the Act does not require the Minister to make the price available, it might be quite reasonable for some person to take the Government to court to see what the outcome would be. We are here as watchdogs of the public of Western Australia. On three occasions in 1963, 1964 and 1965, when we debated the need for an ombudsman, or parliamentary commissioner, the Minister for Industrial Development told us there was no need for a parliamentary ombudsman; that if any information was

required it could be obtained in this House. We have been told there are 80 members of Parliament in Western Australia, and that there are the Federal Parliament, the local government, the Press, radio, and television, and that the people concerned with all those organisations could ask for information and demand it. That is what we are doing. The Press, radio, television, members of local government, and members of Parliament—including a man who has been endorsed on behalf of the Liberal Party for the seat of Collie—all want to know.

Mr. Dunn: Which oil company are you interested in?

Mr. Jamieson: Perhaps he still has his Ampol shares.

Mr. DAVIES: I have never had any Ampol shares. On the three occasions I have spoken of, we were told by the Minister for Industrial Development—the member for Nedlands—that there was nothing to fear because if the public, the Press, radio, members of local government, or members of Parliament, wanted any information they had only to ask for it here. He said we did not need an ombudsman to show us the way. On this occasion when wide interest has been shown by the Press, radio, television, local government, and members of Parliament, and we all want to know the price of oil, the Minister said the Crown Law Department advised him he did not have to tell it and he was not going to tell it.

MR. MAY (Collie) [8.11 p.m.]: In replying to the debate which has taken place on this motion, I want to express my appreciation to those members who have supported it. Also, I appreciate the fact that the Minister, at the start of his speech, agreed that he and I should keep this discussion on a friendly basis.

The Minister, like myself, came into the house in 1947, and I have never heard him make such wild statements as he has made in connection with this motion.

Mr. Hall: He was battling, all right.

Mr. MAY: The Minister seemed to get completely upset. He gave me, and some others, the impression that he did not know anything about the subject he had been called upon to discuss. Before I go any further I think I should read the motion. I also want to advise the Minister that I have a cold and I will not be able to hear a single word he might say to me. The first part of the motion reads as follows:—

Having regard to the wording of section 20 of the State Electricity Commission Act, No. 60 of 1945, wherein it is set out—

(1) The Commission shall furnish the Minister with—

(a) all such reports, documents, papers and in-

formation as are required by Parliament, pursuant to any Act or pursuant to any order or resolution of either House of Parliament, and

- (b) full information on all business of the Commission to enable answers to be made to all questions asked in Parliament concerning the Commission or to enable the Minister to furnish any returns required by Parliament or which he himself requires.

The Minister, when speaking, scouted around to find an excuse not to abide by the section in the Act. I thought he made a very bad job of it.

Mr. Nalder: I thought you said you could not hear me.

Mr. MAY: The purport of the motion before the House is for members of Parliament to be informed of the operations of the State Electricity Commission, because people should know what is going on. It is the people's money which the State Electricity Commission is spending.

The Minister also went so far as to quote Victoria in an endeavour to advance another reason why the price of oil should not be disclosed. I am not concerned with Victoria; I am concerned with Western Australia and I will stick to that too.

As the price of coal has been disclosed, is there any reason why the price for fuel oil should not also be disclosed? How can anybody make a comparison of the economics of using the two fuels unless he knows what the Government is paying for fuel oil? For the life of me, I cannot understand why the Minister will not disclose what the Government is paying for oil. Along with other members, and a good number of outside people, I think the Minister should tell us the price the Government is paying.

The Minister went on to talk about the Muja power house and the number of men employed there. Irrespective of whether this Government had come to power or not, the Muja power house was on the drawing board, and was waiting to be built, when the present Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Works and in charge of the State Electricity Commission. Therefore I cannot see why the Government should take refuge behind the fact that this big power house has been established at Muja. As a matter of fact, the number of men employed there is somewhere in the vicinity of 250, and many of them have been seconded from other power houses whose output is being reduced. So much for the argument that all the men who have been discharged from the mines have been taken on for work at the power house at Muja.

The Minister also made great play regarding the increased production of coal. I agree with him in that regard, but the Minister did not explain how this increased production was being brought about. Since December, 1960, which is only seven years ago, no fewer than 1,000 employees have been discharged from the coalmining industry by one means or another. In 1960 there were 1,700 employees in the coalmining industry, and today there are only 700. So, over a period of only seven years, 1,000 men have been lost to the industry.

It may be difficult for members to understand how, having lost 1,000 men from the industry, production of coal has increased. Let us take the position of private coal orders, for a start. At the time of which I am speaking, private orders for coal in this State were 200,000 tons a year, and today that figure has been reduced to 20,000 tons. Had it not been for the open-cut method of mining, and the mechanisation of coal production, the companies would not be in the race today to supply their coal to the S.E.C., the railways, or anybody else at the present price, or a price at which the companies could undercut the price of fuel oil.

I agree with the Minister when he says that coal production is now over 1,000,000 tons per annum. The reason for this is that they do not have to go below to mine coal; the coal is conveyed from the open cut by conveyor belts. It is more or less surface coal, or coal within reach of the surface. At the moment there are two deep mines working in Collie, but one of them is just about played out. When the other deep mine becomes unworkable, all that will be left will be open-cut coal; and the reason private orders for coal have been reduced over the last few years is the terrible stuff that is supplied from the open cuts. Rocks and everything else are included with the coal and, as a result, Collie has lost private orders for nearly 200,000 tons a year.

The sort of stuff that is called open-cut coal suits the S.E.C., and that is the reason it is supplied so cheaply. Production has been increased—but this is a result of mechanisation—even though only 700 men are employed in the industry.

I was glad to hear the Minister say tonight—and I hope it is well and truly recorded in *Hansard*—that the Muja power house, for years to come, will be the base power house for this State. I do not know how that statement will be borne out, because I am sure as soon as Kwinana comes into operation, using oil fuel, that station will have an output greater than Muja. I am tipping that when Kwinana is finished it will become the base power house for the State and the power houses at South Fremantle, Perth, Bunbury, and Collie—I am not talking about the Muja power house—will go out of existence because they will have served their useful

lives. We know what will happen then. There will be an increase in the use of oil fuel and a gradual decrease in open-cut coal.

The Minister made some reference to Tasmania, and it is obvious why that State has had to change over to the use of oil fuel for its power houses. Everybody knows—or should know—that in Tasmania the electricity commission has been relying on hydroelectric power and, because of the dry weather and drought, the State is running short of water. An investigation was made into coal supplies in Tasmania but they are insufficient for the requirements of the electricity authority there. As a consequence, oil fuel will be used and, under the circumstances, that is a justifiable action.

However, in regard to Western Australia, it is difficult to understand why there is any need to use oil fuel, because we have millions of tons of coal at Collie which could be used as fuel. The Minister referred to the fact that Muja will be taking supplies from Collie for the next 30 years. I would go so far as to say that if the State Electricity Commission continued to use coal, there will be sufficient supplies for the next 100 years.

The Minister also referred to the water position at Muja. I want to take his mind back to 1964 when we had floods in Collie. Water was flowing over the tops of the houses; and it is only a question of banking up that water to ensure there will be plenty of water for the power house. That scotches that argument.

Mr. Nalder: How long is it since that situation prevailed?

Mr. MAY: The Minister then referred to nuclear power and said that so far this has not proved successful. I was in England some two years ago and although power is being produced by this method, and that power is being fed into the grid, it will be a long time before nuclear power can take its place with either oil or coal as a means of producing power in this State.

The Minister also tried to make a comparison between the towns on the goldfields and Collie. He said that Collie is like towns on the goldfields; when the mines cut out the towns shut up. If the Minister does not know—and he should know—I would tell him that goldfields towns rely on the gold that is produced in those districts, and when the gold cuts out the towns go out of existence. However, it will be many years before the coal at Collie cuts out, and that is the difference between that town and the goldfields towns. The Minister made no attempt to explain that to the House. He was grasping at any straw to back up his argument.

Mr. Dunn: What happened at Collie was that the cheap coal cut out.

Mr. MAY: Somebody interjected but I could not hear him. On the 7th July this year an article appeared in the *Australian Financial Review* as follows:—

The pricing policies of the oil refineries have been examined in several Tariff Board hearings and the Tariff Board has reported (to quote from its 1965 report) that "confidential information submitted by the marketing companies shows that the actual prices for refined products have been reduced more than indicated by the changes in list prices. It was stated that marketing companies have been prepared to allow large discounts off list prices to defend their market position or to secure large contracts for which distribution costs are low. Discounting is most pronounced in furnace fuel market . . ."

That is the nigger in the woodpile so far as this State is concerned.

I have already admitted that the Minister's statement about increased production is perfectly true, but the methods of production at present are quite different from those used when there were 1,700 men working in the industry. The increased production of coal has been brought about solely by the use of open cuts, and that is why 1,000,000 tons of coal are now being produced annually. However, that increased production has not created additional employment, because it has been brought about as a result of mechanisation. Had the deep mines continued to operate, production would not have been nearly as great as it is today.

There are other areas suitable for open-cut mining but they still have to be tested. I can remember, during the regime of the Hawke Government, we were trying to get coal from anywhere at all. The Stockton open cut was under discussion, and I remember telling the member for Merredin-Yilgarn, who was the Minister for Mines at the time, that there was three feet of slate at the Stockton open cut and it was being included with the coal the company was supplying—I have told that story in this House before—and for that coal and slate the companies were getting £3 12s. a ton. It was absolutely useless to the railways because the engine drivers could not raise any steam on their engines. That ruined the private orders for coal.

I think we should look at all angles of this matter, because from time to time Ministers have said that everything at Collie is rosy. But they do not consider the people who have been forced to leave the town—people who have lost their jobs and, as a consequence, have lost their homes, their motorcars, washing machines, and everything else. Overnight they were stripped of their wages and they lost everything.

I could not think of anything worse. I admit that some men who lost their jobs in the industry were employed by the Forests Department, but by and large those men who were retrenched had to leave Collie and make a fresh start elsewhere, with the result that they had to forgo their homes and give up all the household possessions which they had on hire purchase.

Mr. Burt: What do you think happened at Big Bell, Cue, Youanmi, and all the other big mining towns?

Mr. MAY: Speak up! In 1960 the percentage of open-cut coal mined was 30 per cent. of the total, and deep-mined coal represented 70 per cent. Everyone knows, or should know, that deep-mined coal is much superior to open-cut coal. Today the position is reversed; the figures are 70 per cent. open-cut coal, and I think deep-mined coal is down to about 30 per cent. That will give members an idea of how the position has deteriorated in Collie.

In the coalmining industry the miners have to retire at 60. The Government is now adopting a policy that when the men retire or leave the industry they are not replaced; the idea being, presumably, to reduce the number of men employed. This system, of course, has been made possible by the ever-increasing production of open-cut coal; and I do not know how long the Government intends to continue with its policy. No effort is being made to replace the men who retire from the industry, and quite a large number of men retire each year. I do not know what the final outcome will be.

The employees at the Muja power house do not, by any means, represent the number of men that have left the coalmining industry. I make the comment that the South Fremantle, Bunbury, East Perth, and Collie power houses will be downgraded as a result of the increase in the use of fuel oil because, automatically, the use of coal will decrease. Although the Minister declared that when he questioned 40 people on whether they were interested in the price the Government was paying for fuel oil, not one of them showed any interest, I can assure him there are many people in this State who are interested in the price the Government is paying for fuel oil, and, what is more, would like to know why the Government is not using coal.

Evidence of this can be seen in the various announcements and articles that are contributed to the Press on this question. Such articles have appeared weekly and almost daily in some instances. All those people have shown an interest in the price the Government is paying for fuel oil. The assumption is that the price for the oil has been reduced below cost so that oil will ultimately and completely replace coal as a fuel. However, the oil company concerned, in order to make up

the loss it is incurring by supplying fuel oil below cost, is increasing the prices of other oils it is selling.

We know the price shipping companies are paying for their fuel oil, so I do not know why the Government is afraid to disclose the price it is paying for fuel oil for power houses. If the Government disclosed the price it would stop all the arguments that one hears in many parts of the State, because the Government is importing foreign fuel oil into Western Australia. I cannot think of any more disloyal act than that on the part of a Government in charge of the administration of this State, no matter to which party it belongs. To think that the Government is sending money out of the State to purchase foreign oil when there are ample supplies of coal within our State borders which can be used for fuel is incomprehensible and unforgivable.

It hurts me to see Japanese motorcars travelling along our roads, despite the fact that there are some Japanese cars in the Parliament House parking area at the present moment. It hurts me to see Japanese-made cars in this State after what we went through during the world war. I am not one who will crawl on his belly to the Japanese to give them a few pounds in trade, because I venture to say—

The SPEAKER: I think you are a bit wide of the subject matter of your motion now.

Mr. MAY: I agree, Mr. Speaker, but I think we should look after our own State first. If the Japanese want to buy our iron ore let them do so, but I sincerely hope it will not be returned in the shape of missiles or war weapons. Apart from that, I firmly believe the motion is justified.

I know that members of the Country Party have been trying to obtain from the Government information in regard to what it is paying for fuel oil. If they have been successful in their efforts they certainly have not disclosed the price. I think we should get some co-operation from the Country Party on this matter, but I know that when the motion is put to the vote it will probably be defeated. That will not be because the motion is not justified, but because the Government has sufficient numbers in the House to defeat it. We all know the result of any motion that is brought before this House if the Government is not in favour of it, because the Government has the numbers with which to defeat it. I feel sure the same will happen this evening when this motion is put to the vote.

Nevertheless I am perfectly satisfied that the matter has been fully aired in this House. The Government can continue to go on its sweet way and use fuel oil instead of coal, but there will come a day of reckoning. This is a matter that will embarrass the Government and its supporters at the next election, and rightly so. I will certainly do everything I can in

the next few months to ensure that on this particular question the Government will be embarrassed. I do not know how members on the Government side can remain in their seats when they realise what is going on in Collie and the numbers of men that are leaving the industry without their places being taken by others, which means that the total number of men employed is gradually being whittled away.

At present in Collie there is a big argument over housing. Of course, this is part and parcel of the set-up that is encouraged by the Government. In 1960 many houses became vacant as a result of retrenchment in the coalmining industry. When I brought this matter before the House, the Minister for Industrial Development, on several occasions, stated that we did not have any empty houses in Collie, because they had been occupied by employees of the Muja power house. That statement was entirely untrue. Those houses were filled mostly by age pensioners who were sent to Collie purely for the purpose of occupying the vacant houses so the Government would not be subjected to criticism on the matter.

I commend the motion to the House and I hope members will give it favourable consideration. As long as I am a member of this Assembly I will put forward the claims of the Collie miners, who always come to the rescue of the State when it is confronted with an emergency, or with a serious situation. Once again I refer to the big bush fires that occurred at Mayanup a few years ago.

The SPEAKER: The honourable member must keep to the motion.

Mr. MAY: This concerns the Collie miners, and in fairness to the community I think we must repeat the story of these happenings. Weekend after weekend the Collie miners spent all their spare time in the Mayanup district digging post holes and re-erecting on various properties fences that had been burnt down by the fire. Members cannot tell me that the Collie miners have not been loyal to the State when they have been called upon in times of need.

The Government should be severely criticised for its use of fuel oil instead of coal. Once again I repeat that by using foreign oil the Government is being completely disloyal, because it is sending money out of the State when coal that is available within the State could be used as fuel.

The SPEAKER: The question is—

That the motion be agreed to.

All those in favour say, "aye," and the contrary, "no." The ayes have it.

Mr. May: Divide!

The SPEAKER: What I should do is to give the vote to the ayes, but as I think that both the member for Collie and I got a little confused, I will put the question again.

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

Ayes—16

Mr. Bickerton
Mr. Brady
Mr. Davies
Mr. Evans
Mr. Hall
Mr. Hawke
Mr. W. Hegney
Mr. Jamieson

Mr. Kelly
Mr. Norton
Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Rowberry
Mr. Sewell
Mr. Toms
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. May

(Teller)

Noes—23

Mr. Bovell
Mr. Burt
Mr. Court
Mr. Craig
Mr. Crommelin
Mr. Dunn
Mr. Durack
Mr. Elliott
Mr. Gayfer
Mr. Grayden
Mr. Guthrie
Dr. Henn

Mr. McPharlin
Mr. W. A. Manning
Mr. Marshall
Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Nalder
Mr. Nimmo
Mr. O'Neill
Mr. Runciman
Mr. Rushton
Mr. Young
Mr. I. W. Manning

(Teller)

Pairs

Ayes

Mr. Curran
Mr. Moir
Mr. Graham
Mr. Fletcher
Mr. J. Hegney

Noes

Mr. Brand
Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. Lewis
Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Williams

Question thus negatived.

Motion defeated.

House adjourned at 8.47 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 14th September, 1967

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. L. C. Diver) took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (3): ON NOTICE

MANJIMUP DAM

Pumping Station and Water Mains

1. The Hon. V. J. FERRY asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) With regard to the Manjimup dam recently completed near the Seven Day Road, for what period have the following works been programmed:—

(a) pumping station at the dam site; and

(b) laying of water mains from the pumping station to the service tanks at Manjimup township?

(2) If the works for the pumping station and water mains have been programmed, when will tenders be called for these works?