

# Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 9th November, 1978

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

## MINING BILL

### *Rejection: Petition*

**MR SKIDMORE** (Swan) [2.18 p.m.]: I have here from 795 residents of Western Australia a petition which I will summarise. They say that history shows that big companies do not find mines. They do not like risking money in searches. Traditionally the prospector knocks on the door with his find. They state that under the Bill the companies will take up all the likely areas and farm them out—as in the oil industry.

They also say the Government has been unfair, dishonest, and stupid; that the Premier condemned Mr Anthony; and that the Premier's Parliamentary Secretary (Ian Laurance) has called the British Government reprehensible for doing the very things the Mining Bill will do. They believe that no Liberal could vote for the Bill and retain political integrity because it is against Liberal philosophy.

The petitioners then go on to indicate that there will be discrimination with regard to temporary reserves and that therefore the Bill is against the wishes of the many organisations which are enumerated in the petition. The petitioners then humbly pray that the House will give the petition its earnest consideration as in duty bound.

I certify that the petition does bear 795 signatures and that it conforms with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

The SPEAKER: I have some doubt as to whether that petition is one which can be received because of the language used in it. I will have a look at the wording of the petition and advise the House whether or not it will be received. I will make a ruling at a later stage.

## PORNOGRAPHY

### *Exploitation of Children: Petition*

**DR DADOUR** (Subiaco) [2.20 p.m.]: I wish to present a petition from 62 residents of Western Australia praying for the greater protection of children in respect of pornography.

The petition conforms with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly, and I have certified accordingly.

The SPEAKER: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

(See petition No. 46.)

## EXPLOSIVES AND DANGEROUS GOODS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

### *Second Reading*

Debate resumed from the 2nd November.

**MR JAMIESON** (Welshpool) [2.23 p.m.]: While I assure the Government of support of this measure, I cannot assure it of the same lengthy support it received for the last legislation which went through this Chamber. I do not think we can stretch the debate to that length.

Mr Davies: We will try, though.

Mr O'Neil: We will be eternally grateful!

Mr JAMIESON: That will not be my endeavour. As explained by the Minister, this legislation is to tie up the loose ends with regard to those problems we have observed and which exist in the cartage of dangerous goods. Accidents occur now and again which bring us to understand that we have not the necessary legislative control over matters which we should have. It is only as a result of accidents which occur periodically that attention is drawn to the powers that exist, and necessary action is taken to correct the situation by legislative means.

The recent cyanide spillage near Wooroloo caused great concern. There was another spillage about that time, and it is only reasonable that in those circumstances the Government should bring down legislation so that it can control, by regulations, the types of vehicles which are able to transport dangerous goods, the quantity they transport, the type of containers to be used, and the rest of the guidelines which go with safety in the transportation of such materials.

The Minister very clearly indicated that basically this measure was to give power to the Governor to make regulations. Different sets of circumstances and different specifications are in existence for the cartage of certain dangerous goods, and it is natural that the regulations which apply to one type of dangerous goods would not apply to another.

Regulations have to deal with solids, gels, liquids, and so on. Of necessity, there has to be a number of different regulations. The United Nations has attempted to come to grips with this problem and it has determined that certain categories and types of explosive goods should have a standard form of marking. Unfortunately, recently we have discovered that the markings throughout the different nations do not coincide.

That is a great pity. This is one area where we should be able to have uniform markings throughout the world. Dangerous goods should be able to be identified with regard to the degree to which they are dangerous. That identification should be by way of markings, and the legislation now before us will cover the marking of packaging also.

There appears to me to be a need for all categories of goods to be able to be recognised with regard to their danger element simply by looking at the markings and the specifications on the package. The United Nations has done much work with regard to this matter. Some nations are not very careful with the marking of explosives, and they have caused problems.

Some time earlier this year a gas tanker in Spain exploded. A similar explosion occurred in America which highlighted just how disastrous some modern transport methods can be when something suddenly goes wrong.

There is no point in waiting for people to be burnt to death before we take some action. I was in Asia when the tanker explosion occurred in Spain. I understand that some of the television coverage which I saw did not appear in Australia, and perhaps that is just as well because it was very upsetting to see so many people running around on fire, and running into the sea.

Mr Laurance: It was horrific.

Mr JAMIESON: Obviously, the member opposite saw it when he was overseas. It is one of those events for which we as legislators would not want to feel responsible. It is probable that similar events will occur from time to time.

Mr Laurance: An interesting point is that an investigation into the explosion which occurred in Spain established that the vehicle was using a side road so that the driver could avoid paying a toll.

Mr JAMIESON: I am not sure of the point which has been suggested. In this State we do not have any toll roads, and so far the Minister does not face that problem. However, if we do introduce a system of toll roads I suggest that is one of the matters which regulations should cover. Certain roads should be allocated on which dangerous goods can be transported. Aircraft, when moving from airport to airport, have to have their path defined. I do not think it would be unreasonable for the drivers of vehicles transporting dangerous goods to fill in a card setting out their proposed route. People would then become acquainted with those transport routes, and I suggest that such roads could be clearly marked. The public would be aware that dangerous goods

were transported on those roads, and there would be less chance of any unusual instances occurring which could cause unnecessary concern. Of course, there are occasions when accidents occur for which the drivers of the vehicles transporting the dangerous goods are not responsible. Despite some forward thinking, we cannot really make provision for all events which might occur in the future. We hope to cover the situation as much as possible, and I suggest this legislation is heading in that direction.

It was interesting to note that the Minister mentioned the United Nations' classification of liquid petroleum gas is Class 2 dangerous goods, whereas in Western Australia Class 2 dangerous goods refer to flammable liquids similar to kerosene. Kerosene is not very highly explosive, and is not likely to cause much trouble.

The necessity to have uniformity throughout the world in the classification and marking of dangerous goods, and their packaging, is very important. Whether or not dangerous goods should be carted at all in vehicles for hire, is very doubtful to me.

I notice the Bill provides for the making of regulations in regard to vehicles for hire. It should be completely forbidden to take explosives and dangerous goods into a taxi. If a prospector on the goldfields should run short of fracture for his little mine, and if he goes to town to purchase a hoop of it, he should not be able to return with it in a taxi. Situations such as this must be covered more carefully than they have been in the past.

I see nothing in this Bill to provoke any lengthy debate such as we have experienced recently in this House. To that extent I guess we are all happy. The Minister has told us that on this occasion the legislation is necessary, and certainly recent experiences in this State and overseas have highlighted this fact. We support the proposal.

**MR DAVIES** (Victoria Park—Leader of the Opposition) [2.31 p.m.]: When he introduced this Bill the Minister did not indicate who had decided on the form the legislation should take. In his reply I wonder whether he will tell us what bodies were consulted. Did the Mines Department, the Fire Brigades Board, and the Public Health Department get together to decide on its contents?

I cannot see that there could be any better standard than that of the United Nations, but if we adopt that standard, although the Chief Inspector of the Mines Department and his officers will know what the identifications mean, what about the other people who will have to deal with these

substances? In the event of an accident, the chief inspector for instance may not be readily available. Once the standard of identification has been established, there should be the best liaison possible between the fire brigades, the Public Health Department, and local government, and indeed there should be public education so that the correct action is taken quickly if an accident occurs.

We can applaud the action taken by the Government in recognising the need to introduce such legislation, but if the knowledge of the identification standard is restricted to a handful of officers, we will be no better off.

Serious accidents have occurred recently, and the likelihood of such accidents in the future is increasing. For that reason I would like the Government to take action along the lines suggested by the member for Welshpool that specific routes for the carriage of dangerous goods should be laid down. In addition to that, the public should be aware of the identification system. If I saw a box labelled "Class 2 classification" I would not have any idea what it meant. Probably the box would be labelled also "Dangerous" or "Explosives" and that would warn me to stand clear, but a fire brigade officer, an ambulance officer, or a police officer attending the scene of an accident where some of these substances had been spilt on the road would not have the knowledge to deal with the situation.

The officers to whom I have referred should know what action to take to eliminate any danger from a spillage of, say, cyanide or hydrochloric acid.

You will be happy to know, Mr Speaker, that I will close on this note: I ask that the information should be made known as widely as possible. Public education could be carried out, for instance, through the trade union movement. People should know what substances they are dealing with but, more particularly, the people called to an accident should know what a classification means and how they should react to it.

**MR MENSAROS** (Floreat—Minister for Mines) [2.35 p.m.]: I thank the Opposition for supporting the Bill, and on this occasion I agree with all that the Opposition spokesmen said. Indeed, I am grateful for their suggestions.

Although we had statutory control, through the Mines Department, in regard to the storage of some of these dangerous goods, it appeared it was desirable to extend this statutory control to cover the transport and packaging of such goods as well. This action was not really taken because

of accidents or mishandling of such substances in this State. The bulk of these flammable and dangerous goods are in a liquid form—usually in some form of petroleum product—and they have been handled for a long time by many companies. One cannot but commend the companies for the discipline they have exerted and the regulations they have laid down themselves. The transport of such chemicals has been handled for many years without an accident of any considerable size occurring. As the member for Welshpool said, the Government must be seen to have statutory control, and that is the purpose of the legislation.

It is fairly difficult to adopt any international code willy-nilly, even a code emanating from the United Nations. Whilst it is readily apparent that dangerous goods are the same all over the world, and there is no doubt that there are advantages in uniform classification, it is also obvious that different situations arise in different countries. In this day and age people may move from country to country, and although a uniform classification is of great benefit, it is still a fact that conditions might be vastly different. The vehicles used might be different, and the roads on which the vehicles travel might be better or worse.

For one thing the climate in Western Australia is different from the climate in many other countries. We do not have ice, snow, or extensive fogs here. Even the people who are to handle the goods might be different; generally speaking the people here may be better educated than those in, say, the newly developing African States. So all such matters must be considered, not because the Government wants to show its power capriciously, but because of the different conditions prevailing.

Obviously, the legislation is necessary, and yet it is not complete with regulations because they will be worked out in the future. It may take a considerable time to draw up comprehensive regulations. Once the regulations have been drawn up, and experience gained in their application, obviously changes may be necessary.

In reply to the question raised by the Leader of the Opposition, the legislation was considered mainly by the Mines Department, the officers of the Minister for Transport, and other Government officers. The officers co-ordinating these regulations will consult with the authorities mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition; namely, the Fire Brigades Board, the Public Works Department, and even the emergency services under the responsibility of the Deputy Premier, and others.

In addition, of course, we have undertaken a study of the existing statutory conditions applying in other States of Australia.

I take the advice of the Leader of the Opposition—in fact, the Government already has considered this matter—that it is not only the regulations which are important; in addition, perhaps we should arrange some fairly intensive publicity relating to the classification of the goods and the description of the remedies which immediately can be applied in an emergency situation, even before some authority arrives at the scene.

I thank members for their support of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

*Third Reading*

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

## MINING BILL: REJECTION

*Petition: Speaker's Ruling*

**THE SPEAKER** (Mr Thompson): Earlier this afternoon when the member for Swan presented a petition I expressed some apprehension about its admissibility. I have now had a close look at the petition and I do not agree with the statement of the member for Swan that it complies with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly. Standing Order 86 (f) states—

Every Petition shall—

- (f) be respectful, decorous, and temperate in its language.

In the petition the words, "the Government has been unfair, dishonest and stupid" appear. I rule those words are in conflict with Standing Order 86 (f) and that the petition therefore cannot be received.

## NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES REGULATION BILL

*Second Reading*

Order of the day read for the resumption of the debate from the 2nd November.

*Amendment to Motion*

**MR SKIDMORE** (Swan) [2.44 p.m.]: Mr Speaker, I move—

That all words after the word "Bill" in the motion "That the Bill be now read a second time" be deleted with a view to substituting the following words—

be withdrawn until there has been full public debate on and consideration of the present unresolved economic, social, biological, genetic, environmental and technical problems associated with the mining of uranium and the development of nuclear power and in particular—

- (a) the absence of procedures for the storage and disposal of radioactive wastes to ensure that any danger posed by such wastes to human life and the environment is eliminated;
- (b) the proven contribution of the nuclear power industry to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear war;

and also until community groups, trade unions and other interested persons or bodies have been given reasonable time to comment on proposals for a nuclear code for the protection of the environment in Western Australia.

Mr Bryce: Hear, hear!

**MR SKIDMORE:** The terms of my amendment are germane to the problems continually faced by members on this side. We are an Opposition which tries to do its job, albeit under difficult circumstances made even more difficult by the Government's practice of introducing legislation and providing insufficient time to debate it. This Bill was introduced on the 2nd November, yet only six short days later we are expected to consider it. The Bill is supposed to be complementary to the Environmental Protection (Nuclear) Code of 1978.

*Point of Order*

**MR O'NEIL:** Mr Speaker, I have just received a copy of the amendment, and I would seek your direction as to its admissibility. It proposes to delete all words after the word "Bill" in the motion that the Bill be now read a second time and to supplant others in their place, containing the qualifications relating to the withdrawal.

I question whether it is within the power of this Chamber to withdraw a Bill in such a manner and whether the only action which can be taken by an Opposition is to defeat the Bill. I raise that point simply as a query because I must admit

this is the first time I have experienced such a motion. I have seen motions where the word "now" was sought to be withdrawn with the intention of substituting words to the effect that the Bill be read a second time at some time in the future. I simply question whether it is within the competence of this House to so decide.

The SPEAKER: It is not my intention to make a judgment on this matter without first having a good look at the amendment moved by the member for Swan and at the point of order raised by the Deputy Premier. I shall leave the Chair until the ringing of the bells.

*Sitting suspended from 2.48 to 3.08 p.m.*

*Speaker's Ruling*

The SPEAKER: I have had a look at the amendment moved by the member for Swan. In point of fact, his amendment is to delete all words after the word "Bill". That is the question currently before the Chair. It has been the practice for questions of that nature to be put in that form and I should like now to refer to an incident which occurred in this House on Tuesday, the 5th November. I should like to commend the Deputy Premier on his consistency, because it was he who raised the point of order.

Mr Bryce: Which year is that?

The SPEAKER: It was 1963.

Mr Davies: You remember it well.

The SPEAKER: I should like to quote what was said on that occasion. It reads as follows—

Mr. O'NEIL: On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker, as I understand the position there is an amendment before the Chair which proposes to delete certain words from the motion moved by the Minister for Labour and to insert in their stead the words, "That the Bill be laid aside." This amendment appears to be a direct negative to the motion moved by the Minister and surely there should not be any debate on the amendment. The motion before the House is that the Bill be now read a second time.

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): The matter raised by the member for East Melbourne is covered by standing Order No. 183, and the question before the House is whether certain words shall be struck out. A member is quite entitled to move to strike out certain words. I cannot anticipate the decision of the House on the motion, and under those conditions it is quite impossible for me to state whether the question to insert further words will ever actually be brought before the House.

In the light of that earlier decision, I rule against the Deputy Premier.

Mr O'Neil: A very good decision.

*Debate (on amendment to motion) Resumed*

Mr SKIDMORE: Being conscious, of course, that we must always act responsibly in this House—

*Point of Order*

Mr MENSAROS: Could I ask, for the purpose of clarification, whether your ruling, Sir, which is undoubtedly the correct one, means the motion before the Chair is not in fact a double-barrelled one, but is only for striking out certain words; therefore, the debate is about striking out certain words?

The SPEAKER: Indeed, that is the case. The opportunity for members to debate the full context of the document which the member handed in when giving notice of his amendment would be very different.

*Debate (on amendment to motion) Resumed*

Mr SKIDMORE: It must be obvious to all members that we will soon become embroiled in many more points of order as the debate progresses on the amendment. Therefore, I seek leave to withdraw the amendment and speak to the Bill. I do so in the interests of the House and so that the decorum of the House may be maintained. I take that action also in order that the substance of the Bill may be debated.

Mr O'Neil: A good decision.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Swan for his co-operation. I believe the business of the House will be facilitated if the House gives leave to withdraw the amendment, notice of which the member has given. Is leave granted to withdraw the amendment moved by the member for Swan?

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

*Debate (on second reading) Resumed*

Mr SKIDMORE: I had reached the point in the debate where I was highlighting the problems with which we on this side of the House have been faced and I believe it is still germane to the issues involved. The Bill is complementary to Commonwealth legislation dealing with nuclear codes. One would feel this is merely a rubber stamp, because if we look at the code proposed in the Bill and at the codes which have been established in the Commonwealth legislation, we will find they go hand in hand with what one

would be led to believe are minor alterations if one reads the second reading speech of the Minister.

When one looks at the Commonwealth legislation, which is the Environment Protection (Nuclear Codes) Act, 1978, one finds there is quite a substantial difference between that and the Bill introduced by the Minister, which is now before the House. According to the Minister the code set down in the Bill now before us has only minor alterations of small consequence, and he said they should not materially affect the purpose of the Commonwealth legislation. However, he is not quite correct, and this becomes obvious when one looks at what has been removed, and when one compares the present Bill with the Commonwealth code.

I want to refer in a general way to the sections which have been removed, because they remove the Commonwealth requirements from the proposed code which the State will adopt. The argument advanced by the Minister was that that is fair and reasonable because those health standards will rightfully come within the province of the Public Health Department and the Commissioner of Public Health. He said they could be catered for by regulations. I do not concede that that is fair or reasonable because one would have thought that over the years—if the Public Health Department was to deal with the question of nuclear waste and the danger that is apparent with regard to nuclear waste—the Public Health Department would have been very busy bringing about some changes in the Health Act to cover the question of nuclear waste.

A question was asked in another place recently—not more than two or three weeks ago—requesting information as to whether the Public Health Department had considered the standards necessary for the disposal of nuclear waste in this State, whether any regulations had been drafted, and whether the department had bothered to bring forward a code of practice. The answer to that question was that nothing had been done.

The Government is suggesting we should forgo the protection of the health code as enumerated in the Commonwealth Act. The Government will give that responsibility to the State department, which has not even been motivated with regard to this matter. It has not bothered to establish a code of practice. It is reprehensible to try to suggest, as the Minister did during his

second reading speech, that the change was only minor. In his second reading speech the Minister said—

The object of this legislation is to make provision for protecting the health and safety of the people and the environment from possible harmful effects associated with nuclear activities.

The Minister also stated—

The nuclear activities defined in this Bill are those associated with the nuclear fuel cycle. The definition is narrower than the one used in the Commonwealth Act. This reflects the criticism made of that definition that it brought areas such as medical and research uses of radioactive substances into the ambit of the Act.

I do not know why we should look at the question of radiation from the milling of uranium as being anything other than a health hazard. I do not know how the Minister can divorce a Government department from dealing with uranium waste, which can travel far and wide in dusty conditions. A little later I will refer to a document which will demonstrate that nuclear dust can travel for miles. Surely that is a health hazard directly attributable to the milling and mining of uranium ore.

Mr Mensaros: I think the member might have misunderstood the provisions because any hazard arising from medical usage belongs to the Public Health Department. However, any hazard originating from the nuclear fuel cycle remains within the ambit of this Bill.

Mr SKIDMORE: I am trying to show that a hazard exists in the milling and mining of uranium ore.

Mr Mensaros: But that is covered under this Bill.

Mr SKIDMORE: That is right. That happens merely because the ore is treated or processed. I will quote from the Commonwealth Act, section 4 (c), as follows—

(c) the milling, refining, treatment, processing, reprocessing, fabrication, enrichment—

Those words are contained in the Bill but the following words in the Federal legislation are omitted from the Bill: "storage, handling, transportation, possession, acquisition, abandonment, or disposal of".

The Bill ignores the very basic, fundamental principle, as I see it, of control over nuclear waste. Under the Bill, very little control can

be exercised. In fact, if this Bill is carried and becomes an Act of Parliament, it will be impossible to control the disposal of nuclear waste, because the Commonwealth Bill states, "abandonment or disposal of any prescribed substance". So the Government has said, "We do not want to worry about anything that has been abandoned; we will just leave it as it is at Maralinga, bury it in the ground, and it will go away in another million years; and we will not be affected by the disposal." The Government says the storage of ore is not an issue; it is a prescribed material and the storage of ore is not supposed to be bound up with other issues in a Bill which covers nuclear waste and the storage of uranium ore.

To me it is incomprehensible that the Government should abrogate the right of its citizens to protection, on the ground that it wants to be a bit different from the Federal Government, that it will not slavishly follow the Commonwealth legislation because it wants to be different, it wants to show it is a trend-setter, and it wants to establish its place in the sun.

Mr Mensaros: Have a look at paragraph (f). It destroys your whole argument. What you said amounts to nothing. It is in paragraph (f) in the State Bill.

Mr SKIDMORE: I will come to that. The Minister suggests I look at paragraph (f), which says—

(f) any operation or activity connected or associated with or incidental to any operation or activity referred to in paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d)—

Mr Mensaros: It says "including the use, storage, handling, transportation, possession, acquisition", etc. which is exactly what you claimed is not in it.

Mr SKIDMORE: I would like to read it if the Minister does not mind. Paragraph (f) continues—

—or (e) of this interpretation including the use, storage, handling, transportation, possession, acquisition, abandonment or disposal of—

- (i) any prescribed substance; or
- (ii) any mineral, or other matter, that contains a prescribed substance,

for or in connection with such an activity.

I agree it appears in the Bill in another place, and it removes the importance placed upon the words used and the section in which they are used in the Commonwealth code. It has downgraded the Commonwealth code, as the Minister is well aware.

It is pertinent to understand why the words have been taken out of the context of the Commonwealth code. The reason was to overcome the referral of health matters which, as the Government says, should rightly become the province of the Minister for Health. I quote from the Minister's second reading speech, on page 4520 of *Hansard*—

The codes developed under the proposed Nuclear Activities Regulation Act will not intrude into those areas which are more properly controlled by the Minister for Health through the Radiation Safety Act, 1975.

I believe there is no substance in the Government's intention to remove those health issues which are supposed to follow the Commonwealth law. I do not want to debate that matter any further.

Although we may think on looking at the Bill that there does not appear to be a great deal in it, when one looks at the *Hansard* reports of the debate which took place in the House of Representatives and the Senate one does not gain the impression that it was a very simple Bill. In fact, long and involved debate took place on the whole issue, and rightly so. Therefore, one would have thought we would at least have been shown the courtesy of being given some time to have a look at the Bill to evaluate what it is all about. Let us have a look at some of the factors we must consider in relation to the mining, storage, and processing of uranium and enriched ore and the disposal of nuclear waste.

The other day I asked the Minister to table three documents; namely, *Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Materials*, *Management of the Waste in the Mining, Milling, and Transport of Plutonium and Thorium Ores*, and the *Code of Practice on Radiation Protection in the Mining and Milling of Radioactive Ores*. Those are very important documents relating to the use and processing of uranium ore and the disposal of the resultant waste. I asked for them deliberately because I had asked the Environmental Protection Authority for them and one of them was not available to me. The Parliamentary Library was unable to obtain a copy of the *Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Materials*, 1973 revised edition.

Therefore I cannot in all conscience say I am prepared to accept the code laid down as being the standard, because I know nothing about it. These are the very standards the Commonwealth wants us to adopt. They are the standards, the bible, and the handbook for the development of uranium mining and the disposal of nuclear

waste. These issues are dealt with in those codes and they are not available. I have not yet had time to read the documents, although I have read *Management of the Waste in the Mining, Milling, and Transport of Plutonium and Thorium Ores*. Through a bit of detective work I was finally able to track down that booklet. The code of practice put out by the Commonwealth Department of Health is readily available at the Commonwealth Government Book Shop in Newman House.

I will refer to that booklet first, to demonstrate the difficulties with which we, as the Opposition, are faced in determining whether the code proposed in the Bill provides sufficient protection for all concerned and whether the safety issues should come under the Health Department or whether the Commonwealth Act is sufficient to cover that aspect. We were not able to evaluate the documents, having had them for only one day. I will therefore refer only to the code of the Commonwealth Department of Health, because I do not know what is in the other documents, and I certainly will not accept a blank cheque from this Government in respect of the environmental problems—I am aware of its shortcomings in dealing with the protection of the environment. I am sure some of my colleagues will deal adequately with the question at the appropriate time, so I will say no more about it.

I would like to refer to section 1 of the code of practice, 1975, under the heading, "Need for dose limitations". Paragraph 1.2 states—

Man has always lived in an environment in which he has been exposed to background radiation of low intensity. This radiation comes from natural sources, including cosmic rays and radioactive material in the body of man and in the environment. Radiation doses greatly exceeding those normally received from natural sources are known to cause harm and, in particular, to increase the risk of cancer. It is not known, however, if harmful effects continue to be induced at low doses and low dose rates comparable to those associated with background radiation. Because of the lack of this knowledge, it is cautiously assumed that any exposure to radiation may entail some risk and that the risk is proportional to the dose received, down to the lowest dose.

I pause there to point out I have read almost the complete text so that I will not be challenged and accused of taking a statement out of context. There is more to the statement, to which I do not need to refer; but I am quite happy to read it out if any member wishes me to do so. Let me stress

it is stated that it is not known whether harmful effects continue to be induced at low doses and low dose rates comparable to those associated with background radiation.

Let me tell the Minister we are talking precisely about background radiation when we are talking about the mining, milling, and storage of uranium ore and the handling and disposal of nuclear waste. We are not sure of the effect of this background radiation upon human beings; yet the Commonwealth and State Governments want me to accept the code of practice, 1975.

To substantiate further what I have said, I have been able to accumulate over several months many references which indicate the attitudes of people who know what they are talking about—experts in the field, and scientists of the greatest repute throughout the world. These people have doubts in their minds.

On one hand I pick up an article which agrees with the point of view that people should not worry too much about safeguards in respect of the disposal of nuclear waste, and it sets out the various methods used for the storage, of such waste, including storing it in glass blocks and burying it in the bowels of the earth or in a stable area of the desert, as was suggested by a mining magnate in Western Australia. Then, on the other hand, I find a scientist who has delivered a paper at a scientific seminar in London or New York has a contrary point of view.

When we come down to the basic element—that is, the ore—we find a degree of confidence has been built up amongst the people concerned that the dosage rate accepted for Yeelirrie during the milling of 165 000 tonnes of uranium ore is the standard to which we should adhere. I do not say that is not so; I simply say the standards are not good enough; nor are the codes proposed within the Bill which supplements and complements the Commonwealth legislation—which I say is deficient for the same reasons.

#### *Quorum*

Mr GRILL: Under Standing Order No. 42, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Sibson), I draw your attention to the fact that it appears there is not a quorum present in the Chamber.

Mr Skidmore: The member for Mundaring has resumed his seat in a hurry.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Sibson): Order! I will count the House. There are 19 members present in the House, so there is no point of order.

Mr Laurance: We are enduring it.



Mr Pearce: There are more of us than there are of you.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

*Debate Resumed*

Mr SKIDMORE: I do not mind the interruption; this is one of those rare occasions on which I have unlimited time.

Mr Bryce: It is obvious the Premier is absent today; just look at the Government benches.

Mr SKIDMORE: Prior to that point of order—taken quite properly because any member of this place may raise any matter that he considers should be brought to the notice of the Chair—I was about to refer to an article headed, "Radiation Hazards in Uranium Mining and Milling", written by Mr R. M. Fry. Mr Fry's qualifications are as follows: Bachelor of Science (Hons), Director of the Environment and Public Health Unit, AAEC Regulatory and External Relations Branch; Australian representative on Committee on Radiation Protection and Public Health of the Nuclear Energy Agency of the OECD. I suggest his qualifications and standing make it difficult for one to challenge the remarks he makes in his document. I would like to refer to some of the early history in respect of the discovery of radium and the mining of uranium. Under the heading of "Cause of Mountain Sickness" I quote as follows—

The cause of the lung cancer was not known at first. Initially it was attributed to inhalation of various components of the ores, notably arsenic and cobalt. In the early 1920s, radon, a radioactive gas always associated with uranium in its natural state, was suspected as a possible cause and, though the details of the explanation of just how it acts to induce cancer have been modified over the years, there is now little doubt that radon is basically responsible.

He says that radon is basically responsible for lung cancer. Perhaps the Minister for Mines may be aware that the article mentions in the early days of mining in Bohemia people used simply to mine the ore without worrying much about health hazards. However, the number of people who died of a mysterious illness as then unknown to the medical profession was staggering in the extreme.

The article states—

This material was piled around the mines, essentially useless, though it had a certain curiosity value because it glowed in the dark giving out a faint greenish-blue light. Pieces of it were sold around Europe as a novelty,

especially in Germany and France and it was such a piece that led Becquerel in 1896 to the discovery of radioactivity.

So from time immemorial—or at least since 1727—there had been no conscious tying up of the incidence of cancer in people living in those areas until this learned gentleman stated categorically that there was little doubt that radon was basically responsible.

Further in that article, I would like to refer to a section headed, "Radioactive Decay Chains". That section reads as follows—

It was stated that when an isotope decays it changes into the isotope of another element. Sometimes this new atom is stable, but in some cases it is not.

This is very important. This is the indecision of a scientist in this field who cannot make up his mind in relation to this question. I will repeat what I have just read—

It was stated that when an isotope decays it changes into the isotope of another element. Sometimes this new atom is stable, but in some cases it is not. If it is not, it too will decay radioactively, with its own characteristic half-life, turning into yet another kind of atom. This process may continue through a chain of isotopes, each parent atom when it "dies", giving birth to a radioactive "daughter" atom of a different element, until finally a stable nuclear configuration is reached, the final product being the stable isotope of some naturally occurring element.

That could refer to uranium ore as we know it, if it ever reached the stage of stability where there was no more radon emission. Of course, we know that is just not possible; it goes on, and on, and on, and it never reaches a stable state.

I must apologise to the House because, as I said, I have had very little time to prepare this objection to the legislation. I have not had time to document my material. I have nothing further to quote from Mr Fry's article.

There is another article which I wish to quote. It is headed, "Management of Wastes Containing Radioactivity from Mining and Milling of Uranium Ores in Northern Australia". Of course, this comes very close to home. The article was written by J. M. Costello of the Assessment and Planning Unit, Uranium Fuel Cycle, Australian Atomic Energy Commission. This paper was presented originally at the IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Power and Its Fuel Cycle, Salzburg, Austria, May 2nd to 13th, 1977. I imagine that a person who attended such a conference would certainly be a leading international

expert on the question of uranium ore and the management of wastes and radioactive material from the milling of that ore. I accept with due regard the position he would have held in having been asked to present a paper.

This article points to the problem which will be associated with Yeelirrie. That subject will receive an airing in far more depth at the appropriate time than I will give to it now.

So that there will be clarity and continuity, I wish to build up a story to show that the management that has been suggested is insufficient—that even on the code of practice that I have quoted, the safeguards are not sufficient to satisfy me. That is based on the limited time I have had to give to this subject, and on my limited capacity. I am, one might say, virtually a layman in this particular field.

*Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.04 p.m.*

Mr SKIDMORE: Prior to the afternoon tea break I was referring to the question of the mining and milling of uranium ore in Western Australia. I was quoting from an article which was presented by Mr. J. F. Costello at an international conference on nuclear power and its fuel cycle. It is interesting to use this article, because it refers to the mining of ore in Western Australia. I should like to refer to it extensively; but, of course, you, Sir, would probably frown upon that. However, it is very difficult when dealing with the question of uranium enrichment—the milling and mining of uranium, the safety hazards involved, and the effects of radiation—to quote a portion of a paper and try to do so in a sensible manner so that people who are inclined to read *Hansard* will know exactly what I am trying to say. Therefore, if I quote at length I hope you, Sir, will forgive me.

The matter raised by the writer of the paper reads as follows—

The heavy rainfall resulted in breaching of embankments retaining tailings, erosion of ore and waste stockpiles, and water contaminated with heavy metals, uranium, and its decay products entering local rivers.

This is exactly what happened in the Rum Jungle area on the Alligator River in the Northern Territory despite all the expertise and the codes of practice which have been enforced in an endeavour to look after the environment by stopping the leaching of dangerous minerals. To continue—

Present environmental legislation to minimise the consequences of mining operations did not exist when uranium was mined and

milled at Rum Jungle\*. Procedures accepted at that time have resulted in a degree of environmental degradation which is unacceptable by modern standards.

The result of this was that leaching occurred and rivers were polluted by uranium and heavy metals and the water was contaminated.

I have examined the ERMP on the Yeelirrie project and I have visited the site in an endeavour to tie up the report with the code of practice, because this is the very basis upon which the whole process stands. I became extremely alarmed as to whether the company concerned is operating under a sufficiently strict code of practice in regard to the tailing ponds. Three or four options were given to the company. The option the company chose is the storage of the tailings by building up a dam above the surface of the flood plain in the breakaways at Yeelirrie. I became very worried, because certain standards are set down, but it has been shown in reports of the EPA in relation to the Wagerup refinery that there is doubt about the efficiency of tailing ponds. These ponds leak, leach, cause problems, and contaminate groundwater. It has been proved that this occurs. And yet the use of tailing ponds is supposed to be a safe practice and is laid down in the code, which we are supposed to accept as being reasonable and fair. The very same code has been used, but the tailing ponds are not sufficient.

Mr Young: Which ones are not sufficient?

Mr SKIDMORE: The ponds which are constructed in accordance with the ERMP on the Yeelirrie project. The company was given three or four options for disposing of the tailings. The option favoured by the company is the cheapest one. Of course, the one I favour is the return of the tailings to the floor pit. That is where they ought to go. There should be a process of backfilling so that the eight kilometre by half kilometre excavation is removed. Otherwise the excavation will be filled up by water which will become radioactive. The mine should be back-filled and we should remember that when we produce one tonne of yellow cake approximately 85 per cent to 90 per cent of the ore milled is returned to the pit. Very little is taken away.

Mr Young: Following the questions asked by the member for Rockingham on a number of occasions about the monitoring of the ponds at Kwinana, have you checked those monitoring figures?

Mr Barnett: They have been monitored only once, and the figures show—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Sibson): Order!

Mr SKIDMORE: I appreciate the concern of the Minister for Health and I am not worried unduly about his interjection, because he is entitled to question me on what I have said. This is what Parliament is all about. However, my remarks have been substantiated by the Minister and the member for Rockingham and there is no doubt that these ponds leak. The degree to which they leak is not the point. It could be a small or a large leak. Disastrous leaching into the subwaters could take place. It could be as simple as that and because no statement has been made that the ponds do not leak, they are suspect.

As I was saying before the Minister interjected, the code of practice is the measure we are supposed to accept as being adequate for the protection of the people as far as the mining of uranium is concerned.

I take note of Mr Costello's remarks in regard to the heavy rainfall which results in leaching, because one can only cast back one's mind to the disastrous floods which cut off the Nullarbor Plain by washing away the railway line a couple of years ago. The flood waters came from the area in which we will mine uranium. That is where it all started. This water flows down through the lakes with such force that a tailing pond in the area would disappear down the hill. One may say that would happen only once in 50 years, but if it happened once in 50 years, that is too often in my opinion.

There is another danger involved in the milling of uranium ore, which is as follows—

Siliceous dust containing radon and other decay products is produced during ore crushing and grinding. Solid products (tailings) containing radioactive and mineral constituents of the ore and solid reagents, e.g. oxidants or neutralising agents, are discharged from the leaching stage.

Liquid effluents generated during purification of the uranium contain chemical wastes from ore leaching, uranium purification and precipitation as a diuranate, dissolved mineral constituents rejected during purification, together with traces of uranium and radioactive decay products, and dissolved or entrained solvent.

Particulate dusts also are produced from calcination of diuranate and crushing and packaging of yellowcake.

This material may be spread by dust containing radon and other products. The dust will travel on the wind all over the countryside until such time as the life of these products is dissipated. The strange and most unacceptable aspect of this

is that the radon which attaches to a dust particle dissipates very slowly when it is blown about and it can be deposited on the vegetation around the mine. This vegetation may be eaten by animals, such as sheep, cattle, and kangaroos which would then become radioactive as a result of the consumption of the grass. I shall refrain from mentioning my favourite creatures, birds, which could of course become radioactive also.

Many problems are associated with this matter; but when I examine all the codes of practice and the safety aspects covered by them, I see that not one of these codes has arrived at an answer which will stop the distribution of radon by dust emission. There is no answer to this problem. The company tries to prevent it by placing its workers in an area over which the prevailing winds do not blow, but it does not worry about where the dust goes. It just hopes and prays that the dust does not land on someone and cause damage. This is not covered in any of the codes with which I am familiar. I hope the Minister can show me a code which covers it. I hope he can show there is a way of preventing such a disaster as a result of the mining of uranium.

A code which supplements the Commonwealth code has been mentioned. I believe I have shown beyond doubt that all of the codes are suspect and scientists throughout the world will back up what I have said. Members may read the articles I have located.

I should like to quote from another article on radioactive waste management. This was written by P. G. Alfredson whose qualifications are as follows—

BScApp(Hons), BE(Hons), MSc, PhD, CEng, FICHEME, FIAust, Acting Chief Chemical Technology Division and Leader of Chemical Engineering Section, AAEC Research Establishment.

Mr Tonkin: Beat that!

Mr SKIDMORE: He is a man who has a few letters after his name and he would be certain to be a top-flight man in the scientific world. He is the co-author of this document. I am not too sure what all these qualifications are. I imagine he obtained some of them in England.

Mr Bryce: A master in the art of passing examinations, too!

Mr SKIDMORE: Could easily be.

I wish to quote a small portion of the article. As I have stated it is difficult to get over a story when it is necessary to quote portions of a

scientific paper and make them understandable. With your forebearance, Sir, I will read the quote as follows—

Natural uranium is a radioactive material with a long half-life (4.5 billion years for  $^{238}\text{U}$ ) and decays through a chain of radioactive daughter products. The most hazardous of these daughter products are radium 226 and radon 222 gas and its daughter products. In mining, the frequency of lung cancer is increased by exposure to radon daughter products and chemically active dusts in the air, and limits to exposure are provided in the new Australian Code on Radiation Protection in the Mining and Milling of Radioactive Ores at present in draft form.

That is the first paper I have found which makes reference to the code in connection with natural uranium and its radioactive material; and of course that is the code which the Commonwealth Government has adopted in its legislation and which, in complementary legislation must be accepted in the State. It says that the limits concerning exposures are covered in the new Australian code.

That code was prepared in 1975. Many years of research must have been involved before the code reached that stage. As I have said—and I repeat—it is time the code was updated, and the minimum standard which has been established should be scrutinised and brought up to date. However, has any effort been made by the Government here or anywhere else to do so? In answer to a question asked in another place recently it was admitted that the State Public Health Department has not done any research of great note—if any—and has no established regulations for the control of such situations. Nevertheless, we are supposed to accept that that is the department which will look after the lives and safety of workers in the uranium industry, in the disposal of the waste, and with the fission reactors.

The article goes on—

The majority of the ore is not dissolved in the leaching stage and is a waste product called tailings which still contain most of the natural radioactive daughter products originally in the ore.

If the yellow cake is removed and sold for the proliferation of nuclear weapons—heaven forbid that we will do that—the radioactivity of the tailings is almost as high as the original ore. The article continues—

Possible future approaches include returning the tailings to fill worked-out mines or covering the tailings with soil and revegetating the whole area to stabilise it.

That is the question I raised. If this material is placed on the flood plain it could end up in the lake system and even on the Nullarbor. Even if it is covered with three or four feet of rather large conglomerate it will be subject to seepage and it can get into the water.

I have here a table which deals with the radioactive waste and management practice in the nuclear industry. It is in the same article written by the two men to whom I have referred. It appears in *Atomic Energy*, July 1976, and refers to the radioactive waste system and its contaminants. I will make no quotation from it, but if members wish to enlighten themselves on the problems associated with this subject, and the very necessary standards which must be reached for the protection and safety of individuals in the industry, I suggest they read it.

I wish to quote another article from *Atomic Energy*, July 1976. It is significant to note that I have been quoting from articles published in 1976. Strangely enough, the scientists are telling us that problems exist with the code of practice. The code must be suspect because the scientists have said so.

Even in 1978 articles are still being written on the subject. One was published under the name of L. H. Keher. He wrote a paper which was originally presented to a meeting of the Victorian Branch of the Professional Officers' Association on the 26th July, 1977. The writer was in the Environment and Public Health Unit of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission. He is a fairly modest person and does not add a great list of letters and qualifications after his name. However, because of the position he holds and the article he wrote which went into depth on the subject matter, one could not challenge his veracity or ability to understand the science he practises.

I do not like quoting material, but on this occasion I must do so. Mr Keher wrote—

No biological effects have been demonstrated in man, or animals, at these low dose rates. It requires doses of tens or even hundreds of rems to specific organs, delivered in short periods, before effects become statistically observable in man.

I pause to reflect upon the statement. What he says is that before we can be sure that specific organs in man or animals will not be affected by overdoses of tens or hundreds of rems the situation must be statistically observed. We must also study the statistics which have been produced in other parts of the world on the subject of uranium mining and the disposal of the waste material. There is no question that problems

are associated with this and that they have horrifying effects, even when the standards are strictly adhered to, so we can imagine the situation if the standards are not maintained.

I wish to make a final quotation from the same paper written by Mr Keher. He mentions the annual maximum permissible dose of mrem which organs and tissues can sustain without injury. His details are as follows—

Organ or tissue	Annual maximum permissible dose (mrem)
Gonads, red bone-marrow, whole body ....	5 000
Skin, bone, thyroid ....	30 000
Hands and forearms, feet and ankles ....	75 000
Any other single organ, e.g. lungs ....	15 000

They are figures obtained from reports of our very limited endeavours in the mining of uranium ore in the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth code of practice was based on those mining ventures. In fairness to those who prepared the code I must hasten to add that, in addition, material was obtained from all over the world and was also used in the preparation of the code.

However, the scientists challenge that code in simple terms. They say that it should not be dangerous and they are not too sure that it is dangerous. They say we should reconsider the code and re-evaluate it.

If members have been listening—and I hope some have been—they will realise that, in the short time available to me, I have dwelt only on the results of uranium mining. I have not touched upon the whole cycle which follows the production of yellow cake and its use as an energy resource.

Very quickly I want to touch upon the current plan for the handling of high-level radioactive wastes as contained in an article which appeared in *Scientific American* of June, 1977. The article is comparatively recent and deals with one of the areas the code seeks to cover. I wonder when it is envisaged we will have a fission reactor in this country. The article is headed, "The Disposal of Radioactive Wastes from Fission Reactors", and on page 24 of the publication is the following—

**CURRENT PLAN** for handling high-level radioactive wastes calls for their incorporation into glass cylinders about 300 centimeters long and 30 centimeters in diameter. In the single-step solidification process depicted here the liquid high-level waste is first converted

into a fine powder inside a calcining chamber (*top*), then mixed with glassmaking frit (*middle*) and finally melted into a block of glass within the thick stainless-steel canister in which it will eventually be stored (*bottom*). When canister is full, flow is switched by a diverter valve into a new canister (*broken outline*); hence the process is continuous.

So the process goes on and on and the waste is stored in a glass cylinder. However, what do we do with the glass cylinder when the waste is stored? That is the problem of the century and is one of the many imponderables we face with the disposal of the waste. It has also been the cause of trouble throughout the world and, in particular, in America where leakages have occurred. One method is underground burial, and it is the one at present favoured.

On page 25 of the same publication is the following—

**DEEP UNDERGROUND BURIAL**, is at present the method favoured by most nuclear power experts in the U.S. for the long-term storage of high-level radioactive wastes. In this idealized diagram of a proposed Federally operated repository in southeastern New Mexico the waste canisters are shown emplaced at a depth of 600 meters in a geologically stable salt formation. In order to dissipate the heat from the canisters they would be buried about 10 metres apart; thus each canister would occupy an area of about 100 square meters. On this basis the total high-level wastes generated annually by an all-nuclear U.S. electric-power system (assuming roughly 400 1 000-megawatt plants) would occupy an area of less than half a square kilometer.

It does not take up much space, but what is packed into the half a square kilometre is mind-boggling when we consider the effect it would have on human life if it were ever released and became a contaminant.

Remarkable things happen in this world today. In an area which is considered stable, many changes can occur. Perhaps there may be an earthquake in an area where there has never been an earthquake before. We could say, "Will it happen again?" For all we know there may be a developmental fault somewhere making a now stable area unstable. This is the sort of question we should be asking ourselves.

We have the code of practice, the article on the management of waste from mining and milling, and the regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials. I have not had time to

study the regulations, but certainly I have looked at the other two documents and I believe that too little attention has been given to this problem. We have not faced anything like it yet in this country.

I now want to come to the reasons that we on this side of the House oppose the proposed legislation. I have shown that the code of practice is deficient. I have shown that it needs upgrading, and that we need to set far better standards to provide greater protection. After all, this is a Bill for an Act to make provision with respect to the regulation and control of nuclear activities, for the formulation and adoption of codes of practice in relation thereto, and for incidental and other purposes.

The only venture we can foresee that may receive the sanction of the people of Australia, and of Western Australia in particular, is that of the Yeelirrie deposits. It might be said that the greatest research ever has been carried out in relation to this project. However, that research has been carried out on the basis of the experiences in overseas countries, and we have been presented with a code of practice which I have shown to be deficient.

As I have said, it is self-evident that there will be a leaching out of the ponds. It cannot be shown that the dust emission can be controlled. No way can we be sure that animals will not become radioactive by the consumption of foliage in and around a uranium plant. No way can the Government prove that we are assured of safeguards. There are many grey areas in this legislation.

That is not the only area where control is needed. I doubt very much whether we in this country will ever be involved in the nuclear activities set out in the Bill. The interpretation of the term "nuclear activities" is given as follows—

- (a) the mining (whether by underground or surface working) or recovery of any prescribed substance or any mineral containing a prescribed substance;
- (b) the production of any prescribed substance;
- (c) the milling, refining, treatment, processing, re-processing, fabrication, enrichment of—
  - (i) any prescribed substance; or
  - (ii) any mineral, or other matter, that contains a prescribed substance;

We then come to the issue of the reprocessing of the waste from nuclear energy. I understand that this reprocessing has almost ceased in

America because of its inherent dangers. The best knowledge available in America—from the scientists and researchers who have contributed to the development so far—is that there is no answer to the problem. Japan does not want to do its own processing. It has been suggested that Japan ought to send its residue to us for processing. I do not want it here at all.

Merely to follow slavishly the Federal Government's code of practice is perhaps a reason to introduce legislation, but surely to goodness the health of the people of the State is a matter for the Public Health Department. The code of practice is very vague in this area. On questioning the officers of the Public Health Department we find that the department has done nothing about this problem over the past decade. The Government stands condemned.

I doubt very much that any member can consider we have a right to proceed with this Bill. It should be withdrawn; it should go back into the wilderness so that we do not have to see it here again until such time as we have positive proof in regard to safeguards. It has become self-evident throughout the world that the present safeguards are not adequate. Perhaps we could consider similar legislation when the scientists discover a way to deal safely with nuclear waste.

On my behalf and on behalf of the members on this side of the House I oppose the Bill. We can see no reason for its presentation, and no reason that such legislation could not wait for another three, four, or five years. It is not necessary for us to become concerned about these deposits yet. We are aware that the code of practice has been introduced as a result of the Fox report, but obviously there are insufficient safeguards in that code. For these reasons we cannot support the Bill.

Debate adjourned until a later stage of the sitting, on motion by Mr O'Neil (Deputy Premier).

## QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

## NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES REGULATION BILL

### *Second Reading*

Debated resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR McPHARLIN** (Mt. Marshall) [4.56 p.m.]: The purpose of this Bill is to make provision for protecting the health and safety of the people of the State, and the environment, from possible

harmful effects associated with nuclear activities. In clause 4 it is stated that the interpretation of "Commonwealth law" means the Environment Protection (Nuclear Codes) Act, 1978, of the Parliament of the Commonwealth, and any Act amending or in substitution for that Act. Therefore, the object is to provide adequate safety measures for any activities in which the State may indulge in respect of the mining, milling, transportation, and export of uranium ore; and perhaps at a later date the enrichment of uranium and possibly even the construction of a nuclear power station.

A great deal of criticism of nuclear power development throughout the world has been published in the media over some time. In addition we have seen many items in favour of the development of nuclear power. This matter has been well debated in many countries and nations, and a substantial number of countries throughout the world—and the number is increasing—have accepted and are going ahead with more nuclear power stations.

Mr Bryce: Quite the contrary. Isn't there an increasing number of nations which are downgrading nuclear programmes? America? Austria?

Mr McPHARLIN: If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition checks the information he will find that is not correct.

Mr Bryce: In the United States?

Mr McPHARLIN: Yes.

Mr Davies: Read *Time* magazine.

Mr McPHARLIN: The countries that have nuclear power are in favour of building more power stations, and for very good reason.

Mr Bryce: What about Austria?

Mr McPHARLIN: The reason is the shortage of fossil fuels which it is known will develop in the not-too-distant future. For that reason there is a definite need for an alternative source of power generation and apart from nuclear there is no other source which can give the results required at the moment. Sure, a great deal of research into solar energy, wave energy, and other sorts of energy is being carried out, but none of that research has reached the stage where energy can be produced in the volume demanded by industry and societies throughout the world. Not only the western world is developing nuclear power on a large scale; Russia and other countries are doing it, too. That sort of development is progressing rapidly in some countries.

Mr Bryce: I hope you appreciate that those of us who condemn it condemn the Russians and the eastern European countries just as much as we condemn the Americans and anybody else, for that matter.

Mr McPHARLIN: The Russian scientists, the British scientists, and the American scientists are working together on a number of experiments in regard to future developments, particularly in the operation of the fusion process.

Mr Tonkin: We are not denying that.

Mr McPHARLIN: The scientists engaged in the industry are as responsible people as you or I. These people—

Mr Davies: More responsible than some of us.

Mr McPHARLIN: They would not be recommending or placing before Governments measures which would create extreme dangers to the community.

Mr Davies: That is a wide-sweeping statement.

Mr Bryce: Can you not appreciate that scientists have an ego involvement with their profession, the same as anybody else in the world?

Mr McPHARLIN: Scientists have families, too. They have their children and their grandchildren. They would not be insensible. If there were great risks that would endanger their own families, they would not be promoting a source of power—

Mr Tonkin: So becoming a grandfather makes you wise? Is that your thesis?

Mr McPHARLIN: They are concerned. Members would find no scientist engaged in research who would say there was not some risk involved. Of course there is. However, their knowledge of the risks enables them to devise methods to control those risks. That is what the scientists are doing in their research programmes.

A lot of publications criticise adversely what has been recommended. I have taken the opportunity to discuss this topic with a number of highly qualified scientists who are engaged in the industry. They have given reasons for the hysteria that is created. They have said that the arguments advanced by some of these people are not true. I will quote a few of these people so that members are aware of their identities and their qualifications.

The member for Swan made a comment about the plutonium that is supposed to be buried at Maralinga. I have obtained the comments of Professor Sir Ernest Titterton on this.

Mr Tonkin: He would be a good one to ask!

Mr McPHARLIN: He is highly qualified.

Mr Tonkin: He does not speak as a scientist; he speaks as a politician.

Mr McPHARLIN: He is a nuclear physicist from the Research School of Physical Sciences in Canberra. He has a world-wide reputation.

Mr Tonkin: Yes, I know he has.

Mr McPHARLIN: A very good—

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is too much conversation.

Mr McPHARLIN: He made comments about the matter of the supposed danger in the plutonium buried at Maralinga. He does not deny that there is a concrete cell there in which some wastes have been placed. I will read an extract from his article. He made the point that there has been some publicity about what would happen if terrorists were to obtain this amount of plutonium, and how they could develop a nuclear bomb of some description with which to terrorise people. I will not go into lengthy detail. This is what Sir Ernest Titterton said—

In fact there has never been any attempt by terrorists to seize plutonium anywhere in the world and the *probability* that this situation could change by an attempt at Maralinga is extremely small. There are very good reasons why this should be so. First, how would a terrorist locate the burial pit in which the item was encapsulated? If that hurdle were overcome, how would an egg-sized lump (should it be in that form—highly unlikely as we shall see later) be located within the pit itself—some of which have dimensions of 40 x 20 x 9 feet? And if located, what about the physical problem of breaking into the concrete outer container, all designed appropriately, and some having walls up to 4 feet thick? Hardly a job for a "team of determined men" even if armed with picks and shovels.

Mr Bryce: They would not be armed with picks and shovels.

Mr McPHARLIN: To continue—

If powered equipment were introduced the most elementary surveillance system would detect this immediately.

Sir Ernest Titterton does not deny there is probably a minute quantity of waste there which is of no use at all. If there were the amount that has been spoken of within this egg sized lump, it would be worth something in the vicinity of \$500 000. If that were so, the people responsible would not leave it lying around for anybody to pick up.

A lot of misconceptions are held by people about these matters. Perhaps the Press picks these matters up because they could become sensational. This could increase the sales of their newspapers. However, that sort of thing limits the factual information to a degree which leaves it wide open to questioning.

Much has been said about the problems associated with the nuclear power industry and the disposal of waste. Claims have been made that the radioactivity of uranium, the processing and enrichment of it, and the use of it in power stations, could cause great risks to people and to pastures nearby. There are many people engaged in the industry, and there are many people working in the industry who are happy about doing just that. They are not over concerned with the fears that have been expressed by many people.

Those workers are content to live near the reactors. They do not experience any problems in regard to the fears that a lot of people are expressing.

I turn now to the mining of the ore. In the initial stages of the process, after the ore has been mined it has to be milled to the refined stage—the yellow cake stage—for transport and then for sale. The tailings from that process contain a minute amount of radioactivity. The uranium ore which is mined usually contains less than 1 per cent of uranium. One may pick it up in one's hands without any fear at all.

There is a dust factor which has to be considered in relation to men continually engaged in mining. That dust contains radon or radioactivity. This is a matter to which the people engaged in the research have paid a great deal of attention.

Mr Tonkin: You can pick up a hand grenade in your bare hands, too. What does that prove—that it is not dangerous?

Mr McPHARLIN: The scientists pay attention to the safety of the workers. The scientists provide the safety measures to ensure that the miners are protected.

Open-cut mining is less hazardous than deep-pit mining. I had an excellent discussion with a leading scientist in Canada where there are both open-cut and deep mines.

Mr Jamieson: What sort of ore are they mining? Is it base-rock or calcrete?

Mr McPHARLIN: I am not sure what the ore is, but it could contain other minerals. It is different from the South African ore where there is a combination of gold and uranium. I took the opportunity to talk with this



gentleman; in fact, I considered it an honour to be able to speak to an American scientist whom I believe to be one of the leading scientists in the world. I had the opportunity to speak to him for 2½ hours at the St. Louis airport. He was on a lecture tour of the United States and it was fortunate that my itinerary allowed me to spend time with him.

I asked if he would allow me to record our discussion and he agreed. The only qualification he made was that I did not return and release the whole tape to the Press. He did not want anything he said to be distorted without being able to defend himself. I agreed to that, and I have not released the tape to the Press. He allowed me to use the context of the discussion in debate in Parliament.

I asked him questions which were on the minds of most people. I wanted the information to be satisfied as to the facts of the matter. I asked about the dangers people complain about in connection with nuclear power stations. The gentleman is Dr Teller, a leading scientist in the fusion process, and he is known as the father of the H-bomb which is the use of the fusion process for explosive devices.

Mr Tonkin: If you quote him in defence of your argument, you will not prove much.

Mr McPHARLIN: This gentleman is very highly regarded and is very much in favour of the proliferation of nuclear power.

Mr Tonkin: Rubbish!

Mr McPHARLIN: I asked him, "Are nuclear power stations safe, and are we exposed to radiation in normal day-to-day living?" He replied, "We are exposed to radiation in normal living due to natural causes."

Mr Tonkin interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Clarko): Order! The member for Morley is making continual interjections, and I ask him to refrain.

Mr McPHARLIN: The member for Morley would not have a one-hundredth part of the knowledge of the scientist to whom I am referring. The transcript continues—

I have extensively discussed in an earlier book on nuclear future, written in collaboration with Albert Latter, and published in 1957. At that time, you know, the question of fall-out was in the forefront of people's minds.

The natural background is approximately 100 millirads per year. Millirad—that is approximately one-tenth of a roentgen per

year. To this you have to add another .07 rad, altogether amounting to maybe one-sixth of a rad.

The .07 rad is what the normal individual gets who takes care of himself, by diagnostic x-rays—you know, your yearly, or bi-yearly check-up in lung x-rays or whatever else you take. Now we have rules, very stringent rules, which limit additional radiation to as much as the average dose of 0.17 rads. Now to put that in perspective I should say there are places and occupations where this so-called maximum permissible dose is greatly exceeded.

It is exceeded in many places in Brazil, and in many places on the Malabar coast. In India, where people live right on top of monazite sands containing thorium, and there the so-called maximum permissible dose is exceeded five or ten-fold.

That is much greater than any emission which might come from a nuclear power station. I have pages of this sort of information.

Mr Tonkin interjected.

Mr McPHARLIN: Those figures no doubt also would be available. I asked him, "Do the present release limits give adequate protection to the public if a larger number of nuclear power stations are built?" That is one of the questions a lot of people have asked. He replied as follows—

Without any question. The present limit is sufficient. I believe it is even overly conservative. In general, the statement made in this book by Professor Petr Beckmann *The Health Hazards of not going Nuclear*, is giving the facts in a straight-forward and understandable fashion.

He went on to detail the chemical poisons and radiation and he became a little technical. He then made this point—

I would say that probably very few people, and possibly nobody, gets from nuclear reactors as much of a radioactive effect as all of us get from the potassium in our own blood.

We are talking about ridiculously small considerations which are made frightening because of the sound of the word "nuclear".

Mr Tonkin: That is assuming they are ridiculously small.

Mr McPHARLIN: That comes from one of the most highly respected men in the industry.

Mr Tonkin: Did he say whether the threshold concept is valid?

Mr McPHARLIN: I said to him, "Some United States scientists have claimed that risks from nuclear generation are very serious. Have these claims been substantiated?" He answered as follows—

These claims have not been substantiated; they have been disproved and the claims themselves have been raised either by people who are liars, or by people who are ignorant. Actually, in the early history in Los Alamos a number of people, I think approximately 30, had been exposed to quantities of plutonium present in their bodies and according to some people all of them should be dead. Two of them are—one of them by an automobile accident, and another one by some other cause similarly unrelated to plutonium. The rest are well and there is not a single case where this exaggerated damage claimed by some people in emotional terms could be substantiated and all these facts are accessible.

Mr Tonkin: How many deaths occurred after the ingestion of plutonium?

Mr McPHARLIN: I do not know what the time factor is.

Mr B. T. Burke: Was this the next day?

Mr McPHARLIN: No.

Mr B. T. Burke: You would not know.

Mr McPHARLIN: I am speaking of a man who has been in the industry for a very long time. He is a responsible scientist as are most people engaged in nuclear research. Members will find that the majority of these men are just as concerned as we are about the safety factors of the industry.

Mr Tonkin: What did he say about waste?

Mr McPHARLIN: He had plenty to say about waste. I questioned him on this matter. I asked him, "Will radioactive waste from nuclear power generation become a major problem?" That is a very vital matter.

Mr Bryce: Do not tell me he said, "No."

Mr McPHARLIN: He said, "Yes. It will if you make it so by foolish political decisions. It certainly will not if you proceed in a reasonable manner."

Mr Bryce: What does "a reasonable manner" mean?

Mr McPHARLIN: He went on to say that the majority of scientists in the United States are using the system whereby the spent fuel is cooled. It is cooled in a deep pond for a period

of up to several years. This reduces the radioactivity. That is the process which is being followed. We then come to other methods whereby the heavy elements such as uranium, plutonium, and trans-plutonic elements are separated and it is the disposal of that high level radioactive liquid waste which is the problem.

Mr Tonkin: And what do they do with that?

Mr McPHARLIN: That is the major problem. They allow the other elements to cool so that the radioactivity is reduced to a level which is within the range set down by the international agencies. The low level liquid waste is disposed of at sea and the solids are usually buried.

Mr Tonkin: And he was in favour of that?

Mr Bryce: It is dumped into the sea.

Mr McPHARLIN: The low level liquid waste is disposed of in the sea.

Mr Tonkin: What about the high level stuff?

Mr Bryce: It is dumped in the sea just off the coast of San Francisco.

Mr McPHARLIN: The high level liquid waste is processed in the manner referred to by the member for Swan. It is placed in glass vessels or logs, or whatever they are called—

Mr Tonkin interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! In the last four minutes the member for Morley has interjected eight times and he has asked five questions. That is not an acceptable manner of interjection. I ask him to come to order and not to continue to interject in that way.

Mr McPHARLIN: Experiments on this have been carried out at the Harvard University research laboratories in England for many years. The liquid waste drips into molten glass and is placed in stainless steel containers. It is then buried in terrain which has been stable for millions of years. That is the process being used. In Scotland the scientists are test boring in deep rock in an endeavour to place the containers there. Various sites in America have been used; but the containers generally are buried in areas where the terrain has been stable for millions of years.

Mr B. T. Burke: Kalgoorlie.

Mr McPHARLIN: The Japanese have some problems, because of the earthquakes they experience. It is not yet known how long it will be necessary to store the nuclear waste, because it has not been going on for very long, but it is possibly for all time.

Mr H. D. Evans: It will take 500 000 years.

Mr McPHARLIN: If this waste is buried in terrain which has not moved for millions of years, will it suddenly erupt?

Mr Grill: You never know, do you?

Mr McPHARLIN: What danger will it be?

Mr Grill: Brodie-Hall from the Western Mining Corporation came to Kalgoorlie and said it had the best structure in the world to bury this stuff and two days later there was an earthquake.

Mr McPHARLIN: That does not mean it will cause a massive number of deaths in the population. The scientists are aware of the effects it may have.

Mr Tonkin: Why are they burying it in stable formations if they are not worried about it?

Mr McPHARLIN: They are doing this because they want the public to be confident that all safeguards are being taken. They want it to be as safe as possible.

Mr Grill: That is being used now is it?

Mr Tonkin: There is no commercial reprocessing going on at the present time throughout the world.

Mr McPHARLIN: The statement made by the honourable member is not correct.

Mr Bryce: It is true.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Mt. Marshall to direct his remarks to the Chair.

Mr McPHARLIN: Reprocessing is one of the necessary functions of the nuclear power industry. This is going on in many parts of the world. It is being done in Europe, England, and Japan.

Mr Tonkin: Not commercially; only militarily.

Mr McPHARLIN: I had the opportunity to visit a reprocessing plant at Windscale in England. This plant has been given the green light by the Government to increase its production markedly. I saw a plant in Japan also where reprocessing is being carried out. The Americans were not happy about it.

Mr H. D. Evans: Are they not sending their waste to Windscale for reprocessing?

Mr McPHARLIN: Japan may be sending some of its waste there; but it is reprocessing its own also. The reprocessing system involves the burnt fuel—that is, the uranium—being reprocessed after burning in the reactors and plutonium, which is a very valuable element, is extracted.

Mr Tonkin: It is very safe also.

Mr McPHARLIN: It is a very valuable fuel.

Mr Tonkin: And it is very safe.

Mr McPHARLIN: It is highly radioactive. It is reprocessed and used as a fuel. A couple of years ago the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Canada—

An Opposition member: President Nixon.

Mr McPHARLIN: —made a ruling that they did not want reprocessing to be carried out in their countries. However, scientists do not agree with that stand. The reason they do not agree is that the plutonium which is extracted from the fuel is a very valuable element. It is valuable because some countries are in the process of perfecting a reactor which uses plutonium as a fuel. This is called a fast breeder reactor which in fact breeds more fuel than it burns.

In the north of Scotland at Dunreay experiments are being conducted into this matter. A fast breeder reactor has been operating there for years. They will experiment and research until such time as it is perfected. This will prolong the life of the known uranium fuel reserves of the world. Every country is very interested in this. England is interested in proceeding further with it and Japan is experimenting with a fast breeder reactor. It has one on stream at the moment and a second one is due to come on stream at any moment.

Mr Bryce: More shame them!

Mr McPHARLIN: America also is interested. I am not sure exactly how far the Americans have gone with it; but the important point about the matter is fast breeder reactors will prolong the life of the uranium reserves of the world. We have to burn uranium to obtain plutonium. This process will cut down our use of uranium and, looking to the future, we will have a known fuel reserve to provide the power demands of industry for a much greater length of time.

We should look at the figures which show the percentage increase in the consumption of fuel per year by the highly industrialised countries. As time goes on the demand for fuel will increase. The known reserves of fossil fuels are very limited. Governments have a responsibility and we have a responsibility to provide fuel to countries which are in need of it.

The nuclear proliferation treaty has been agreed to by most countries. Australia would not sell uranium to those countries which are not a party to the treaty. In addition, if it were discovered that any country which is buying ore was using it for other than peaceful purposes, the supply would be discontinued. That has happened before and it will again. It occurred in India. Canada was selling uranium to India. It also sold that country a nuclear reactor in, I think, 1974. Then

India detonated a nuclear device and immediately the sale of uranium to India was discontinued by Canada. I had the good fortune to be in Canada and to talk to those involved. That is the situation under the agreement and the countries adhere to it.

I also had the good fortune to be taken over several reactors and to have their workings explained to me. While I was at one an inspector from the International Atomic Energy Agency carried out an inspection. This is going on all the time and managements are conscious that they must adhere to the guidelines, rules, and limits which have been established.

Australia must consider the enrichment aspect in the future. It would be only common sense. I saw several enrichment plants covering the two systems; that is, the gaseous diffusion and the other, the centrifuge. One of the latter has been perfected on the Continent and another in England. It is a cheaper method and the enrichment process does attract a great deal of income because of the charges made for it. I was taken over the plant and the process was explained to me in detail. In America there is a tremendous plant at Oak Ridge in Tennessee using the gaseous diffusion system and it attracts many millions of dollars to the American company involved because it processes material from all over the world. A great deal of our uranium has gone there. Some has gone also to Springfield in the United Kingdom for enrichment.

Mr Bryce: The fascination of the dollar is the basis of the whole thing!

Mr McPHARLIN: It is more than that. It involves the filling of a need.

Mr Jamieson: If that is so, what is the ultimate?

Mr McPHARLIN: The ultimate I believe—I was guided by the scientists who were good enough to spend time discussing the process with me—is that the fusion process will be perfected.

Mr Jamieson: I agree.

Mr McPHARLIN: However, it will take time.

Mr Jamieson: What I disagree with is the interim measure.

Mr McPHARLIN: One must have—

Mr Bryce: One must not!

Mr McPHARLIN: —a source.

Mr Jamieson: There is abundant fuel available. Don't give us that nonsense. It is the lobby which puts that story out. Don't give us that.

Mr McPHARLIN: The fusion method has not been perfected.

Mr Jamieson: It is not far off.

Mr McPHARLIN: We cannot say.

Mr Bryce: It is 30 or 40 years.

Mr McPHARLIN: It may be, but at the same time the demand for power is increasing tremendously and who knows how long our fossil fuels will last? Supposing the fusion method in the nuclear industry is not perfected? We may have to wait for a much longer period.

Mr Bryce: Necessity is always the mother of invention and if you do not have necessity, the invention is delayed.

Mr McPHARLIN: It is a safeguard to go ahead with nuclear power. If we have fossil fuel also, we have an insurance against the future.

I cannot understand why there appears to be so much opposition to the proposal. The people in the industry are responsible and qualified. They will not go ahead just for the sake of doing so and just for the sake of producing something spectacular. They are doing a responsible job.

Mr Bertram: What evidence do you have on which to base their responsibility? The same as we have in this Parliament?

Mr McPHARLIN: I suggest that at some time the member for Mt. Hawthorn should avail himself of an opportunity to talk to some of the people in the industry and then he will see how responsible they are and how highly qualified they are.

Mr Bertram: Qualifications have nothing to do with responsibility or character.

Mr McPHARLIN: The member for Swan referred to the contamination of pastures and waterways. All these aspects are being thoroughly monitored and checked over and over again—daily in some cases. I saw many monitoring units checking the water supplies. This is done regularly. Nothing is left to chance. These are the sorts of safety and research measures which are being practised in the industry, and we in Australia are in a position where we can take advantage of the experience gained in other parts of the world. We can profit by the experience of others. It is only when we know a problem that we can tackle it.

Had we not had people prepared to risk their lives in an attempt to break the sound barrier in aircraft, we would never have obtained a breakthrough in supersonic speeds. Risks are taken in development and progress in all spheres of life.

Mr H. D. Evans: Like asbestos mining!

**Mr McPHARLIN:** Supposing we did not go ahead with the development of nuclear power? In 20 or 30 years' time what would happen if no more fossil fuel were available? Do we want to leave such a legacy—no power—to future generations? What a responsibility that would be.

**Mr Jamieson:** That is not the ultimate option. There are alternatives.

**Mr McPHARLIN:** There are not!

**Mr Jamieson:** I tell you there are!

**Mr McPHARLIN:** The honourable member does not have any evidence of alternatives.

**Mr Laurance:** Not a practical one.

**Mr Jamieson:** Everything is practical.

**Mr Bryce:** If a war broke out tomorrow and solar energy was required, we would get it.

**Mr Laurance:** Is that your answer?

**Mr Bryce:** Not at all.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr McPHARLIN:** Nowhere in the world is there an alternative source which will provide the volume of power required. Solar energy is one alternative which is being researched in a number of countries. Solar energy is available in small quantities, but solar power in large quantities is just not available at present. I wish there were an alternative. I would like a renewable source such as solar energy if it could be made available. Everyone would. However it is not available.

**Mr Bryce:** There is not a quid in it. That is the point.

**Mr McPHARLIN:** Rubbish!

**Mr Bryce:** The sun is so cheap and it is so available that no-one would have a monopoly on the source of supply and that is why there is no real interest in the development of solar energy. You know that.

**Mr McPHARLIN:** There is mixed thinking on the subject of energy. No-one to whom I have spoken about the subject is opposed to the development of solar energy. Everyone is very interested in it.

**Mr B. T. Burke:** They're not trying hard.

**Mr McPHARLIN:** Many people are interested in wave energy also.

**Mr Bryce:** In a minor fashion.

**Mr McPHARLIN:** The point is that there has to be a volume of power. That is what we have to have.

One could go into many other aspects in connection with the comparisons between the risks involved in the mining of coal and the use of nuclear power to produce one kilowatt of electricity. Another aspect is the risk that results from the discharge into the atmosphere from the power stations.

I have with me other very important information, but my time has expired. Perhaps I will have an opportunity to present it at some other time.

**MR TONKIN (Morley) [5.41 p.m.]:** I believe we really should be questioning whether the taxpayer's money should continue to be spent on the Environmental Protection Authority. I think there is a very good case for scrapping that authority because the present Government is taking no notice of it at all.

**Mr Nanovich:** That is not true.

**Mr TONKIN:** We have the situation where, long before we know the attitude of the EPA towards the mining of bauxite, the Government introduces agreements and Bills into this place. There is no mention of the attitude towards this Bill of the Environmental Protection Authority. The Minister did not mention the EPA during his second reading speech. That indicates the authority is a piece of expensive window dressing.

When we introduced the legislation to set up the EPA we were sincere and we believed the authority would be an environmental watchdog. However, this Government is riding roughshod over it, and for this reason the people of Western Australia have to consider seriously whether we should continue to have the EPA. When we have an authority which appears to be doing a job, but which is not doing that job, we are in a worse situation because people are inclined to believe everything is under control; the EPA is there, and it must be looking into matters affecting the environment to ensure that things are safe. So, in reality there is a sense of false security. If we did not have the EPA people would be worried and agitating for the creation of such a body. I believe the people should be concerned at this expensive piece of window dressing which the Government is consistently ignoring. The Government has been very consistent on this matter by continually taking no notice of the EPA, and that is something which is to be deplored.

The member for Mt Marshall referred to Dr Teller. I would like to mention that Dr Teller coined the phrase, "The Faustian bargain". We

know that Faust sold his soul to the devil, and that gives an idea of the attitude of Dr Teller, and shows his concern about the future. In that phrase there is a suggestion that there is bargaining; that we are in fact mortgaging not our future so much—because most of us have very little future left—but mortgaging the future of our children and our descendants—some temporary relief for an adverse future.

The member for Mt Marshall asked what will happen in the next 30 years, and that is a good question. However, I think he is wrong in saying that fossil fuels will cut out within the next 30 years.

Mr McPharlin: Possibly.

Mr TONKIN: Not possibly. There is plenty of fossil fuel left. Certainly, petroleum will run out, but even if that is so, are we to say this? Because we have been living in the manner to which we have been accustomed, and if we are to continue living in that manner for the next 30 years, should we use fission power until we achieve fusion or solar power in order to bridge the gap between the present generation and future generations? For the sake of that miserable 30 years it seems we should put in jeopardy the people on this planet for the next 100 000 years. That is the situation which worries me.

Mr McPharlin: You do not think that the demand for energy will increase?

Mr TONKIN: I think it will. But given the present situation, there is no doubt there are other energy methods we can use. Different technology could be used so that the energy demand would not increase. But even allowing for an increase in demand, I believe there are other options.

We have been completely wasteful with our energy. The member opposite has said we should put it to some good use. We are wasting our supplies. For instance, we see children on trail bikes racing through the bush and along road verges. We heard all about that last night and early this morning. Those children are using up our fossil fuel.

Our fossil fuel was laid down over a period of millions of years. Mankind, savage barbarian that he is, is using up that supply in 100 years. What kind of waste is that? Imagine the situation if one spent a million years laying in a food supply and then set out to consume it as quickly as possible without any thought for the future.

It is not the demand for energy we need; we demand the right to waste our energy. One has only to look at the number of lights which are left on to observe the waste of electricity. So,

when people talk about the demand for energy, essentially they are talking about their right to go on wasting energy.

Mr McPharlin: The populations are increasing.

Mr TONKIN: They are. I expect the demand for power will increase.

The member for Mt. Marshall made great play about the fact that some people have grandchildren. I do not think that many people on the other side of this House would say that I am a very wise person. I do not hear any dissent—but really I am not endowed with a great deal of wisdom. However, it seems that if my daughter or my son were to become a mother or a father—and I might say I am very young to become a grandfather—the member opposite would say that I was, indeed, a wise man; a wise man from the west. As a result of some action or accident such as the one I have mentioned, not related to my ability to have wisdom, I would suddenly become wise.

I tire of the stupid and spurious argument that a person is wise because he has a grandchild. Stalin had a grandchild, so we must say that he was wise. Mussolini had a grandchild; President Nixon had a grandchild; and others have had grandchildren. They have all been grandfathers and, therefore, they are considered to be wise. That is insupportable; it is spurious. I feel ashamed that these arguments are advanced, and when people read our debates they must wonder what kind of people represent them in this place.

Mr McPharlin: You are supposed to be concerned for the future.

Mr TONKIN: I am concerned for the future. I am saying that by becoming a grandfather one does not necessarily become wise. The member opposite is confusing skill with wisdom. There is no doubt that we have seen some very successful people in the world with great skill, but can it be said that those people have been wise and have done the best for the human race? Of course that is not necessarily so.

Let us take Patton for example. He was a brilliant tactician, and a brilliant commander in the field, especially in tank warfare. But, when one looks at his private life, one must question whether he was wise. I just mention that in passing, and I could mention many other instances. However, it is quite spurious to suggest that because some person has a particular skill as a scientist, he is wise. The member for Mt. Marshall is confusing knowledge with responsibility.

Mr McPharlin: The point is the responsibility to the coming generations.

Mr TONKIN: That is right. The member for Mt Marshall has to realise—and he does not think of this often enough because his ear is not tuned to it—that a responsible person does not have to be a scientist or a politician; he can be a plain, ordinary bloke.

The member for Mt. Marshall mentioned Sir Ernest Titterton and Sir Philip Baxter who are highly qualified scientists but who rarely speak as scientists. When one hears them speaking on the radio or television they are speaking as politicians—and reactionary politicians. We are not hearing the sober evaluation of evidence which we would hear if they were speaking as scientists; we are hearing the emotive type of comment which most of us make. But because the emotive comment comes from the mouth of a scientist, we should not say, "He is a scientist; it is not an emotive comment; let us listen to what he says."

Mr McPharlin: Whom do you take notice of?

Mr TONKIN: In technical matters I will take notice of the technician. Largely these are not questions of technique or expertise in that area. They are value judgments, and the value judgments of the non-expert are just as valid as the value judgments of the expert.

When the member for Mt. Marshall speaks to a scientist and asks, "Are there any problems?", the question is practically worthless. It is a shame that this Parliament should send someone across the world to obtain information which is known to a large number of members of this House without stirring outside the State. The questions the honourable member asked were very general and vague. For example, he asked, "Are the warnings about nuclear power stations valid?" The answer was, "No." What warnings? All kinds of lunatics are saying all kinds of things. If someone says a critical mass could go up in a mushroom cloud, we know that is not very likely and that those predictions of doom are not soundly based. On the other hand, some people have spoken about other types of problems.

I suggest we need to go into the matter far more deeply and look at it in a far more sophisticated way. There is no point in our just skimming over the surface. The member for Mt. Marshall says I am not a nuclear physicist and asks what right I have to make a decision. In that case we should close the Parliament, make

Sir Ernest Titterton the dictator, and let him make the decision. If that is what the honourable member thinks we should do—

Mr Mensaros: Or the EPA. It is the same principle.

Mr TONKIN: There I take issue with the Minister.

Mr Mensaros: Not an elected Government but a body which is there for ever.

Mr TONKIN: I am not suggesting the EPA should have control. I accept that the Government should make the decision, but it should do so after listening to the EPA and, more importantly, after the EPA's statements have been made public so that the people themselves—who should be the final arbiters, if we live in a democracy—can say, "The Government has made this decision, but on the other hand the EPA has indicated certain dangers." The citizen then has to make his value judgment.

I do not suggest the EPA should make the decision. It is a body which is not responsible to the people and which cannot be turfed out at an election. But the Government should listen to the EPA, and it is important that the EPA's reports be made available to the public so that the people can understand what is going on. I believe the EPA is being ignored at the present time.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to the lure of the dollar. That is something members opposite probably respect more than members on this side of the House do. If that is so—and we understand the dollar has its uses because it is an indicator of economic factors—we should take cognizance of the fact that the insurance industry will not touch the nuclear industry.

Mr McPharlin: That is not true.

Mr TONKIN: It is true.

Mr McPharlin: It is not.

Mr TONKIN: It depends what one means by "touch". It will be realised, in view of the limitations the insurance industry sets for itself on the nuclear industry in the United States and Britain—that it is afraid to take the risks, despite the network of reinsurance—

Mr McPharlin: It has changed in recent years.

Mr TONKIN: The United States has an Act of Congress and Britain an Act of Parliament which make the taxpayer—who has no choice, poor sod

—pick up the tab. The Government, through an Act of the Legislature, is the final backstop. That is the situation at the present time. The insurance industry will not touch it.

Mr McPharlin: It is not true to say it will not touch it. It is involved and it has changed its attitude.

Mr TONKIN: It is very limited and the real backup is provided by the Government, not in fire and life insurance but in insurance in the nuclear industry. We must ask ourselves what the insurance industry is afraid of. If ever there were realists as far as the dollar is concerned, they are the insurance companies.

The member for Mt. Marshall spoke about monitoring. I do not trust this Government to let the people know the results of such monitoring. I believe this Government has a mania for secrecy. We have seen this with the red mud lakes and so on. One has to know the answers before one can ask the questions. I believe the Government would suppress such information. If it were shown that dangers exist, rather than have a panic, a flight of the dollar, a strike, or a problem associated with bad readings, the Government would suppress information. Monitoring may sound all very well but, firstly, it has to be made public and, secondly, there has to be willingness to act.

The word "monitoring" is used by the Government when it is looking at prices. It says the Consumer Affairs Bureau is monitoring prices. That is another waste of the taxpayers' money. What does the bureau do to stop prices rising? It says, "Tut, tut", and does nothing at all because the Government considers it should not have power to control prices. "Monitoring" is a nice word which suggests people are looking at things, but if we had a fire brigade which was not allowed to have any water to put out a fire it would be a waste of the taxpayers' money. It could be said it was monitoring the fire but it would have no ability to act.

We have in this place and elsewhere in the community an inability to understand the qualitative difference in nuclear power. It is not just quantitatively different; it is also qualitatively different.

The great nuclear physicist Lang Hancock was giving a talk one day on the perils of nuclear power. He held up a box of matches and said, "That is as dangerous as a nuclear reactor. If I strike a match down at North Fremantle where all the oil is stored, there would be a tremendous explosion. So a box of matches is just as dangerous

as a nuclear reactor." He was suggesting a petroleum explosion is much the same kind of thing as a nuclear explosion.

Not being respectful, and not realising he had so many letters after his name, I asked Mr Hancock, "What is the half-life of a petroleum fire?" I think he thought I did not quite understand what a half-life was; he did not get the point. The point I was making is it is ridiculous to try to equate a petroleum explosion and a nuclear explosion. With a petroleum explosion, once the fire is out—whether it takes a few hours or a few days—that is the finish of it. Whoever may be burnt, that is the end of it.

Here we are dealing with a new substance. In fact, the isotope plutonium 239 was not known on earth until we started to put uranium into nuclear reactors. So we have actually introduced something completely new to this earth. With everything else we deal with, we are simply combining and recombining elements. Although we combine different elements together, we are still dealing with the kinds of substances in spite of which human beings have managed to evolve.

Mr McPharlin: You are aware that a nuclear reactor cannot explode, aren't you?

Mr TONKIN: As I have already indicated, a nuclear reactor cannot explode because there is no critical mass. Certainly the fear of an explosion is unfounded and unreasonable.

I now turn to the question of the time scale. This is not simply a problem for the scientists. If it were, perhaps we could listen to Professor Titterton and people like him, although I would caution against that course.

When we consider a time scale of 100 000 years, we then must say, "Do we have the political institutions capable of dealing with this problem? Can we expect that civilisation will last for the next 100 000 years so we can deal with the problems of the storage of the nuclear waste?" I remind members that Rome was known as the "Eternal City", but the Roman Empire did not last all that long.

The history of civilisation is one of development and decay. So we cannot have the confidence to say to our descendants, "In 100 000 years we will have a stable system which will enable us to look after this high-level waste which cannot be changed." We cannot deal with it. There are many dangerous substances which can be acted upon chemically and which can be altered, but we cannot transmute these substances we are discussing now.



This time element presents a very great problem. I am reminded, therefore, that in dealing with this problem we are really like little babies playing with matches. We do not know what we have in our hands. We do not have the experience or the wisdom—although mankind certainly has the wisdom as distinct from the technical skill—to be able to deal with this kind of problem. We do not know what we are doing.

Some of the people who have expressed confidence in our ability to cope with the problem say, "Look, there is no problem because we are all receiving background radiation." I do not really think we had to ask Dr Teller that question, "Are we exposed to nuclear radiation?" All members of this House would have been able to answer "Yes" to that question. Also, there was no need to ask Dr Teller the question, "Is the background emission from a nuclear reactor very great or not?" because we do not know what is great and what is small.

There are many qualified scientists who doubt whether the threshold criterion operates at all in this field; in other words, they doubt very much whether, in respect of any amount of radiation, we can say, "That is only a little bit of radiation and it will not hurt you." Let us consider a substance such as cyanide. We can say to a person, "You can take a certain amount of cyanide and it will not kill you." We all take cyanide in various amounts in our food.

Mr Dadour: Not enough.

Mr TONKIN: Yes, some of us do not take enough. The scientists can say to us, "If you are normally healthy and you take a certain amount of cyanide, you will not die." However, no such statement can be made with respect to radiation. We do not know what amount of additional increase in radiation will cause problems. How can anyone here say, "There is no harm associated with background radiation", when we have the large number of deaths from cancer which we have today? How can we have enough confidence to say, "We are all receiving emissions of radioactivity, and there are no problems"?

Obviously we cannot make those statements, and certainly we cannot say how much extra to the background radiation will be dangerous.

I am reminded of the problems associated with Wittenoom. We are aware that the cancer problem resulting from the industry at Wittenoom will not reach its peak for another 10 to 15 years. The member for Mt. Marshall will be interested to know that the brilliant German scientist who developed thalidomide said, "It is the safest thing since water." Therefore, how can we say the

experts know what they are doing? I am aware that they know more than I do about this subject, but it does not mean that they are God. It does not mean they are infallible.

These scientists have personality problems just like the rest of us. Some of them are unstable, some of them are ambitious, and all kinds of pressures are forced on them. So when one of these experts says, "Let us go ahead", we do not know whether he is empire-building, looking for jobs, or whether in fact he is gambling. Some people would be quite happy to take a gamble on a matter such as this. As we know, some people drive in a very cautious manner on the road while others take a gamble. A science degree does not preclude the possibility that a man will drive recklessly. All these factors come into it. We just cannot say, "Let us leave it all to the experts", because the experts are often wrong.

When we discuss these problems of course we are creating experts. We use experts on technical matters, but we do not use them for value judgments. Unfortunately at the present time there is great pressure upon us to go ahead with nuclear activities because of the unemployment situation. The members of the Australian Labor Party find the pressure of unemployment almost intolerable, but obviously the people in government find it an even greater burden. Although we are told that we must develop to provide more jobs, it does not necessarily mean that development will lead to more jobs. Let us leave aside all the possible deleterious effects of the nuclear industry, and consider simply the matter of employment and development.

We have more development in this State than we had 10 or 15 years ago. If I were to ask the Premier to compare the State of Western Australia now with what it was 10 years ago, he would point very proudly to so many developments and improvements and he would claim the credit for these for himself. We could then say, "What about the employment in Western Australia? It is worse than it was 15 years ago." Not only do we have more people unemployed, but we have a greater amount of unemployment expressed as a percentage of the work force.

Mr Mensaros: Do you really think that is a cause and effect argument?

Mr TONKIN: Of course not.

Mr Mensaros: Then what is your argument?

Mr TONKIN: The Minister has made my point for me. I am saying there is no one-to-one correlation; but that is what Governments do to people dishonestly. They put to them the simplistic and spurious argument: "Do you want

jobs?" Naturally, the people say they want jobs, and the Government says, "Right, this project will provide jobs." It might provide jobs, but that does not mean as a consequence there will be less unemployment in Western Australia or in Australia.

Consider the United States, one of the most developed countries in the world. The United States of America has had chronic unemployment for decade after decade. The problem at present is that anyone brave enough or foolish enough—it depends where one stands—to dare to stand up against development runs the risk of being trampled by the mob who are saying, "We want jobs." I can understand the people wanting jobs; I have never been unemployed, but I can understand it must be a terrible situation to be in.

However, this is the problem we must face at the present time. I believe we are in danger of being stamped into many unwise decisions simply because it is difficult for us to stand up against the popular clamour for development; because people assume development means progress, the better life, and less unemployment. Those correlations do not necessarily exist.

Mr Shalders: It might not mean less unemployment, but it certainly means more jobs.

Mr TONKIN: It means more jobs, certainly; but if we are thinking in global terms it does not mean necessarily there will be more jobs in the world: if we are thinking in terms of Australia it does not mean there will be more jobs in Australia; and if we are thinking in terms of Western Australia it does not mean there will be more jobs in Western Australia. When we create jobs here we can in fact destroy jobs there. We have more unemployment today than 10 or 20 years ago.

Mr Shalders: There is more employment, too.

Mr TONKIN: Yes, but considering we have so many more people today, are we really better off? If we want to paint a really lurid picture and say we have 100 000 unemployed people in Western Australia, we could still say there are more people employed now than there were previously. Is the member for Murray really saying Western Australia is in a better position now than it was 10 years ago because more people are employed, ignoring the fact that many, many people are unemployed and all kinds of social problems are being caused? That argument is far too simplistic. The matter needs far more examination.

#### *Leave to Continue Speech*

Because I want to examine the matter more carefully, I seek leave of the House to continue my remarks at the next sitting.

Leave granted.

Debate thus adjourned.

#### **BILLS (6): ASSENT**

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills—

1. Public Service Bill.
2. Acts Amendment (Public Service) Bill.
3. Shipping and Pilotage Act Amendment Bill.
4. Road Traffic Act Amendment Bill.
5. Consumer Affairs Act Amendment Bill.
6. Law Reform Commission Act Amendment Bill.

*House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.*

#### **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

##### **LEGAL AID COMMISSION**

##### *Funding*

2290. Mr DAVIES, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Of the sources of income for the Legal Aid Commission, does the \$269 000 estimate for the commission this year from Consolidated Revenue include any funds from the solicitors trust fund account?
- (2) If "No" how much does the solicitors trust fund account hold?
- (3) Are funds from this account used by the Legal Aid Commission?
- (4) If so, how much in this financial year will the commission receive from this source?

Mr O'Neil (for Sir CHARLES COURT) replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) to (4) It is assumed that the question is related to the amount of funds which would be available for legal aid from the legal contribution trust.

The funds which become available from the investment of proportion of the solicitors guarantee trust account is determined at the end of each half year. The amount which the Legal Aid Commission receives is the amount of interest received less administration costs and any amount required to maintain the solicitors guarantee trust fund at \$200 000.

The amount provided in the present half year was \$147 600 and the estimated amount which would be available in the next half year will be \$135 000, making a total for the year of \$282 600.

### ABORIGINES

#### *"Rockhampton Morning Bulletin" Article*

2307. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Community Welfare:

- (1) Has he seen a press report in the *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* dated Wednesday, 25th October, 1978, headed "Policies for blacks under fire"?
- (2) Is the statement that all State Ministers concerned with Aboriginal welfare expressed "strong opposition" to Federal Government policies fact?
- (3) Is the statement also fact that all State Ministers "expressed strong support for Queensland's Aboriginal policies"?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) My understanding of the outcome of the meeting was that there was some general discontent on the level of funds provided particularly for housing and for a number of commitments to State departments where long term funding for staffing arrangements was necessary.
- (3) I am not aware that there was any general support for Queensland's Aboriginal policies other than for projects which had counterparts in other States such as housing programmes conducted by the State Housing Commission and which all States felt were better carried out by State instrumentalities.

### NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF

#### *Cyclone "Alby": Gascoyne Residents*

2335. Mr DAVIES, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Are residents of the Gascoyne region who were affected by Cyclone Alby, eligible for financial assistance?
- (2) If so, to whom should they apply?

Mr O'Neil (for Sir CHARLES COURT) replied:

- (1) and (2) Assistance to victims of cyclone "Alby" was confined to an area which can generally be described as comprising the south-west and Great Southern administrative regions. In this area, the damage caused by the cyclone was such

that the area was declared eligible for financial assistance under the Commonwealth-State natural disaster arrangements.

The Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund also confined its relief operations to the same southern area of the State.

If the member knows of any specific cases of "Alby" damage in the Gascoyne region which should have been considered for assistance, would he please let me know.

### HOSPITAL

#### *Heathcote Reception Hospital*

2336. Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is it a fact that Heathcote hospital will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 1979?
- (2) If "Yes" what steps are being taken to mark this event during the 1979 150th Anniversary Year celebrations?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) 1979 is the 50th anniversary of the official opening of the Heathcote hospital.
- (2) No special celebrations have been arranged but a small function will be held at the hospital during the year. The occasion will be given special mention in the Mental Health Services exhibition to be set up in St. George's Hall, 508 Hay Street, Perth, opening in February, 1979.

### MINING

#### *Readymix Quarry*

2337. Mr PEARCE, to the Minister for Mines:

When might I expect a reply to my letter of 12th July, 1978, concerning blasting at the Readymix quarry, Gosnells?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

I regret my reply has been inadvertently delayed as at the time of the receipt of the member's letter I was overseas and had no personal knowledge of it. I thank the member for his advice and will attend to his query immediately.

## NUDIST BEACH AT SWANBOURNE

### *Control*

2338. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) What public authority has regulatory control to permit and regulate the nude beach at Swanbourne?
  - (a) in relation to the area it originally occupied; and
  - (b) in relation to the area south of the original site?
- (2) Is it a fact that the beach area south of the original site of the nudist beach is increasingly being used as a nude beach?
- (3) What action can be taken and by whom to prevent the southward shift of the nude beach?
- (4) Is it fact that the "No Parking" signs on the east side of the road are being constantly ignored by the users of the Swanbourne beaches?
- (5) What authority has responsibility for the enforcement of the parking restrictions in the area?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

The Town Clerk City of Nedlands, has advised as follows:—

- (1) (a) It is believed that the land is under the control of the Department of the Army.
  - (b) Persons south of the army land come within the scope of the by-laws of the council of the City of Nedlands.
- (2) No. Due to council action, this use has now ceased in this area.
- (3) Constant patrolling by council Officers.
- (4) No. Council polices the area including weekends and a tow away vehicle is in use.
- (5) Nedlands City Council.

## TOURISM

### *Norseman Rest Centre Complex*

2339. Mr GRILL, to the Minister representing the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Has the Department of Tourism received a proposal from the Dundas Shire Council relating to the construction of a rest centre complex for road travellers to be erected at Norseman?

- (2) (a) If "Yes" could the Minister give details as to when the proposal was received;
- (b) what is the general nature of the complex; and
- (c) the approximate proposed cost thereof?
- (3) What is the Government's attitude towards the proposal?
- (4) What is the Government's attitude towards promoting Norseman as a "gateway town" to this State in tourist terms?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) The initial approach was made in February, 1977 and discussion and correspondence has continued. On 24th October, 1978 the shire was requested to expand on the proposed use of an information kiosk and other matters.
  - (b) A rest area with barbecues, showers, toilets, information kiosk and associated works.
  - (c) The most recent cost estimate of \$102'000 includes new facilities for the existing swimming pool, towards which the council would contribute.
- (3) Although the proposal has been received sympathetically by the Department of Tourism, a decision must wait the resolution of all matters presently in doubt and agreement with the Shire of Dundas in relation to the sharing of the cost of the project.
- (4) Norseman is recognised as a major centre for interstate travellers and every effort is made to encourage interested persons with the necessary means to establish accommodation and other facilities for tourists.
 

The town's existing facilities and amenities are referred to in appropriate tourist promotional literature, etc., which will be expanded as development takes place.

## FLOODING

### *Control Scheme: Gascoyne River*

2340. Mr JAMIESON, to the Minister representing the Minister for Water Supplies:

- (1) What priority has the Government accorded to the proposed flood mitigation of the Gascoyne River at Carnarvon?

- (2) Was this scheme included in submissions from Western Australia for assistance from the Commonwealth under its \$200 000 five year water resources and flood control scheme?
- (3) When can it be expected that action will be taken to make a start on this protective scheme for Carnarvon?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) High priority.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) Public Works Department has the work listed on its provisional works programme for commencement in 1979-80. However, the rate of progress will be largely dependent upon the outcome of a submission to the Commonwealth Government for financial assistance.

## HOUSING

### *Rental: Maintenance*

2341. Mr TAYLOR, to the Minister for Housing:  
With respect to State Housing Commission rental apartments:

- (1) Is there any regular maintenance/repainting programme being carried out at apartments?
- (2) If "Yes" at what frequency?
- (3) If "No" is the commission contemplating introducing a repainting programme at regular intervals?

Mr RIDGE replied:

- (1) External: Yes.  
Internal: No.
- (2) Frequency to external: approximately eight years.
- (3) On request by tenants in occupation, only where considered absolutely essential. All vacant properties are brought to a reasonable condition for ingoing tenants.

## HOUSING

### *Rental: Maintenance*

2342. Mr TAYLOR, to the Minister for Housing:  
With respect to State Housing Commission rental houses/duplexes/town houses:

- (1) Is there any regular maintenance/repainting programme being carried out on the exterior of such homes?
- (2) If "Yes" at what frequency?

- (3) If "No" with respect to any category, is the commission contemplating introducing a repainting programme at regular intervals?
- (4) Is there any regular maintenance/repainting programme being carried out on the interior of such homes?
- (5) If "Yes" at what frequency?
- (6) If "No" with respect to any category, is the commission contemplating introducing a repainting programme at regular intervals?

Mr RIDGE replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) and (3) Approximately eight years.
- (4) and (5) No.
- (6) On request by tenants in occupation, only where considered absolutely essential. All vacant properties are brought to a reasonable condition for ingoing tenants.

## FIRE STATION

### *Joondalup*

2343. Mr CRANE, to the Chief Secretary:

- (1) Has the W.A. Fire Brigades Board been successful in its approach to the Joondalup Development Corporation for a fire station site to be made available?
- (2) Are loan funds available from Treasury for its construction of a fire station at Joondalup?
- (3) When is it expected that work will commence on this fire station?
- (4) When is it expected that a fully manned fire station will be operating at Joondalup to take the pressure off the Wanneroo volunteer fire brigade who are possibly being put at risk in fighting industrial electrical and home fires for which they are not trained and for which the proper equipment is not available?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) and (2) Yes.
- (3) It is anticipated that work could commence in the second half of this financial year.
- (4) The construction period is expected to be approximately 12 months.

## TOURISM

*Travel Agents' Conference*

2344. Mr TAYLOR, to the Minister representing the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Are any efforts being made to have the world conference of the association of travel agents in Perth in Western Australia's sesquicentennial year?
- (2) If "Yes" is the question of finding suitable accommodation as yet an unresolved problem?
- (3) Would the Minister support any moves to have the above conference held in Western Australia?
- (4) If "Yes" would the Minister lend his good offices in an endeavour to have the above conference held in Western Australia?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No. There are two eminently suitable venues available at alternative dates, either of which may be acceptable to the organisers.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) The Western Australian member of the Board of Governors of the World Association of Travel Agents and the Perth Convention Bureau, are assured of the

Minister's full support in their endeavours to secure this meeting for Western Australia's Sesquicentennial Year.

As the member will be aware, the Association referred to is the oldest travel body in the world, and its membership includes eastern European nationals, as well as those of western nations.

This travel conference would probably be unique in that delegates, of which there would be from 250 to 300, represent travel agents, as distinct from principals.

## HOUSING

*Manjimup*

2345. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Housing:

- (1) What is the waiting list for each of the various categories of State Housing Commission accommodation at Manjimup?
- (2) What is the waiting period for each category?
- (3) What is the number of units being built in Manjimup at this time?
- (4) What number of units does the State Housing Commission propose to build in Manjimup in—
  - (a) 1979;
  - (b) 1980?

Mr RIDGE replied:

## (1) Rental applications

	5 B/R	4 B/R	3 B/R	2 B/R	1 B/R	S/U	Total
Caucasian	....	1	15	15	5	6	42
Aboriginal	....	1	1	1	....	....	3
Total	....	2	16	16	5	6	45

## Purchase applications

Purchase only	....	5
Dual	....	1
In occupation	....	10
Total	....	16

(2) Caucasian	4 B/R	3 B/R	2 B/R	1 B/R	S/U
Current month of allocation	April 1978	March 1978	October 1976	May 1973	January 1978
Aboriginal					
Current month of allocation	June 1978	Sept. 1978	May 1978		

- (3) Eight 3-bedroom houses. 19 per cent complete at 10th October, 1978. Expected to be completed 8th February, 1979.

- (4) Provision of accommodation at Manjimup, as in other centres, will be considered as the construction programme for 1979-80 is reviewed.

## HEALTH

### *Asbestos: Risks*

2346. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) When did the Public Health Department first become aware of the health risks by persons associated with asbestos mining?
- (2) Has the department collated information concerning health risks and the consequences of the effects of asbestos mining among former employees?
- (3) When did the department first advise the Government of the day of their concern?
- (4) Will he table the information referred to in (3) above?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) The member has already been advised, in answer to No. 1068, that the Public Health Department would have been aware of the health risks in the 1930's.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) The earliest record of the department's concern regarding dust is dated 14th November, 1949.
- (4) It is not normal practice to table correspondence between Ministers.

## TRANSPORT: AIR

### *Perth-Port Hedland-Darwin*

2347 Mr LAURANCE, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is there an application by TAA to introduce a second DC9 service on the Perth-Port Hedland-Darwin run?
- (2) Is it a fact that MMA is opposing this application because:
  - (a) present loadings are less than 50 per cent;
  - (b) the additional service is likely to adversely affect the existing F28 services to other outports in the north of the State?
- (3) Will he investigate whether existing services will be adversely affected to the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley areas if TAA's application is approved?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) Yes. An application has been received by the Commonwealth Department of Transport.

(151)

- (2) (a) and (b) The basis of any opposition by MMA to this application is not known to me. I have been informed that the application by TAA is at present being considered by the Commonwealth Department of Transport.

- (3) Yes. In addition as all aircraft services, other than the TAA Perth-Port Hedland-Darwin service which operates from Perth to the north-west, do so in accordance with timetables which must be approved by the Commissioner of Transport, this is a matter which is examined on a continuing basis.

## HOSPITALS

### *Young Adults with Terminal Illnesses*

2348. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Are there any facilities for the hospitalisation of young adults with terminal illnesses other than hospitals catering for old people?
- (2) If so, where?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Public hospitals provide facilities for all persons including young adults with terminal illnesses. I am aware there are problems from time to time and that some young adults with terminal illnesses are occasionally nursed in circumstances which may not be ideal. I am inquiring into the needs and the facilities available in this area.
- (2) Public hospitals throughout Western Australia.

## WATER SUPPLIES

### *Hydrofluoride Acid*

2349. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister representing the Minister for Water Supplies:

- (1) Is hydrofluoride acid used in Western Australian water supplies?
- (2) If so, will the Minister provide details of the extent of such use?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) and (2) No.

## RAILWAYS

*Capital Investment, Interest and Depreciation,  
and Loans*

2350. Mr McPHARLIN, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) What is the total capital investment of the Western Australian Government railways as at 30th June, 1978?
- (2) What has been the increase in capital investment over the last ten years?
- (3) What is the total amount charged against interest and depreciation over the ten year period?
- (4) What are the terms of loans to Westrail, i.e., period of repayment and interest rate?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) \$300 689 173.
- (2) \$56 866 156.
- (3) Interest \$126 546 467; depreciation \$90 426 836.
- (4) The Western Australian Government Railways has not raised loans in its own name since the conclusion of the 1927 financial agreement. Since that time, railways capital has been provided by the State from its pool of loan funds, raised by the Commonwealth on the State's behalf. The State meets the interest and sinking fund payments on these borrowings and in turn levies interest and sinking fund contributions from the railways and other business undertakings which receive an allocation from the State General Loan Fund.

It is not practicable to assign specific loan raisings to individual authorities from the pool of funds in the General Loan Fund account.

Because the aggregate State debt comprises many loans at varying interest rates and periods of amortisation, State authorities are charged an average rate of interest and a uniform sinking fund contribution which is calculated to amortise the debt over 53 years, the period over which the State debt is amortised.

In accordance with the averaging approach, the interest rate charged by the Treasury in 1977-78 on the railways loan indebtedness was 6.5 per cent.

At 30th June, 1977, funds provided from the General Loan Fund to the Railways Department totalled \$330 662 502. However, after deducting sinking fund contributions, depreciation used in reduction of capital indebtedness and capital written off, the actual loan liability at that date was \$204 573 166.

## WATER SUPPLIES

*Rates: Commercial Properties in  
Country Towns*

2351. Mr COWAN, to the Minister representing the Minister for Water Supplies:

What are the water rates charged on commercial properties in rural towns for the years:

- (a) 1974;
- (b) 1975;
- (c) 1976;
- (d) 1977;
- (e) 1978?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

It has been interpreted that the member is referring to financial years commencing 1st July and that he wishes to know the water rate in each dollar of the estimated net annual value. On this basis the answer is 10 cents for all years 1974 to 1978.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

## RAILWAYS

*Boyup Brook*

1. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is it intended to move any or all of the crews of locomotives stationed at Boyup Brook at the present time?
- (2) If "Yes" to the above—
  - (a) when is it proposed these crews will be moved;
  - (b) to what depots is it proposed to move them;
  - (c) what is the reason for moving these crews;
  - (d) precisely how will trains servicing Boyup Brook be staffed having regard for the need of men to stay over?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) Yes. One of the two crews.
- (2) (a) November 27th, 1978;



- (b) one crew will be transferred—driver to Lake Grace and fireman to Collie;
- (c) better organisation of crew working arrangements;
- (d) a Bunbury crew will work trains to Boyup Brook then take their rest period and work a train back to Bunbury.

## EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

### *Warnbro Area: Committee*

#### 2. Mr BARNETT, to the Deputy Premier:

- (1) If, as the Deputy Premier claims in his answer to me yesterday, the committee set up to co-ordinate the search for high explosives in the Warnbro area has not been instructed not to talk to me, will he authorise them to answer any reasonable questions that I as member for the area may put to them in the future?
- (2) Was the exercise conducted considered successful?
- (3) Is it now known—
  - (a) how much it will cost to clear the prime impact area;
  - (b) how many personnel will be required for the exercise?
- (4) When is it anticipated work will commence to clear the prime impact area?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) The committee is a joint Commonwealth-State committee responsible to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister and the Deputy Premier of Western Australia.

It undertakes tasks assigned to it by those Ministers conjointly and reports to them conjointly.

The honourable member is perfectly entitled, as he is doing now, to direct any reasonable questions to me as the responsible State Minister.

The very nature of the committee determines that on some issues I may be required to consult my Federal counterpart. The honourable member is perfectly free to make submissions to the committee if he so desires.

- (2) to (4) These matters are the subject of a report which has been forwarded to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister in Federal Affairs.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### *Information Leakage*

#### 3. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning:

My question refers to the one I asked yesterday about leakages of information. In view of reports that information leaked from State Government departments has been of a secret nature, and in view of the provisions of section 81 of the Criminal Code relating to the disclosure of official secrets, why is this matter not under investigation by the CIB instead of the Commissioner for Town Planning?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

The matter has been investigated by officers of my department. I am completely satisfied no officers have behaved in any way incorrectly.

## HOUSING: PURCHASE

### *Applicants: Eligibility*

#### 4. Mr B. T. BURKE, to the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that the State Housing Commission is now withdrawing, on financial grounds, the eligibility of some applicants for SHC purchase homes?
- (2) Does the Minister concede that this policy is creating a category of people who are unable to buy a family home from any source?
- (3) What is the policy of the Government towards these people?

Mr RIDGE replied:

- (1) Yes, but only in relation to those applicants who do not have the financial capacity to service a loan, and where there is no apparent prospect of an improvement in income to enable such servicing.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) This category of applicant is better served by tenancy assistance.

## MINING: BAUXITE

*Alcoa: Disagreements with Government*

5. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Industrial Development:

Relevant to the requirement under 3A of the EPA report, 1978, dealing with disagreement between Alcoa and the State regarding bauxite mining on Alcoa's leases—

- (1) Will a special arbitration body be set up, and if so, of what members will it comprise?
- (2) If no special body is to be created, before what authority or individual will any possible disputes be heard?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

I thank the member for Warren for having given adequate notice of the question. The answer is—

- (1) No.

- (2) In accordance with clause 31 of the Alumina Refinery Agreement, 1961, as amended by clause 14 (4) of the Alumina Refinery (Pinjarra) Agreement, 1969, any disputes will be referred to and settled by arbitration under the provisions of the Arbitration Act, 1895.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

*Information Leakage*

6. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning:

In view of the fact that the Minister is satisfied with the result of the inquiry and in order to clear the air, is she prepared to table the relevant papers?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

Yes.

Mr Davies: When?

Mrs CRAIG: At the next sitting of the House.