

# Legislative Council

Thursday, the 27th October, 1977

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. Clive Griffiths) took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

## QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

## BILLS (7): INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

### 1. Liquor Act Amendment Bill (No. 2).

Bill introduced, on motion by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House), and read a first time.

### 2. Criminal Code Amendment Bill (No. 3).

### 3. Off-shore (Application of Laws) Bill.

Bills introduced, on motions by the Hon. I. G. Medcalf (Attorney-General), and read a first time.

### 4. Western Australian Marine Act Amendment Bill.

Bill introduced, on motion by the Hon. D. J. Wordsworth (Minister for Transport), and read a first time.

### 5. Land Act Amendment Bill.

Bill introduced, on motion by the Hon. I. G. Medcalf (Attorney-General), and read a first time.

### 6. Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill (No. 2).

### 7. Marketing of Eggs Act Amendment Bill.

Bills introduced, on motions by the Hon. D. J. Wordsworth (Minister for Transport), and read a first time.

## URANIUM

*Endorsement of Government's Decisions: Motion*

**THE HON. G. G. MacKINNON** (South-West—Leader of the House) [2.52 p.m.]: I move—

That this House endorses the decision of the Government to permit in Western Australia—

- (a) The mining of uranium; and
- (b) The processing of uranium, including the production of yellow cake ( $U_3O_8$ ), and the upgrading and eventual enrichment of uranium to a level suitable for use in nuclear power stations.

For these purposes—

(1) Exploration for uranium shall be encouraged.

(2) All phases of uranium exploration, mining and processing shall be subject to—

- (a) adequate personal and community health safeguards,
- (b) adequate environmental safeguards, and
- (c) adequate mining, transport, handling and processing safeguards,

which are covered by existing statutes and regulations, and by those to be amended and proclaimed from time to time.

(3) There shall be continuing research in Western Australia, in co-operation with the Commonwealth and appropriate overseas authorities, into—

- (a) the methods of exploration, mining, processing and end use for peaceful purposes of uranium and products derived from uranium, and
- (b) the need for, the timing, and the methods of introducing nuclear energy into Western Australia.

(4) The policies in respect of uranium enunciated by the Federal Government in the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, in Canberra on 25 August, 1977 shall be endorsed so far as they relate to the Commonwealth's constitutional responsibilities.

and further,

This House is of the opinion that active participation in uranium exploration, mining, processing and export of uranium and products derived from uranium, on the lines proposed by the Western Australian and Commonwealth Governments, is the most practical way of ensuring—

(1) That Australia has a voice internationally in the end uses of uranium and products derived from uranium, with particular reference to the ability to require conditions of sale directed at non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and

- (2) That Australia and Western Australia have the right and the opportunity to be kept up to date with international research and development on nuclear and alternative energy sources.

In moving this motion I think members will appreciate it has been brought before the House to complement the action already taken in the Legislative Assembly which endorsed the decisions of the Government to permit the mining and processing of uranium up to a predetermined level, in Western Australia.

No doubt members will have taken note, also, of the speech made by the Premier when he presented the motion in the Legislative Assembly and called for the adoption of a Government policy on uranium. The Premier made clear the need for Western Australia to join with the rest of the world in framing a basic policy on uranium, and he set out four guidelines to pave the way for these primary steps.

Briefly, those guidelines cover the encouragement of the exploration for uranium; the requirement for strict safeguards in mining, transporting, handling, and processing of uranium; provision for continuing research; and the adoption of the Federal policy on uranium insofar as the authority of the Constitution of the Commonwealth Government extends over the affairs of Western Australia. The Premier's address on the motion is recorded at pages 1234 to 1246 of *Hansard*, of the 8th September, 1977.

I do not consider it is necessary for me to expand further on those guidelines set out by the Premier because he covered them adequately. Rather, I consider I should stress the need to determine those grounds on which a broadly acceptable policy can be based.

I have been very interested in the recent views expressed by Sir Macfarlane Burnet of the University of Melbourne. Along with other members, I received a pamphlet which I intended to use during my address today. However, the Hon. John Tozer acquainted the House of the views of Sir Macfarlane Burnet while speaking to the Solar Energy Research Bill last evening. Therefore, there is no need for me to include those views in this address. My previous knowledge of Sir Macfarlane Burnet was in his capacity as Minister for Health. He is a man of very great stature in this nation.

Fundamentally, this motion is a means of determining whether we consider uranium, and by extrapolation, nuclear generated energy as a possible alternative to a projected world energy

shortfall. The shortfall is a function of both depletion of readily accessible fossil fuels, and of ever increasing demand.

The alternatives to nuclear power, such as nuclear fusion, solar, wind, tidal, and geothermal, have limiting technological or economic factors at this stage.

We are at the crossroads in decision-making on future energy requirements. While we may be considered to be a lucky country in regard to fossil fuel deposits and reserves, it must be recognised that the increasing speed of industrial and other development means such reserves are utilised many thousand times faster than they can be replaced.

It would ill-behave us, of course, to make any sort of judgmental decisions so far as anywhere else in the world is concerned. There are virtually no countries which have not already embarked on the nuclear power road and, indeed, it would be impossible for us to remain out of it.

I am firmly convinced that some of the younger members of the Australian Labor Party, who may live to see the day when they are in a position of authority, would be well advised not to take too firm a stand. It is my very real conviction that any country in this world today—and its governing authority—will of necessity accept nuclear power. It is very difficult to foresee in the short term the emergence of technology making it no longer necessary to heat water and turn it into steam. It is quite obvious we will run out of fossil fuels with which that process is carried out at the present time. There is every indication there will be a need to continue to heat water for a period of years until the necessary technology and other methods of energy generation are found.

I suppose it would be comparatively easy for countries low on the scale of energy use to do without. It would be extremely difficult for countries such as ours which are very high on the scale of energy use to do without. The sort of disorders we see now would be as nothing to the disorders which will ensue if we were gradually reduced in our use of electric light and the other forms of energy. So accordingly there is a need for fuel and energy reserves to be made available to the public with a "time constant" responsibility to the inevitable public demand.

Debates on this subject are generally centred within three categories of objection; that is, moral, political, and environmental. In the first two categories of moral and political arguments the conflicts are very human, and understandably there is a desire to quantify them or to put numbers on them. I repeat, and it is worth

repeating, that I do not think anybody anywhere in the world should be so foolish as to go totally out on a limb with regard to the opinion that they would not ever want to use nuclear power. It is all right for some way-out fellow who never has any likelihood of making a decision to say this sort of thing, but anyone who has the likelihood to make a decision should approach the matter with very great care.

Mr President, I never believe it is a sign of great care when all the groups, all the people, and all the individuals in one group make the same decision. I just do not believe that human beings are made that way. We do not have a firm decision being made by one total group, and a contra decision being made by another total group. There are individuals within a group with all sorts of variations of opinion.

It might be all right for a group to make a firm decision about whether it is to rain tomorrow or whether or not to hold a butchers' picnic, but not in regard to decisions about uranium. I can understand a political party making a decision that great care should be used, but not the decision that it would never use a particular form of energy.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: What particular parties have done that?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: Groups have done it. I think I would be excused if I devoted a great amount of my attention to the environmental aspect for obvious reasons. There is possibly no need for me to go into details on the processes involved in the exploration, mining, and milling of uranium, except to say there is no reason that these activities should be penalised above any other mining operations on environmental grounds if appropriate safeguards are implemented and standards are enforced. Surely we have the knowledge and the technical know-how to ensure that these methods are all carried out with the greatest degree of safety that is possible.

I suppose there is no form of mining that does not have some risks. Probably no-one here today has not at some time in his or her life read the book, *How Green Is My Valley*, and in this way, been made aware of the problems of coalmining. Of course the tragedies of recent years have been reported in the Press; such as the sliding of the slurry dumps. So of course there will always be some risks in all forms of mining but it is my belief that these risks have never been less than they are today, because of the greater degree of concern expressed and the greater degree of technological expertise that has been applied to the problem.

No less than any other form of mining, the risks associated with uranium are well documented and the technological solutions are known. Problems are associated with enrichment, nuclear power plants, and waste disposal, and of course, the problems are more complex. Most of the emotion in the public arena is centred around those problems.

I mentioned a few minutes ago that a great many of the nations of the world have embraced already the use of uranium in nuclear power stations. It has been proved that technically it is possible to design and build enrichment plants and nuclear power plants which are safe to contemporary standards, and which have acceptable environmental impact standards under normal operational conditions. As with mining, and as with any other line of activity, there are some degrees of risk. I might argue that the risks are greater in this field or in that field but suffice it to say that the record of the 25 years of nuclear power stations is very good indeed.

In this field, of course, we have to make a political choice. At this stage it would appear that a great number of countries in the world have a very simple choice; either utilise nuclear power or to do without, and I mean doing without the electric power generated by it. That is the choice these countries have to make, and I have no doubt what the decision will be. They will opt for generated electric power because that is what our particular civilisation happens to need and what most human beings happen to need. Not only do most of us need it, but also we desire it very strongly indeed. Of course, if the Governments of the respective countries chose any differently, then automatically they are saying to their people that their entire life style will change.

It would take us quite a long time to really work out what a gradual rundown in the generation of electric power would mean to the people in any reasonably well advanced or developed country.

I see little or no possibility of diverting liquid fuel from motorcars to be used for the running of power stations. I know we hear a great deal of talk about utilising public transport, railways, buses, trams, or even trolley buses. However, virtually every in-depth study that has been made has resulted in the very obvious conclusion, which all of us made long ago, that the ideal and most convenient form of transport is a motorcar, driven by an individual, and powered by petrol or diesel oil. Every person who can afford it

owns at least one motorcar, and to the person who cannot afford it owning a motorcar represents his main ambition in life.

A motorcar is the most flexible and the most efficient way to transport from one to five people or even more, depending on the size of the vehicle. As long as people can obtain fuel for their motorcars, they have a most amazing flexibility, a flexibility which they will give up only after a very severe fight. It is my belief that such a fight could well end up in bloodshed. I remember reading about the situation in Melbourne at the time of the petrol strike. For the first time people were fighting in the driveways of petrol stations. They were not fighting over matters of deep principle, but over the matter of who would be given the two or three gallons of petrol. It seems absurd, and yet that was the very marked reaction to a shortage of petrol.

In terms of environmental impact, the problems associated with the enrichment of uranium are similar to those associated with nuclear generation particularly, and no doubt also very similar to a tremendous lot of the problems associated with ordinary power generation. There is a need to safeguard against routine or accidental radioactive emission or any other sort of accident. All the technology associated with that has been well documented.

Once we get away from that we go into the ordinary problems which beset anybody in respect of any type of plant. I refer to thermal pollution through the cooling system. This is a matter which until recently was not considered to be of very great moment. Mr Pratt would be aware of the problems experienced with the development of industry at Cockburn Sound, and indeed anywhere else in the world where hot water is mixed with cold water. When that happens some problems have to be resolved.

A great number of problems associated with any form of power generation are exactly the same, and therefore the technology exists to resolve them. I have heard some people speaking in terms of this happening for the first time. Anyone who builds a nuclear power station which depends on the mining and processing of uranium will bring about problems relating to changes in the environment.

However, it is extremely doubtful if anyone, in association with the use of nuclear power, can bring as marked a change to the environment as one can bring about through the development of hydroelectric power.

Most people regard hydroelectric power as the most excellent form of electricity generation, because water is used to generate the electricity,

the process is perfectly clean, and there is no pollution. The creatures which live on the bank of a river, climb up the bank to eat insects, and down the bank to drink water, will be affected if they suddenly find themselves in a dam under 100 feet of water. These creatures would have a totally different point of view in regard to the generation of hydroelectric power.

It might be worth while for us to talk to Professor Stanley, who has made a very deep study of the possible effect of the Ord River Dam on the environment of that area. However, the effect turned out to be nothing as worrying as it was thought to be originally. Nevertheless, it is obvious that if we take a relatively dry area, build a dam across a nearby creek, so that it suddenly becomes a very wet area, the environment of that area will be changed very markedly. For certain species of animals it could be a change for the worse. It is possible that problems which are endemic could become epidemic. To say that hydroelectric power is the ideal form which presents no problems whatsoever is not correct, because it does create environmental problems, and it does change the situation.

We are in the situation that in whatever way we might be planning the production of uranium, or the mining and processing of uranium, we would be very advantageously placed in that we would have the benefit of the research that had gone on before.

Already laboratory trials have been carried out with the vitrification of certain wastes. No doubt members are aware this is a process whereby the waste products are embodied in glass. These wastes can then be handled and stored with relative safety. It has been claimed that these are only laboratory experiments and are not conclusive.

It is my understanding, and I was authoritatively informed this morning, that the first factory based on these experiments is under construction in Europe. I have also been led to believe, and it has been my experience, that anything that has been done in the laboratory ultimately can be done in the factory. Often difficulties are experienced in transposing from small-scale to large-scale production. That was experienced for a considerable number of years in converting rutile or ilmenite into titanium dioxide, from a white to a black powder. This was done through reaction with sulphuric acid, which was regarded as a magician's parlour trick.

When it was discovered that titanium dioxide could be used in paints, it was not long before that magician's parlour trick became a factory

procedure; and that procedure is now carried on in many parts of the world, including Bunbury in this State. Of course, great care was necessary, and so it is with the commencement of virtually every new activity.

As a very young man I remember reading about the experiments relating to the development of the gas turbine motor. The problem was to get the blades to withstand the heat and the tremendous stresses, because the blades rotated at a high speed. Quite diabolical accidents occurred, because the blades on the gas turbines stretched and flew to pieces; sometimes that wrecked the entire structure. No doubt that happened to the steam turbines also, although in this case the blades revolve at a much slower speed.

I could go back further to the days of James Watt and Stephenson, between the time when Watt saw the kettle steaming and the time Stephenson rode on the first steam train. I am sure there were many times when they felt they could not carry on because of accidents and near disasters. Nevertheless, they persevered in the sure knowledge that energy and its use would be possible.

I am sure there will be a period when yellow cake or  $U_3O_8$  will be needed. Uranium mining and processing will reach that stage, but hopefully it will not be for our use, but certainly it will be for the use of other people. It will not make a skerrick of difference if we do not produce  $U_3O_8$  because other countries will.

By not producing the uranium it will mean the same sort of difference to us if we suddenly said we would not grow wheat or wool. The result would be that much less money, and a lowering of the standard of living of our people.

The environmental responsibility for these matters rests with the Environmental Protection Authority, although specific statutory responsibility rests with other bodies; for example, statutory responsibility rests with the Minister for Mines under the Mining Act and regulations, with the Minister for Health under the Clean Air Act and regulations, and also with the Minister for Health under the radioactive substances legislation. Furthermore, members of the Environmental Protection Authority have areas of relative expertise.

Of course, a tremendous number of papers have been written on the subject. In the main we have on the one hand the cold factual statements which always hedge around caution by those who favour the procedure. On the other hand, almost without exception we hear the emotional, frequently quite irrational statements of those who

oppose it; not always, but frequently. This debate reminds me very strongly of the fluoride debate which members will recall took place some years ago.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: The first time or the second time?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: The second time. A question would always be asked, "Can you be totally and absolutely sure that no damage whatsoever will ever be done?" Of course, the answer is, "No."

The Hon. R. Hetherington: Your analogies are not very good.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: My analogies are the analogies of the people who embarked on the fluoride debate and they are exactly the same ones as we will have in this debate, because frequently they are put forward by the same people. In that debate they were the same people as those who were involved in the anti-vaccination debate.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: From teeth to tombs!

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: After the sort of emotional statement the honourable member has just made, the analogy is quite accurate. It may not apply to the Hon. Robert Hetherington; but it will apply to a number of people who enter this debate. One side, and that is the side I support, will be expected to validate every statement it makes. However, the other side will expect to get away with any irrational comment that comes into its head.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: All those statements will come from your side; our statements will be rational.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: We will wait and see about that.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: It will be a distinct change.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: The fact remains that we are in a situation where we in this nation have very considerable quantities of uranium which can be mined and which, in my opinion should be mined.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: Hear, hear!

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: The product can be processed and, in my opinion, it should be processed. The product can be sold and I believe it should be sold. If on balance one looked at the situation of the ordinary human being prior to the development and use of mechanical energy, and if one looked at his lot now

that mechanical energy has become very much a servant of mankind—

The Hon. D. K. Dans: You may be surprised. They may want to go back to the other one.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: —one would find that the lot of mankind is infinitely better now.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: Most of us are too lazy.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: This matter is frequently forgotten in the arguments, even if the speaker goes back—as speakers often do in an emotional manner—to the early days of the industrial revolution. Members often go back and talk about the way in which children were used in the mining industry and the like. It is frequently forgotten that it is about the first time a sufficient number of children have survived early infancy to enable them to be used in any way whatsoever.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: They have been used for a long time.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I cannot hear the mumbling that is going on over there. If the honourable member wishes to interject at least he should use a loud, clear voice as Mr Dans does. The Hon. Robert Hetherington should have learnt this during the time he has been a member of the House.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: Apparently you do not want to hear me. You just want to give a lecture.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. R. Hetherington: The Minister was taking away from his argument by being insulting.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I am in favour of this motion. I am in favour of moving forward into yet another era in the utilisation of energy for the benefit and enrichment of mankind. I trust this House will support the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. R. F. Cloughton.

#### **BILLS (4): RETURNED**

1. Tourist Act Amendment Bill.
2. Legal Representation of Infants Bill.
3. Suitors' Fund Act Amendment Bill.
4. Legal Practitioners Act Amendment Bill.

Bills returned from the Assembly without amendment.

#### **GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL**

##### *Third Reading*

Bill read a third time, on motion by the Hon. D. J. Wordsworth (Minister for Transport), and passed.

#### **ADOPTION OF CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT BILL**

##### *Second Reading*

**THE HON. D. J. WORDSWORTH** (South—Minister for Transport) [3.30 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time. It has been found necessary to present this Bill mainly as a complementary measure to the Legal Representation of Infants Bill, 1977, recently dealt with by this House. This is in respect of a minor technicality.

Members will recall that the Legal Representation of Infants Bill was amended to include a provision to ensure that a court inquired into the possible existing guardianship of any infant prior to granting an order for the appointment of a suitable person which the court may consider to be in the interest of the child involved.

In effect, this was to make it possible in all cases where the Director of the Department for Community Welfare is appointed guardian of any infant, whether under State or Commonwealth Statute, for him to receive notice of any proceedings under the Legal Representation of Infants Act.

This Bill takes recognition of that proposal by making the appropriate inclusion in the relevant section of the Adoption of Children Act.

The opportunity is also taken in this Bill to include an amendment to subsection (5) of section 15 to ensure that effective reciprocity is given in all respects to New Zealand adoptions.

This amendment was omitted when special provision for New Zealand was initially included in the Act in sections 14 and 15 (1).

I commend the Bill to the House.

**THE HON. R. F. CLAUGHTON** (North Metropolitan) [3.31 p.m.]: The Minister has indicated that this Bill is complementary to earlier legislation considered and passed by the House. We can see no objection to the proposal in the Bill before us and therefore support it.

**THE HON. N. E. BAXTER** (Central) [3.32 p.m.]: It will be remembered that I raised this issue during the second reading debate on the

earlier Bill and it was necessary for an amendment to be made to that Bill at the time. The legislation before us is necessary to cover the total position, and I support it.

**THE HON. D. J. WORDSWORTH** (South—Minister for Transport) [3.33 p.m.]: I thank members for their support of the Bill, which I commend to the House.

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 the Hon. D. J. Wordsworth (Minister for Transport), and transmitted to the Assembly.

**MARINE NAVIGATIONAL AIDS ACT  
AMENDMENT BILL**

*Second Reading*

**THE HON. D. J. WORDSWORTH** (South—Minister for Transport) [3.35 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time. Section 4 of the Marine Navigational Aids Act, 1973, indemnifies the State, the Minister administering the department, statutory port authorities and officers against any civil action arising from any defect in a marine navigation aid established under that Act, whether or not negligence is a factor in any such claim.

In effect the Act protects the State against any claims arising from the establishment or maintenance of any aids in a port which has been provided by the authority of that Act.

According to advice from the Crown Solicitor, the Act would not serve to exonerate the State, etc., from liability arising from its maintenance of any navigation aid, which has been established in a port under the authority of any other Act, such as those which are provided by a private company under the terms of an agreement with the State.

There are of course cases where private companies, by agreement, have provided navigation aids to define the navigable approaches to private company facilities established in ports and a case in point is the navigation approach to the iron ore pier and the service jetty at Port Walcott. In this case the Harbour and Light Department, the navigation authority, has the expertise and is

better equipped to carry out the work, and it has agreed with the company to maintain the aids subject to the company meeting the cost.

If, however, the State undertook the maintenance the immunity from civil liability conferred by section 4 would not apply in the case of these aids because they were established otherwise than under the authority of section 3 of the Marine Navigational Aids Act.

To take the matter a stage further if the immunity from liability provided by section 4 of the Act was to be extended to protect the maintainer of the aids—not established under the Act—it is conceivable that the owner as distinct from the maintainer could be liable for damage resulting from a ship which is misled or misdirected because of some defect in the positioning of an aid or its malfunction.

It is understandable that the company should not have to accept liability for work carried out by the State, therefore this amendment proposes, where the State elects to maintain privately-owned navigation aids, to absolve both the State and the owner from liability arising from the circumstances referred to earlier.

The amendment, which is to section 3 of the Act, provides that agreements may be entered into by the State with the owners of navigation aids to enable the owners to relinquish control of the aids to the State. These aids will then be deemed to have been established under the Act and to come within the scope of the Act and protected from civil liability. The amendment also enables the State to recover from the owners any costs which it incurs in any additions, alterations to position or character of the aids, or their removal or maintenance.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. R. Hetherington.

**APPROPRIATION BILL (GENERAL LOAN  
FUND) (No. 2)**

*Second Reading*

Debate resumed from the 26th October.

**THE HON. N. F. MOORE** (Lower North) [3.39 p.m.]: I am disappointed to note that once again the Leonora Hospital has not been included in these Estimates. The hospital is in a very dilapidated condition, as the previous Minister well knows. Provision of a new hospital was mooted many years ago; in fact, the plans were drawn up in 1974. Since 1974 the new nurses' quarters have been established although they are not yet in use. However, nothing of any substance has been provided for the hospital itself.

As a consequence, there has been a gradual decrease in the morale of the people working in the hospital and a continuing deterioration in the condition of the building. The matron of the hospital—Mrs Sadie Canning, whom some members may know—has worked extremely hard over many years to keep the hospital functioning, and I am very alarmed to hear she has almost decided to give up the struggle when she finds the hospital has once again not been included in the Estimates.

I realise that Commonwealth funds for hospitals have been significantly reduced and therefore it is understandable that the State has had to reduce its own expenditure. I notice in the Loan Estimates that the amount has been reduced from \$34 million last financial year to \$29 million in the present financial year. Naturally, in determining how it will allocate the \$29 million, the Government must use a set of priorities. Unfortunately, some places like Leonora have once again missed out. Yet when I look at the dilapidated state of the Leonora Hospital it concerns me greatly that it was not included in the priorities. I find it hard to believe there are hospitals anywhere else in the State in a worse condition.

I believe an R & R programme is to be carried out in Leonora and some thousands of dollars are to be spent on what I hope is only a temporary measure to keep the hospital going for some months. But the hospital cannot be economically repaired, and I repeat that I hope the R & R programme is only a temporary measure.

It will give the people in Leonora and similar areas little comfort to know that \$25.5 million of the \$29 million to be allocated in this financial year will be spent in the metropolitan area, where medical services can be described as luxurious compared with those in places like Leonora.

I hope the Government will give consideration to the provision of a new hospital in Leonora in the 1978-79 Budget and that work will commence in the latter half of 1978.

**THE HON. G. C. MacKINNON** (South-West—Leader of the House) [3.42 p.m.]: I thank members for their tacit acceptance of the Bill.

With regard to the Hon. Norman Moore's comments, I know the Leonora Hospital quite well and I also know Matron Canning. I think it is only fair to say that for probably eight or nine years the emphasis in the building of hospitals was on country areas, and a considerable number of hospitals were built. It is difficult to go to any district where there have not been quite extensive alterations and additions or new hospitals built. For example, not far from Leonora,

extensive alterations were made to the Laverton Hospital. Nevertheless, the point is well made.

The point the honourable member made is also exaggerated by the fact that at places so remote from major towns the building costs are tremendously high. He would be fully aware of that because of the time he has spent in those areas. Nevertheless, I will bring the matter to the attention of the Minister for Health and the honourable member's remarks will reinforce the Minister's application to the Treasurer at the appropriate time.

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 the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House), and passed.

*Sitting suspended from 3.48 to 4.05 p.m.*

## **SOLAR ENERGY RESEARCH BILL**

*Second Reading*

Debate resumed from the 26th October.

**THE HON. R. HETHERINGTON** (East Metropolitan) [4.05 p.m.]: Before I deal with the Bill specifically I would like to say I, like the Leader of the House, do not believe in looking backward to golden ages or in looking forward to golden ages. I took his point about children who worked in coalmines, which was a most unfortunate result of industrial England. However, many times people who talk about this forget the children who died of hunger and starvation in medieval England; and likewise there are many people who say—and sometimes I accuse members of the Government of doing this—that if we had some simple thing the future would be rosy.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Hail the millenium!

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: Yes, hail the millenium! I think there are many people who treat solar energy in that way and think it will solve all our problems in due course. I notice the Leader of the House, in his second reading speech, seemed to think that solar energy might in fact do this. He did not quite commit himself, but he has said that on present indications there are few grounds for supposing that solar

energy can make a significant contribution before the next century. I would like to remind the House that the next century is 22 years, two months, and four days away; it is closer than we think. In other words, if solar energy is to make a contribution in the next century, it will have to make a contribution in the next 25 years. I think if we spend adequate money on research it will do so. However, it has to be adequate money.

An electrical engineer who specialises in solar energy told me that in his estimation we could solve all our energy problems within 15 years—but here is the rub—for the expenditure of only \$10 billion. He was using the American billion, so that would be \$10 000 million, which is a lot of money. However, it may be money worth spending, and certainly I think we will need to spend more money than the Government is proposing to spend in the first year. However, we welcome this step as the first step along the road.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: At a guess, what country do you think would be the most advanced in the development of solar energy?

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: I think it might be France.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It would be pretty closely followed by right here, I think.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: It might be; I think the French have a huge solar energy experimental station in the mountains. The Americans are also spending a large amount of money on solar energy, but I am not sure how far they have progressed. Certainly, as far as Western Australia is concerned, I would like to see us getting well ahead from the purely economical point of view, because we have got the area and the sun; and if we get ahead in solar energy this would make us perhaps the most prosperous part of the most prosperous nation in the world in the future. I am not saying that will necessarily happen; I do not want to project a millenarian promise myself, but I think it is something we should think about and I do not think we should be left behind.

The Hon. T. Knight: Don't you think it is a good idea to carry on with a substantial amount of money to investigate the matter before we consider figures such as you have quoted?

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: Yes, but I think we should spend more money than is proposed; in other words, we should speed up the process.

The Hon. T. Knight: Safe and successful exploration at this stage could save a great deal of money in the future.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: I have no doubt about that. We will have to spend a great deal of exploratory money now and in the future. One thing we must remember, of course, is that solar energy, like any other form of energy, has environmental problems. Certainly we should not forget this when we are talking about any form of energy. Any kind of energy we have produced to date in the world has had environmental problems, and sometimes those problems have multiplied. Sometimes the problems are of a special and peculiar nature; certainly I will mention some of these later in this session when I speak to the motion moved today by the Leader of the House.

However, I want to point out that solar energy also must be proceeded with cautiously because it can affect the environment. If we have huge reflectors catching the sun's light what could happen is that we could cool down the surrounding environment, and if the cooling is sufficient it could do all sorts of things to our environment and our climate which we did not anticipate. Therefore, we must proceed cautiously—and here I agree with the Hon. Tom Knight—but we must proceed expeditiously, and perhaps more expeditiously than we are at present. That is all I am saying; I think we should take this matter very seriously because if we can develop solar energy it may well be the solution to the world's energy problems.

There are all kinds of possibilities with the development of solar energy. Some people argue that if we use solar energy in a certain way we can continue with the use of motorcars and steam generators, but this time using hydrogen which is produced from sea water by the use of solar energy. There is another process which produces another gas. In other words, some people argue very seriously that we should look forward to a hydrogen economy where, by using solar energy to produce hydrogen, we can use that gas for internal combustion engines and for the generation of power.

I am not speaking with any great knowledge of this, but it is something that has been investigated in various universities throughout Australia, and it is something that could well solve our problems without causing the damage to our transport systems and to our motorcars that people, who think of solar energy merely as being used to produce electricity direct, would predict. In other words, there is a whole range of possibilities for

the use of solar energy, with a whole range of problems.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Personally I am inclined to think that in fact it will be the ultimate solution to our problem.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: I think it will be, too, but I want to see it happen perhaps a little faster than it appears to be happening.

What worries me—and here I will come to the Bill because I think it is important—is that I am of the opinion that people who mine uranium necessarily must be interested in the mining of uranium, and it would not surprise me if some of them therefore wanted to hold up solar energy research until all our available uranium is mined. It is not unknown for oil companies to have suppressed inventions that would cut down on the sale of oil. This is something about which we have to be very careful. It is not to make accusations against anybody personally to say that we have to institutionalise checks and balances to see that this does not happen.

What worries me about the Bill is that the directors of the solar energy board may comprise three people, one of whom shall be a representative of the mining companies. As my friend, the Hon. Fred McKenzie, said, we could well throw out that part of clause 13 which follows subclause (1)(a) and just leave the appointment of directors in the hands of the Governor on the nomination of the Minister. If in fact the new body does have a representative of the mining companies on it, I will protest very vigorously and make a lot of noise and accusation because I do not think that should happen.

That is not to say that such a representative, whoever the representative may be, would be a person whom I would not regard as a decent or honourable person, and I think the Minister will take that point. But such a representative would have an automatic vested interest in a form of energy other than solar energy and his views could be biased or distorted accordingly.

We have to watch this very carefully. Rather than this elaborate provision I would prefer to leave it to the Minister to take advice to appoint the three persons to the board. I do not see any great advantage in this elaborate provision. That is the main feature of the Bill that worries me.

I do hope that next year we will see another Bill introduced which will increase the funds and increase the activities of the committee. I do think that we in Western Australia should take up the question of solar energy very vigorously and obtain all the advice we can. This may sound to be Western Australian nationalistic jingoism,

but I say this: if possible we should get ahead of the rest of the world in solar energy research, so that we may be able to benefit not only ourselves but the rest of the world.

**THE HON. I. G. PRATT** (Lower West) [4.16 p.m.]: I did intend to say a great deal about the proposals in the measure before us; however, much of that has been said by other speakers. When we are talking about solar energy we are talking about the harnessing of a very diluted end product of a nuclear reactor. The point about the energy from the sun being produced by nuclear fusion has been made by other speakers. The point that has not been made is that all the energy sources we use today relied at some time in the past on this same solar energy source.

Our fossil fuels originated from organisms and living things which required for their propagation the heat or light from the sun. When we look at the coal deposits we find that it has taken from the beginning of time to build them up; similarly it has taken from the beginning of time to build up our oil deposits. However, those types of fuels have relied on the energy source of the sun for their creation. It has taken all that while from the beginning of time to build up and to convert this solar energy source into fuels, but yet in the last couple of hundred years we have come close to depleting them.

If we are to convert solar energy, or the end product of this nuclear fusion, into a household energy source we should find some means to duplicate what has been done by nature. Even hydroelectric power relies on the end product of this nuclear reaction to cause the evaporation of water which subsequently falls as rain. That process places the water in the position where it can be used for hydroelectric power. What we are trying to achieve is to find a better way of converting this power source than nature has been able to do.

I do not believe we will ever be in the situation where we find ourselves so far above nature that we can better it to the extent of supplying all our needs. What we should look for, and what will come out of this solar energy initiative, are ways to better harness the energy source which is available to us; and to use it as a supplement to other forms of energy. It will play an ever-increasing part in supplying the energy we use.

What we will have to turn to is another energy source as our main supplier. This will have to be one of the two forms of nuclear energy. We find that at present we can use one

form, although we cannot use it as cleanly or as well as we wish to. I refer to nuclear fusion. However, some very serious problems are created with nuclear fusion. No doubt, we have all read the article in yesterday's newspaper indicating that experiments are being carried out in England to solve the immense heat problem which is involved with nuclear fusion. What we are harnessing is really the benefit we are reaping from the nuclear fusion from the sun, which through this Bill we are trying to convert to our own use.

People who are opposed to anything connected with nuclear energy should ponder these facts. They should ponder where our existing power sources come from, what they are, and how we have converted and depleted them. They should ask themselves whether we, as humble human beings, without turning to nuclear energy, are capable of creating energy sources which we have managed almost to deplete in the last couple of hundred years, and which have taken from the beginning of time to create.

An interesting facet of this debate was mentioned by the Hon. Fred McKenzie when he referred to the possible need for union representation. I found it very difficult to understand his reasoning. I have thought about the matter since. It occurred to me that what we are seeking to do is to harness energy. If we regard harnessing as constricting or confining something, and then directing it to do our will, it occurs to me that in few other places could we find a body of men with more experience and expertise in constricting and confining energy than in the trade union movement. I therefore wonder whether I could support his suggestion, in order to solve our problems.

I support the Bill.

**THE HON. R. F. CLAUGHTON** (North Metropolitan) [4.22 p.m.]: I find it to be a most unusual concept to regard people who are to be appointed to the advisory committee as being restricted and confined. I imagine the Government has seen some value in their contribution to the deliberations involved in distributing the research grants.

Even the representative of the Chamber of Manufactures, whose members will be required to bring to production the results of research, even the financial wheelers and dealers, and more so even the workers on the shop floor who have to carry out the work in the practical way and not the theoretical way

have some real contribution to make. It is therefore worth while for the Government to take up the suggestion put forward by the Hon. Fred McKenzie.

It is unfortunate to hear an attitude such as that expressed by Mr Pratt, particularly when we hear exhortations in this Chamber that there should be less division and more co-operation.

I am not too clear precisely why the Government has decided to go into this field. However, it is coincidental that we are debating this Bill after the Leader of the House has moved a motion applauding his Government for proceeding with uranium mining. There would seem to be some conflict.

Under this Bill an amount of \$250 000 is provided. It is a fairly small sum. If uranium mining is to be undertaken in this State it will require the expenditure of tens of millions of dollars. Compared with that, the \$250 000 provided under the Bill is very small.

Throughout the world there is a very great imbalance in the expenditure on these two types of energy sources. Some reference was made by Mr Hetherington to the amount that has been spent in several countries. For instance, the United States of America is now spending tens of millions of dollars on solar energy research. If we are to judge the amount spent as an indicator of the results obtained, then we would have to say that the USA is further ahead in this field than most other countries, although we have not had clear reports of the results of its research.

I understand that in Australia this year some \$60 million has been allocated to nuclear research, and a total of \$2 million has been allocated to solar energy research. This is a marked imbalance, particularly when it is realised that all authorities agree that the nuclear period will be relatively short, and that the world will have to rely on an alternative source of energy, such as solar energy, for its long-term needs.

One would have expected Governments to take a much more active part in this sort of development. At this stage I do not wish to stress that argument too much, because there will be opportunity for debate on the motion introduced by the Government. To me this Bill appears to be a window-dressing measure—something to quieten the opponents of nuclear energy development. The Government could claim this: Some emphasis should be given to alternative sources, and in this State it is allocating \$250 000 for that purpose. At the same time it allows millions of

dollars to be spent on uranium mining and nuclear development.

I suppose we should be charitable and accept at face value that the efforts of the Government are genuine in seeking to do something tangible and practical in this important new field of an alternative energy source to nuclear power—one on which the world will have to rely in the long term.

Recently the results of an inquiry by the Senate Standing Committee on National Resources were published. Its report on solar energy is contained in parliamentary paper No. 68/77. I am sorry the Leader of the House is not in the Chamber at the moment, because he made an interjection that Australia was a leading nation in the development of solar energy.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: He is out on parliamentary business.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: We realise that on occasions Ministers are called out of the Chamber. There was nothing nasty in the remark I made. I simply said that I was sorry he was not in the Chamber to hear what I would say.

Mr MacKinnon's interjection indicated he believed that Australia was a leading nation in the development of solar energy. This report kills that idea. There have been developments in solar energy use for domestic hot water heating but very little else. There are a few companies that export these heating units to about nine different countries and this is an excellent thing. It shows the value in developing solar energy uses for manufacturing purposes.

We should not kid ourselves that we are a leading nation in solar energy development. This report lays stress on low energy use which I think is unfortunate. I believe there are more recently announced discoveries resulting from university research that indicate there are possibilities of high level solar energy development. The channeling of funds into this area is likely to give Australia the lead that so many people believe we have.

I would like to refer to a couple of sections of this report because they are relevant to the matter we have under discussion. I think the Government is probably adopting a course which is not the wisest. There are a number of research-granting bodies nationally with the funds and the expertise to assess the worth of projects across the nation and to see that no duplication is taking place. Not only that, the CSIRO is concentrating on solar energy research. I believe this is the

correct body to see that this is done most effectively and it is in a position to make the best use of the limited national resources.

The Bill provides for the establishment of library facilities which I believe would create a duplication of material already existing in the State and which is readily available to researchers. The report of the Senate committee refers to the American Energy Research and Development Administration which puts most of its effort into what it calls the "proof of concept and demonstration project". It is not so much concerned with basic research as it is with the development of any concept which has been brought forward, having been developed to a stage of needing a practical demonstration. To arrange this practical demonstration further funds are needed and this is the area where the organisation is of use. I believe this State should use its funds in the same way.

Instead of putting funds into the universities or into other research projects so the people can simply explore the ideas in a basic form, we should follow the American concept. When a project has been brought to the stage where plant needs to be built or when a manufacturer has a model that has demonstrated its feasibility, grants should be made to these people so the project can be brought to a marketable stage. In this way the State would get real benefit from the limited funds available.

The Hon. J. C. Tozer: You could not have been listening to the Minister's speech.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: I have read the Bill which is what we have to deal with.

The Hon. J. C. Tozer: I mean the Bill also.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: The Bill says nothing about these things.

The PRESIDENT: If the Bill says nothing about them you should not be talking about them.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: The proposition is therefore that the Government should put emphasis in this direction. The report refers to the proposal for the establishment of a solar energy commission along the lines of the Atomic Energy Commission and we should have a committee of experts established, such as the Solar Energy Research Grants Board.

It is interesting to note that the Senate committee did not favour that sort of establishment. It felt that funds could be used more effectively in a different way. Yet this State takes up a similar sort of idea to set up a similar body as

has been suggested in this report. It is difficult to know what sort of advice the Government had in arriving at this decision.

I would like to read the recommendations of the committee because they sum up what I believe should be done. The committee recommended—

- the development of solar energy needs to be considered as part of an overall energy strategy. The evidence suggests that solar energy will not make any significant contribution to Australia's energy needs before the end of the century. Solar energy should take its place within an overall energy strategy. The only areas which the Committee considers worthy of encouragement for commercial development at this stage are low grade heat applications for industrial purposes; heating and cooling of buildings, and small scale power generation for remote and isolated areas. In all other areas there is a need to maintain a watching brief on overseas research and development.

- there is a need to maintain spending in real terms on solar energy research at Australian tertiary institutions until the priorities for energy research are established by the Australian Energy Commission.

- the existence and operation of the proposed Australian Science and Technology Council would assist in overcoming and avoiding duplication and unco-ordinated effort. The avoidance of wasteful expenditure and duplication should be considered by the Senate Standing Committee on Science and the Environment as part of its 'Australian Science Policy Inquiry'.

While I do not agree that lower energy applications are the only worth-while developments, I think the remarks made are pertinent to what should be done in this State.

We have a lower level of resources available. The Australian Government is entering into this field with its much larger sums of money, and I believe more effective use of the State's resources can be brought about by approaching the matter from the proof of concept and demonstration projects. I would hope that is where the funds go and that they are not wasted in other ways.

A lot of time and effort has to be spent on simply keeping in touch with what is happening elsewhere. If we have a national body undertaking that work why should we duplicate it here in Western Australia? It seems to be a tremendous waste of our limited resources.

As I mentioned previously, library facilities should not be duplicated by setting up another library in this institute when comparable material would be available at the universities and the CSIRO. The maintenance of the library and the need to keep in contact with literature from overseas require staff and facilities. Funds required to meet these needs would be better spent in bringing into practical application ideas that have shown to be workable.

**THE HON. D. K. DANS** (South Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) [4.41 p.m.]: I rise to support the Bill and to say that I hope Mr Pratt would rethink his opposition to having a representative of the Trades and Labor Council on any such solar energy institute. If he looks around Australia he will find a great deal more work going on than is stopping. He would find that organisations from the Reserve Bank down have trade union representatives on them. Although ill-considered statements like Mr Pratt's are made, there is a great deal of progress being made in Australia towards orderly advancement and peaceful co-operation in the work force.

Any advances in solar energy use not in the technical field will require the employment of a large number of people to produce the apparatus needed to produce the energy. Earlier this afternoon I was interested to hear a suggestion made that perhaps France was the country where research into solar energy was most advanced. It was also suggested by others that America and then Australia were the countries where the greatest advances were being made.

Probably everyone was correct in his assumption. The research in the Pyrenees Mountains in France has been into the production of very high temperatures involving liquids that would in turn run engines. The same kind of research has started in the United States of America.

Earlier this week I was reading a European paper which made reference to the Federal Republic of Germany. It has made large sums of money available in the last couple of months to investigate the more practical use of solar energy, and that is the point I wish to speak on now.

I do not think there is any place in the world further advanced than Western Australia in the practical application of solar energy. We have literally thousands of solar heaters already installed in Western Australian homes.

I listened recently to a report by Broken Hill Proprietary indicating some of its initiatives in solar energy research. I do not think that company has as yet unveiled the exact technology;

it will not only produce heat but also the energy for cooling homes. The company intends to use this technology in a practical way.

I have also been given a book which was produced by a Western Australian firm, Australian Inventions Pty. Ltd., which sets out high-grade energy options.

I shall refer to some of those options in a few moments, but the part which interests me is the foreword to the book by Peter Newman, a lecturer in Environmental Science at Murdoch University. Peter Newman is known to me, he is a Fremantle councillor and is fairly active in community affairs. Mr President, with your indulgence I should like to read to the House what he has to say. I hope this is the area upon which we will concentrate in the first instance; although I shall not knock the \$250 000 which has been made available because it is a start, it is not a large sum of money. Dr Newman said—

I was fortunate to be living in California during the 1973 oil embargo and witnessed at first hand the social impact of energy scarcity. There were many negative aspects, for example, violent behaviour as people had to queue for hours at petrol pumps, and many positive aspects, not the least being a new awareness of how flagrant our use of fossil fuels has become and the need to pursue alternatives.

A major study was begun at Stanford University on energy alternatives involving over two hundred staff and research students. The most amazing thing to me was the almost total ignorance that existed on renewable forms of energy and in particular on solar energy.

This is the point I wish to make. To continue—

It appeared that these 'experts' had not even heard about the existence of simple solar water heaters. They were only a thing of the future. The fact that they had been developed largely in Perth and had been used there in homes for several decades was beyond the comprehension of the study team who were accustomed to seeing California as the centre of new inventions.

Since then Perth has entrenched itself as a world centre for development of solar heaters and other uses of solar low grade energy. This has not come about from any government assistance but from the initiative of several private companies.

I have already mentioned one very big company but several companies here in Perth have done a great deal in this regard already. As Mr Tozer has pointed out, there are difficulties; and when I was in the north-west several people with solar heaters, particularly a motel proprietor in Broome, told me of some of the difficulties they had experienced. But at present they are only minor things and the heaters are supplying a need; and every heater in existence helps us to conserve our very precious energy. To continue—

But low-grade energy is only a small part of the energy problem. Now we must address the question of high-grade energy production. In this extremely valuable document, Australian Inventions have gathered together information which is both startling and exciting. I predict a similar response of incredulity to that which I found in California when I talked about the actual presence of solar heaters.

Perhaps when the inventions detailed here are examined more closely, the initiative will be taken to make Perth, or at least Australia, the centre for development of high-grade renewable energy options. I can think of few more pressing needs on the global agenda.

I firmly believe this. There are a number of energy alternatives and although I do not wish to go through all of them I mention such things as solar thermal energy and the kind of solar energy which is used in water heaters. At this stage in our development of solar energy I think we would be well served if we expanded the research quickly to help those people who are putting solar energy to practical use; and from then on who knows where we may go? It is quite possible that in the not-too-distant future, as Peter Newman suggests, we could see established in this State the world centre for this kind of research.

Another interesting matter about which I have read, which has already been put into operation in Europe, and which I should like this institute to take into account when it gets under way, is the provision of incentives to people who are prepared to use solar energy equipment in its present form. In other words, if at present people wish to use a simple solar heater to heat water and housing and, in the not-too distant future, to use solar energy to cool, and they are prepared to take the risk in that area, I should like to see Governments—and it may not be possible for the State Government to do this—offer incentives to companies which are prepared to enter this field. I should

also like to see this Government offer incentives to its own State Housing Commission and, despite the very real problems which Mr Tozer represented to us, I hope the Government is prepared to take a gamble by pushing this form of energy resource.

I am not suggesting we should undertake the kind of experimentation which has taken place in France, and which to the best of my knowledge, has not as yet produced great practical value. I have seen a documentary about a house which could be run completely from the solar energy plant in the Pyrenees, but it was not a practical proposition. It may be that something more practical will flow from that and from the experiments taking place in America.

We in Western Australia have reached a stage where we have proved, no matter at what level, that solar power can be converted to the use of mankind, and I think we have to understand that every time someone uses a solar heater in housing it lessens the drag on our power stations. Although we now have an off-peak charge to encourage people with regard to water storage heating, some encouragement should be given to people who are prepared to install solar energy hot water systems. We know that sometimes such people have to use electric boosters, but perhaps someone could look at the way in which some kind of concession could be worked out. This would encourage those private individuals who have bought what may be called a simple solar heater to go further.

Most of the great benefits to mankind have not been made by great corporations or great teams of men but on the initiative of one or two people, perhaps working alone with primitive and simple gear; for instance, the steam engine. I do not suppose that those who developed the steam engine received large Government grants, but it did the job.

In this State we already have a flourishing solar energy industry. It is not doing the things which are being done overseas but it is capable of expansion. In supporting the Bill I hope that the proposed institute pays attention to the people who have already pioneered the way, and does not simply leave them behind.

We support the Bill.

**THE HON. I. G. MEDCALF** (Metropolitan—Attorney-General) [4.53 p.m.]: We have listened to some very interesting comments from members, both yesterday and today, on the question of solar energy generally. Members have probably strayed away from the direct terms of the Bill, but with

your indulgence, Mr President, we have all benefited from hearing the carefully researched comments which some members have made. It is a good feature of a second Chamber that we can have such a discussion on a matter which is of such vital importance to all the citizens of the State—indeed, to the whole of mankind—without indulging in petty political squabbles and that we can appreciate the significance of what we, as members of this Parliament, have the opportunity of doing.

None of us is a scientist—although I apologise if there are any present—and we are certainly not technologists in the strict sense. Nevertheless we are in a position to evaluate the work of technologists and to try to play our part in helping the world to discover new and better forms of energy. Energy is at the base of the whole of our society and because of the conditions under which we live we just could not progress without discovering new forms of energy, without perfecting them, and without spending a great deal of money and using the technology which has been developed during the last couple of thousand years.

This is a matter which is peculiarly capable of being debated in this Chamber and it is pleasing to note the infinitely higher standard of the discourses here compared with those which occurred in another place. It is also pleasing to note that members have really devoted a lot of time to finding out the facts about solar energy, and I have benefited by listening to some of the comments which have been made. I was particularly interested in the remarks of the Hon. Claude Stubbs; he certainly raised some interesting matters, as did Mr Tozer and all the other speakers in different ways. I think we are indebted to members for those comments.

The only really substantial question in relation to the terms of the Bill was raised by Mr McKenzie and referred to by one or two other speakers. A close perusal of the Bill will show that there is not really any bias in the people who will comprise the board of the institute. A close examination of the constitution of the Energy Advisory Council will show that whilst the Chamber of Manufactures and the Chamber of Mines play a part, it is only a small part. They have permanent representation on the Energy Advisory Council, but then so does the Government. The Government is represented by the Chairman of the SEC, a representative of the Department of Industrial Development, and other representatives. In addition, the Government has the right to select representative members; it does

not have to rely upon the Chamber of Manufactures or the Chamber of Mines to select representatives of interests or industries. The Government can also nominate or co-opt members onto the committee from anywhere; the Government also has the right to select a member representing employees in an industry which may be affected. Therefore, the Energy Advisory Council which guides the Minister is a very representative body.

I cannot believe that that council and the calibre of people who are appointed to it would be likely to direct solar energy research in such a way as to prostitute it to uranium research. The number of members on the solar energy advisory committee who would represent those who are trying to develop uranium would be very limited. That is only one very small category of the people who might represent industries engaged in developing or searching for minerals.

The consumers are also to be represented. The industries which consume fuel and energy usually have a completely opposite interest to that of the producers because they want to pay the lowest possible price. I think we are taking too narrow a view of these members.

One cannot help noticing that when people from any walk of life are appointed to important and high positions in the country, particularly when they are appointed under the provisions of a Statute, they take their duties seriously. The members of the solar energy advisory committee will be people of high repute and integrity. There has never been any indication that these people will be acting in the interests of any particular industry or company, and I see no reason to believe that they will do so in the future.

One of the functions of the Energy Advisory Council is to advise the Minister in relation to matters in respect of the development of fuel and energy, and any other matters which the Minister may refer to the council in connection with the whole general subject of energy. The nominees to the body are restricted to people who are skilled in one of the sciences. For that reason, I believe we need have no fear that the council will be likely to act or will even be capable of acting in a narrow personal interest.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: I think we are suggesting this is an area where we need to be ultra cautious, and not only have the right people, but to be seen as not having the wrong people. I am sure the Government will take note of this.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: The Government will take note of the member's comments. It is valuable that comments can be made in this

Chamber so that those comments can be submitted, in due course, to the advisory committee. I thank members for their support of the Bill, and I commend the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee*

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (the Hon. T. Knight) in the Chair; the Hon. I. G. Medcalf (Attorney-General) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 12 put and passed.

Clause 13: Appointment and tenure of Directors—

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Clause 13 (1) (a) gives the Minister fairly wide powers in respect of appointments to the position of director. I cannot see any need for paragraphs 13 (1) (b) and 13 (2) (a) and (b) to be included. The Minister, if he so desired, could call upon the Energy Advisory Council to submit names to him. If he is not satisfied with any of those names he could make an appointment of his own volition. I think the position should be left open for the Minister to make appointments as he sees fit.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: If we were to leave out the paragraphs mentioned by the member, the Minister would have unfettered discretion as to whom he would appoint. The Minister would make a choice.

That is generally not considered to be desirable—to leave the Minister with complete and absolute power to make decisions in these cases. Generally speaking, the tendency of legislation today is to give the Minister advisers and, in fact, to require the Minister to take advice. That is what we have been aiming for, more and more.

The argument has been put forward by the honourable member in a sincere manner but I would like to say to him that for some years we have been listening to arguments exactly to the contrary. Those arguments have been along the lines of people being sick of Ministers making decisions, and not taking advice from experts. We have been told that the provision for a Minister to take advice should be put into Bills. That is the exact opposite to the argument which Mr McKenzie, in all sincerity, has put.

It is important we should provide in the Bill that the Minister will act on the advice of the Energy Advisory Council set up for that specific purpose. The solar energy advisory committee

will not be purely an industrial body; the Minister will be able to add other people. The committee will not be swamped by people who are engaged in the mining of uranium. What would one vote mean anyway on the council? I believe we should leave the Bill as it stands.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I am much wiser for the Minister's explanation, and the point is well made. I accept what the Minister said; that it is necessary to write certain things into the Act.

There is provision in the State Energy Commission Act for the Chamber of Manufactures and the Chamber of Mines to be represented on the Energy Advisory Committee. Under that Act these bodies in turn have been given the right to recommend appointments to the Minister. No other body or person has such a right.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: The Minister is not bound to take the advice of the Chamber of Manufactures or the Chamber of Mines. Part IIIA of the State Energy Commission Act makes it clear that the Minister, after consultation with the commission and such bodies or persons he considers to be representative of interests, may make recommendations to the Governor for the appointment of persons to serve as representative members. The Minister must consult the commission, and other persons he considers to be representative of the interests concerned.

It is true that the Chamber of Manufactures and the Chamber of Mines have the right to nominate representatives, but that is as far as it goes. The Minister may also make nominations and is not bound to accept the advice of those organisations.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 14 to 22 put and passed.

Clause 23: Meetings and proceedings of the Advisory Committee—

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: I move an amendment—

Page 15—Insert after subclause (7) the following new subclause to stand as subclause (8)—

(8) Where a member of the Advisory Committee makes a disclosure under subsection (7) in relation to a matter and a majority of the members present at the meeting determine by motion that the nature of the pecuniary interest disclosed is such that the member should take no part in the consideration of that matter, the member shall not be

present during any deliberation of the Advisory Committee with respect to that matter.

This amendment fulfills an undertaking given by the Minister in another place. The object of the amendment is to provide that if any member of the advisory committee has some particular pecuniary interest which he discloses to the other members of the advisory committee—and he is bound to disclose it—it is up to the members of the advisory committee to decide whether or not he should continue to take part in the consideration of the matter in relation to which he has some interest.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 24 to 36 put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Bill reported with an amendment.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL (CONSOLIDATED REVENUE FUND) (No. 2)

##### *Consideration of Tabled Paper*

Debate resumed, from the 26th October, on the following motion by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House)—

That, pursuant to Standing Order No. 151, the Council take note of tabled paper No. 245 (Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and related papers), laid upon the Table of the House on 21st September, 1977.

**THE HON. M. McALEER** (Upper West) [5.17 p.m.]: In speaking to this motion, I would firstly congratulate the Government, and in particular the Treasurer, on the Budget which he brought down. It is a responsible Budget and one which has sought, within the perhaps narrow limits of State Budgets, to stimulate the economy of Western Australia and which has been at pains not to curtail the main avenue for stimulation open to State Governments, and that is the works programme. Also, this Budget has been brought down at a time when there are national economic difficulties and when we in Western Australia have our own specific difficulties too.

I know that members opposite do not believe in balanced Budgets in these circumstances, but they also sometimes deplore the lack of long-term planning. It seems to me that to budget for a large deficit would be to take a very short view because, as I understand it, the only way a State can recoup a Budget deficit is to take money from loan funds, and so curtail its works programme

in following years. It would be a bold optimist who thought the short-term advantage we would gain from deficit budgeting would be sufficient to see us out of our problems.

The Opposition has consistently voiced the opinion that an investment-led recovery is an impossibility in our present circumstances. When we look at the economy of Western Australia, even in the context of the national economy, there does not seem to be any other option open to us.

By and large Australia is still a primary producing country. We certainly support secondary industry, at some cost, and it provides employment, but I believe the tertiary industries provide the greater employment. The money spinners are our primary producers, the mining, agricultural, and pastoral industries. This is true above all, for Western Australia.

Our problem at present is aggravated by the fact that there is a slump in the primary industries which is due to the world market situation and our inability to compete on that world market when the terms of trade are not favourable to us. One of the reasons we find it hard to compete is that our standard of living is high, and in consequence our costs of production are high. What is more, our expectations are high too. It is not just that we are caught in an inflationary spiral when we are struggling to maintain standards of living we have become accustomed to, our expectation is that that standard should be improving year after year. In many respects we look to the Government to do this for us in many fields such as health, education, housing, and telecommunications. I am not saying it is wrong to have expectations, but in the long run and in the short run too, we have to pay, and since we are dependent on trade, it is by trade we have to pay for it.

Our population is small, but nevertheless, it is still greatly in surplus to our needs as traders because our principal sources of trade are primary industries which are not labour-intensive. However, the population has to be employed, it has to be provided with services and the wherewithal to buy the goods it needs. The bulk of our population lives in the city and it generates needs and wants which the city people cannot supply by themselves. In Western Australia this situation is particularly marked because we must import so many of our goods from the Eastern States. In the short term, perhaps a State Government could supply some kind of employment even if it were only to pay small armies to pick up litter in the countryside while we waited for trade to pick up.

But desirable as it is to have a litter-free countryside, it would not in the end do much to further our ends to improve the services and goods we desire when presumably times change and the terms of trade will turn in our favour.

It would seem more productive, more in keeping with our ambitions, that we should try to stimulate those industries and works which will enable us to trade our way out of trouble, and at the same time provide us with the goods and services we want.

Certainly a State Government is limited in the amount of money it can use to provide the conditions for big projects to take off or develop. Until the end of last week, the Western Australian Government was particularly limited by restricted loan funds and the Budget is notable for the effort it made to save money out of revenue to supplement the loan programme. Even so it is not a large sum. However, the breakthrough on Friday whereby the State will be able to borrow additional funds for its own objectives opens up a new vista of possibilities. We can hope the State will now be able to finance large works which will not only provide employment, but will make the situation attractive for private industry to develop and expand. The benefits of such development and expansion, as we have seen before, flow through the whole community.

Unfortunately I do not see such developments having a very quick effect on the farming and pastoral communities which are not simply struggling with lower prices, ever-increasing costs, and a shortage of experienced manpower, but also, of course, with bad seasons.

I wonder whether we are spending nearly enough money on these industries. I am not thinking so much of tax concessions and direct subsidies which are outside the scope of State budgeting anyway, but I am thinking of the field of research in production and marketing, as well as in the provision of utilities such as water, roads, electricity, and all those facilities which make life attractive in the country. It is no good producing more and more things for which there is no sale. We are accustomed to praise ourselves as a nation of efficient farmers, but real innovations in these industries are few. We rely on a few basic products, extensive type farming, and our machinery gets larger and larger and our costs go up in geometrical progression, or whatever is the worst type of progression.

Recently the farmers and graziers of Western Australia gave a decided "Yes" to the question of improving the marketing of livestock, even if they

were divided as to how this should be done. However, they now feel considerable anxiety in case this uncertainty should be made an excuse for lack of change. They are anxious that the new methods will be implemented as quickly as possible.

Certainly the Farming and Allied Industries Conference is looking for new ideas and new possibilities. I hope these in turn will receive the sort of back-up they need, just as I hope the fishing and allied industries committee will be able to attract the sort of money it needs for its ideas.

I will turn now to more particular things. The Budget contained good things for the Upper West Province including many ongoing projects such as the Geraldton Harbour, No. 5 berth, the fishermen's harbour at Dongara, the Geraldton water supply, the Leeman-Greenhead water supply and groundwater supply to Wanneroo, the Dongara water supply, erosion work at Leeman, the Mt. Tarcoola primary school, and I am glad to say, the new building at the Geraldton senior high school. However, there are a few casualties. The Three Springs Hospital, which the residents of this town had some reason to hope was nearing the top of the priority list for extensive remodelling, is not catered for. I was very interested to hear Mr Moore refer to the plight of the Leonora Hospital this afternoon, because I always understood that the Three Springs Hospital was next on the list.

The Hon. N. F. Moore: It is 100 per cent better.

The Hon. M. McALEER: When he was Minister for Health, Mr Baxter led us to believe that the Three Springs Hospital was next in line after the Leonora hospital. So it looks as though we have a long way still to go.

Unfortunately, even the minor renovations required to the new ambulance entrance at the Three Springs Hospital have not been undertaken.

The other casualty was the new extension to the Jurien school. This extension plan has been put on ice in reaction to the closure of the mine. This was an additional blow to the town which will undoubtedly continue to grow with or without the mining, and which might do even better if it were provided with a fishing harbour to cater for the 80 boats now based there in the fishing season.

The building of the proposed short coastal road between Cervantes and Jurien which has the support of the Dandaragan Shire and both towns, might do much to avoid a duplication of services and enable each town to give strength to the other.

It is not my intention to make a leisurely progress around the province in the wake of the Budget. I want to refer specifically to the Budget item of \$2 million-odd which is to be provided by the Treasury to the St. John Ambulance Association.

The controversy that has arisen over the St. John Ambulance Association was dealt with to some extent yesterday by the Hon. Roy Cloughton. However, this matter has caused consternation in a number of centres in my province so I would like to give some attention to it. In actual fact the Budget item has absolutely nothing to do with the St. John aerial ambulance service. In so far as it has been controversial, the controversy arose because it is felt that this air ambulance would duplicate a service provided already by the Royal Flying Doctor Service, or one which it could provide.

The area which is serviced by the St. John aerial ambulance is roughly that of the South-West Land Division which has traditionally, as the Hon. Roy Cloughton pointed out, been serviced by road ambulances based in a number of towns, and controlled by the various district sub-centres. Certainly the Royal Flying Doctor Service sometimes made emergency flights to towns in the area, but the majority of the patients were brought to district hospitals by the local road ambulances, and where patients had to be transferred to larger hospitals—and particularly, of course, to Perth hospitals—they were transferred by road.

In Upper West Province, as elsewhere, the road ambulances are under the control of volunteer and largely autonomous committees. They are manned by volunteer drivers who naturally enough are often townspeople or nearby farmers. These people have to leave their work in the daytime or go without sleep at night if they are required to drive long distances. An ambulance requires two men to drive it to Perth, and sometimes an accompanying nurse. These volunteers are not allowed to stay at the destination any longer than is needed for a meal, because the ambulance is required back at its base as quickly as possible.

The job is a burdensome one because it falls on a few people, and they are getting fewer; it requires long hours of driving—eight to 10 hours is not uncommon—and often entails a loss of wages or work.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber and the *Hansard* reporters are having difficulty in hearing the honourable member. Would members

please refrain from holding audible conversations while the honourable member is speaking.

The Hon. M. McALEER: As far as the patients are concerned—and they are the main concern—road journeys by ambulance often are fairly rough, because most road ambulances do not ride comfortably on the road, and they are usually driven at a fair speed.

The possibility of putting wings on ambulances for long distance journeys arose not only through the generous effort of Apex in raising money for an aircraft but also from the fact that since October last year hospitals have been able to pay for hospital-to-hospital transfers of patients, and recoup themselves from State and Federal sources.

The need for the St. John Ambulance Association to provide such a service arose from the desire to give better patient care and from the dwindling volunteer effort both in the manning of ambulances and the raising of funds.

The aircraft which the association acquired was a Piper Seneca II—a small, economical aircraft which is ideal for comparatively short distance ambulance work. Since the distances it must fly are not great compared with those covered in the outback by Royal Flying Doctor Service planes, the aircraft does not need to gain great height, and thus does not need to be pressurised; therefore, it has a very large door which enables the patient to be put aboard with the minimum of discomfort and maximum of speed. It is able to make journeys at a cost of only 45c a mile compared with 60c a mile for a road ambulance. The plane is well equipped as an ambulance, and has everything from piped oxygen to heart fibrillation apparatus.

It could be argued that the association should have given all its aerial ambulance work to the RFDS, but possibly there were several reasons it did not do so. In the first place, it is proud of the service it provides to patients which, after all, is its *raison d'être*, and it wished to continue servicing its traditional area.

Secondly, the harsh financial fact is that only long distance journeys pay for ambulances in the country. If the association were to give up that service it would then have to ask the Government for larger subsidies than it does now, because it is the operating costs only in the city which require a large subsidy, mainly because drivers must be paid.

Thirdly, local St. John Ambulance Association committees are very loath to see locally raised funds going away from their districts and associations.

Changing social and economic conditions are obliging the association to restructure its country subcentres and regroup them on a regional basis so that they can retain their largely autonomous status but at the same time make a better use of their resources, particularly road ambulances.

This is a three-year programme, and so far it has been implemented only in the Pilbara, where it is said to be working satisfactorily. However, the new regional groups will make better use of equipment and the aerial ambulance will free more ambulances for short distance work.

In 1974-75, the association had to obtain 70 per cent of its operating costs from the Government. This year, that subsidy has decreased to 49.9 per cent, so there has been a general benefit to the taxpayer.

I believe the St. John Ambulance Association and, of course, Apex are to be commended for their initiative. Even though the service is young, it is already greatly appreciated by the towns which have received it. I must say that Three Springs is one such town which has benefited greatly. I see no reason that the differences which exist between the two associations should not be amicably settled, or perhaps arbitrated by the Medical Department.

Surely the State is big enough to benefit from both the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the St. John Ambulance Association, because the services complement each other. The RFDS appears to be specially geared to cope with greater distances and sparsely populated, remote areas, while the acquisition of another aircraft by the St. John Ambulance Association will enable it to cope satisfactorily with its traditional areas in the South-West Land Division to the combined satisfaction of the patients and the districts generally, without asking the Government for additional money to operate the service.

**THE HON. A. A. LEWIS (Lower Central)** [5.35 p.m.]: Mr President, I am in a bit of a quandary about which Minister I should direct my remarks to; I do not know whether it should be the Minister for Works, the Minister for Police and Traffic, the Minister for Health, or the Minister for Consumer Affairs. Finally, I have come down on the side of the Minister for Consumer Affairs, which may come as a surprise to members when they learn I am going to talk about a police station and a hospital.

Let me take them one at a time. I refer firstly to the Dumbleyung Police Station. I have been talking about this police station for a number of years and I have discussed the matter

with the Minister for Police and Traffic and the Minister for Works. We have had some other Ministers such as the Premier and other people visiting the actual building, and seeing the rotting stumps and everything else that goes to make up this dilapidated building.

I am not particularly worried that the whole thing is going to collapse; we get plenty of these sorts of buildings in my electorate. I am principally concerned for the safety of the policeman's wife. When she starts her automatic washing machine, and it commences going through its cycle, the whole house starts to shake. As it rocks, the policeman's wife must race from the kitchen to the laundry, and lie on the top of the washing machine, holding it down so that the house stops shaking.

The Hon. N. E. Baxter: How does the baby get on?

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: My understanding is that the baby is put outside under a tree on washing days. We have all heard about the Government's safety campaign, about safety in Government buildings, and about public safety. I am extremely worried about safety in the Police Force, for more reasons than one. However, I believe it has reached a ridiculous stage when a policeman's wife must lie across an automatic washing machine to stop her house from rocking.

Even the *Police Gazette* published a cartoon on this subject under which is the caption, "Guess where this is?" The cartoon showed a building which looked like something out of Bill Boyang, which depicted the police station and the policeman's quarters.

This building has been subsidised to a great extent. The police station and courthouse are in a room measuring 12 ft. by 14 ft. The lockup used to take up half of that space, the court another one-third, and the police station the rest. However, we now have the magnificent addition of a transportable office.

Every time the policeman asks about his house, he is told by the Public Works Department, "We cannot spend any money on it". Last year, the great sum of \$480 was spent putting down concrete slabs. They must have been fairly expensive concrete slabs, because the shire supplied the sand, and there were only 18 slabs.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: How thick were they?

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: They were the standard 1½ inch concrete slabs. The tradesman travelled all the way from Narrogin to put them down. It is very seldom that I get upset, but I am upset now.

As I said, I believe this is a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs. Let us think for a moment about the poor fellow who sold the washing machines. If a new officer is posted to this station, his wife will use the automatic washing machine, whereupon the house will start to rock and the washing machine will jump up and down. She will be forced to lie over the top of the machine and, of course, because she has not had a talk with her predecessor, she will blame the washing machine. I believe it is a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, because we are allowing innocent dealers to sell washing machines to be installed in these dilapidated houses around the country. Probably, the machines are sold in bulk, and the dealer could be accused of selling defective machines.

Seriously, I give the Government great credit for its Budget. However, as I travel around my electorate and the electorates of other members, places like the Dumbleyung Police Station stand out like sore thumbs, and all Governments, regardless of their political colour should be hanged, drawn and quartered for allowing such a situation to continue. Mr President, I have heard you talk about certain buildings in your province, and I am sure you will understand I am fast losing my sense of humour in regard to the condition of the Dumbleyung Police Station and its quarters.

I now quietly leave Dumbleyung, with its beautiful lake and caravan park, and move to the other side of my electorate, where I have another health hazard and public safety problem; namely, the Donnybrook Hospital. I have been extremely lucky in obtaining some reports which I should not have; they date from November, 1975, to the present time. The Donnybrook Hospital now has its own doctor, so at least that represents an improvement. However, there are other areas which are lacking. The report of the 27th November, 1975 states as follows—

Investigations under floors of new wing and round to kitchen area revealed two obvious traces of white ant infestation although no live ones visible.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: They do not have any food!

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: The Hon. Gordon Masters is dead right, as he will see. I continue—

There are many areas where joists have been run into brick retaining walls under concrete slabs which are impossible to investigate.

No damage to stump joists or bearers is apparent. Internal walls have been treated by drilling holes in masonite lining near

skirting and between studs to enable spray to be inserted, this appears to have been very thoroughly done.

I suppose what they mean by that is that they have peg board on the wall. The report continues—

In ceiling over shower rooms and toilets to new wing several areas have been infested but do not appear to be working now. The area around Matrons drug store and x-ray is badly affected and could still be working. The ceiling over parts of the old wards also have been badly affected but no new traces are apparent.

The following is a quote from a report dated the 14th October, 1977. It states—

On investigating roof space over nursery and Matrons office—

It would appear the white ants like the area over the matron's office, because they were attacking it back in 1975. The report continues—

—I found considerable white ant damage over a large area. One wall plate is affected and the ceiling joist adjoining it has completely collapsed.

Roofing timbers in this area are also affected. Without stripping wall sheeting it is not possible to assess damage to framing, however, it would appear that foundations and studs must be affected.

Two years ago, they were not affected, but today it is believed they must be affected. The report continues—

Further damage is apparent in X-ray dark room and front wards ceiling and walls.

Listen to this—

Quarter round used as cornice in nursery is eaten out and is not possible at this stage to replace as no fixing is available.

Since that report several of the rafters in the nursery have fallen into the body of the nursery in the hospital. I do not believe this is good enough.

I have written to the Minister and I received a reply to my letter today. It reads as follows—

I refer to your letter dated 26th September, 1977, in relation to the Donnybrook Hospital.

In my letter dated 5th April, 1977, I referred to the difficulties associated with upgrading of this hospital. Although the Department's Planning Committee has not yet been able to provide a satisfactory solution, that Committee has been asked to continue to give attention to the matter.

When a satisfactory solution has been achieved the financial situation will be reviewed.

By that time I would imagine that the white ants would have taken not only the hospital at Donnybrook, but also probably the school and the town hall as well.

We cannot afford to wait for that length of time while people muck around on committees. A man with half vision could see there is need for a new hospital.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: The time to really worry is when the white ants stop eating the timber on site and start carrying it home before they eat it!

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: I do not think that is an amusing comment.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I thought it was very funny.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: I believe the Minister should take notes on this and do something about it.

I am sure when the Leader of the House was Minister for Health, had he received a report such as this where the inspector finishes by saying that demolition and replacement is required, a new hospital would have been built immediately. However, the inspector has not been listened to. I look at the Leader of the House and I look at \$2.8 million which has been spent on the Busselton Hospital.

The Hon. V. J. Ferry: That is a magnificent hospital and long overdue.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: Certainly, it is a magnificent hospital; but the hospital that was there before was better than the Donnybrook Hospital. The member has the regional hospital in Bunbury, therefore, he can afford to treat this matter with levity.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You must remember that only recently has this area been able to secure a doctor.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: They would have been able to secure a doctor long before this had they been able to secure a hospital. Once more it is the situation of the chicken before the egg.

The Hon. V. J. Ferry: It is hard boiled!

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: Indeed, the Government is hard boiled on this situation. For five years I have been endeavouring to get something through the Government's shell on the Donnybrook Hospital. I agree with the Hon. V. J. Ferry that it is hard boiled.

May I congratulate the Hon. John Williams on his speech earlier this week. I also congratulate him on the job he has done in promoting the aims of the Alcohol and Drug Authority. He has visited my area several times and he has addressed large meetings and answered questions for a great length of time. I believe he is serving the Alcohol and Drug Authority in an extremely efficient manner. May I wish him success in the future years that he will continue as chairman of that authority.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Hear, hear!

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: I get sick and tired of the knockers, especially those in the other place, who have done nothing constructive, but are prepared to knock a person who puts a great deal of time and energy into a job such as this.

May I, Sir, move on to three or four other items. I mentioned the water supply at Shotts in my Address-in-Reply speech. I am still unable to obtain any sense from the Government, because the Public Works Department says the SEC may want it for Muja. The SEC says the Public Works Department will not make a decision. As a result, the people of Shotts see gallons and gallons of water passing them by and they are not allowed to have any of this water for their town supply.

To rub salt into the wound, the Federal Government comes along and pinches the telephone from the people of Shotts. We are a Government which is meant to believe in decentralisation. I do not mind if the decentralisation is decentralising Collie and putting things outside Collie, or putting things outside Bunbury. I think it would be a good idea to put things outside Bunbury. However, I believe the Government does not consider what it is saying, and Government departments do not consider what they are saying when they refuse to help people in small townships like this.

I sound a note of warning for country businesses, especially in drought-affected areas. We may look back on this matter at this time next year and see how the Government performed. It is all very well to talk about small business advisers and finance being given to shires. However, if we look at country businesses today in drought-affected areas we will see they are probably going through a fairly bad period. Unless finance is injected into those areas after the end of December, those businesses, some of which employ up to 40 people, which means they are supporting 40 families, will completely collapse. The farming community will not be able to get those businesses to return to those areas again.

A farmer still has his land; but people will not go into debt in a service industry to the extent of having 30 or 40 people on their payroll when they are not able to sell machines or provide a service to the community. Therefore, finance will be vital in those areas after Christmas.

I would like to mention quickly a function which I attended this morning and the need for the Government to continue to finance the Out of School Children's Care Association which you, Sir, know so well. I believe this association is performing a job equal to the job performed by any association in the world. This morning I attended a function to listen to Mrs Marian Baker who won last year's Women's Fellowship and travelled around the world visiting similar institutes. She concluded her remarks by saying that we were on the right line, but we still need to be financed as we go ahead. You, Sir, know the great job these people perform.

I believe the Government should look at this association; let it be an autonomous body, and allow the members of the association to continue to do their good works, because in all stratas of society I believe such an organisation is necessary.

Finally I wish to mention the situation in regard to the magazine *Artlook*. For those who do not know *Artlook* I would like to inform them that it is the best and most comprehensive art magazine in Australia. It has the biggest circulation of an art magazine in Australia and for years neither the Australian Arts Council nor the Western Australian Arts Council has realised what a first-class medium they have to promote Western Australia and the art world.

When we look at *Craft Australia* which is published quarterly and is financed by the Australian Arts Council to the tune of \$90 000, with half the circulation of *Artlook*, which gets \$12 000 and is a monthly magazine, we see a rather incongruous situation. Admittedly, *Craft Australia* is printed in colour and on beautiful paper; but it is limited in that it is dealing with craft only; it is limited in that it is a quarterly magazine. Nevertheless, it is financed to the extent of \$90 000.

*Artlook* is in a serious situation. It has been offered a grant of \$12 000 for the 1978 calendar year. We tend to get the idea that we should cut down on these subsidies when their production costs are increasing. The people who run *Artlook* receive no money for their services. The people working for *Craft Australia* or *Theatre Australia* are being paid journalists' fees

and, in reality, if we subsidised half the cost of *Artlook* it would cost \$40 000. This magazine is published throughout Australia and it serves many people of this country.

When one looks at the list of the amounts which are being given to various groups, one can see that PIFT receives more money—that is the Perth Institute of Film and Television—the Hole in the Wall Theatre receives more money; the Perth City Ballet receives more; and the Trades and Labor Council of Western Australia receives almost as much. The Avon Valley Art Society receives half as much. An amount of \$185 000 is allocated for theatre, and this is without including anything for Her Majesty's Theatre; \$133 000 is allocated for dance; \$54 000 is allocated for community arts; \$36 000 is allocated for film, radio, and television; the National Theatre Company receives a mere \$151 000; the Western Australian Ballet Company receives \$115 000; the opera receives \$156 000; and the Western Australian Arts Orchestral Foundation receives \$115 000. However, the best art magazine in Australia cannot be subsidised to a sufficient degree to pay an editor.

Three thousand people attend orchestral concerts, the ballet and opera in Western Australia. A total of 20 000 people read *Artlook*. The people who attend live theatre are being subsidised to the tune of \$150 per head annually. The people who read are being subsidised to the tune of \$3 per head. I feel this is a disgraceful situation, because *Artlook* has been proved at the national conferences which have been held.

Do not misinterpret my words, because the Eastern States hate giving us any credit, but they have acknowledged *Artlook* as being the best and most comprehensive art magazine in Australia. What do we do? What does the Western Australian Arts Council do? It gives this magazine a measly \$12 000.

A member: It's disgusting.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: I agree. I know it is not a Government grant. We put this into the hands of the WA Arts Council; but someone, somewhere, sometime had better stir up the council and make it get off its pet little theories and contribute to what the public want to see.

I once heard a prominent administrator in this State say that if a factory does not pay, close the factory; and I agree with him. If we have to go on contributing thousands of dollars to the ballet and opera at the rate of \$150 per head for every person who attends, then let us be fair and give the country reading public and

the interstate reading public a magazine of which they can be proud.

Finally, I must say that I am most appreciative of the Budget's provisions for minor works. I think the Budget is an intelligent approach. I do not adopt the attitude adopted by members opposite and ask, "Where did you find that money?" I think it is dashed good budgeting. As I listen year after year to the Opposition's comments on Sir Charles Court's Budgets, I wonder what they will say the following year because they cannot find any area in the whole State that has not been covered and looked into in a Budget sense. I support the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. J. C. Tozer.

*House adjourned at 6.02 p.m.*

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

### RAILWAYS

#### *Disposal of Refrigerated Vehicles*

210. The Hon R. H. C. STUBBS, to the Minister for Transport:

Have Westrail entered into negotiations with another State to dispose of refrigerated vans formerly used to transport refrigerated goods on the Kalgoorlie-Esperance line?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

No. Disposal of redundant refrigerated containers will be by public tender. Other railway systems have been alerted to the proposal.

### BRICKLAYERS

#### *Migrants*

211. The Hon. D. K. DANS, to the Minister for Transport, representing the Minister for Labour and Industry:

How many bricklayers have arrived in Western Australia as assisted migrants in the past six months?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

Assisted passage arrivals for six months to the 26th October, 1977, total 45—Commonwealth 21, State 24.

The last newspaper advertisement for tradesmen lodged by the Migration Liaison Officer in London was on the 26th October, 1976.

The bricklayers arriving now were processed many months ago. Once a tradesman has been accepted for assisted passage it takes a long time for him to settle his affairs before he is able to leave the United Kingdom.

Bricklayers are currently in the "balance" situation in the acceptable categories list of tradesmen for entry into Australia. The significance of this is that there is no recruitment in this category.

212. *This question was postponed.*

### PENSIONERS

#### *Concessions: Eligibility*

213. The Hon. T. KNIGHT, to the Minister for Transport representing the Minister for Community Welfare:

- (1) What category of pensioner, other than aged, is eligible for the rate concession adjustment scheme introduced this year?
- (2) Have local government bodies been fully informed of the classes of pensioner eligible for the concessions?
- (3) Who determines a pensioner's eligibility if the question of doubt arises?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

- (1) Pensioners eligible for the rate concessions are those pensioners who are entitled to hold a Pensioner Health Benefit Card and who are in the following categories:—

Age Pensioners,  
Invalid Pensioners,  
Widows Pensioners,  
Service Pensioners,  
Blind Pensioners,  
Recipients of a sheltered employment allowance,  
Recipients of a tuberculosis allowance,  
Recipients of a rehabilitation or training allowance, who would otherwise be qualified to receive an age, invalid or widows' pension or a sheltered employment allowance.

- (2) Yes.
- (3) There should be no doubt as to which categories of pensioners are eligible for the concessions as the definition is quite clear in this regard. However, questions can arise in respect of other conditions attached to the concessions, relating to

matters such as ownership and occupancy of properties. Where these questions cannot be resolved at the local level, they should be referred back for decision to the Local Government Department, if the query concerns local authority rates, and the head offices of the water supplies, if water rates are involved.

### BUSH FIRES BOARD

#### *Lack of Funds*

214. The Hon D. K. DANS, to the Attorney-General, representing the Minister for Lands and Forests:

- (1) Will the Minister ascertain whether the Minister for Lands and Forests was correctly reported in *The Sunday Times* of the 23rd October, 1977, in an article entitled "Warning as Fire Hazard Looms" that funds were not available to train and equip extra volunteers in anticipation of more bush fires?
- (2) If "Yes" to (1), will he ask the Minister to make representations to the Treasurer seeking a special allocation of funds for the Bush Fires Board, as this summer could be Western Australia's worst bush fire season ever?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (1) The Minister was not correctly reported in *The Sunday Times* of the 23rd October, 1977.

The Bush Fires Board will have trained a further 1 000 volunteers by the end of December this year. This training is part of an on-going programme.

Provision has been made in this year's Budget for the appointment of three more liaison officers.

The Premier has requested the Minister to make an urgent study of the hazardous situation facing the State this summer and if, as a result of this study, it is found that there is a need for more funds to be made available, then in accordance with the practice of this Government, the need will be met.

- (2) Not applicable.

I table a statement made to the Press today.

*The document was tabled (see paper No. 312).*

## WATER SUPPLIES

### Yuna

215. The Hon. H. W. Gayfer (for the Hon. TOM McNEIL), to the Attorney-General representing the Minister for Works:

With respect to the claim that \$43 289 has been expended on the Yuna town water supply up until the 31st August, 1977, and taking into consideration that the township still has an insufficient water supply, would the Minister please detail—

- (a) the years in which the work was carried out, and the cost and type of such work; and
- (b) whether any consideration has been given to the list of likely water sites that has been prepared and forwarded by the Chapman Valley Shire Council?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (a) A summary of expenditure on Yuna water supply is provided hereunder:  
Prior to 1949 expenditure was \$2 461—no details are available.  
Since then, expenditure and work has been as follows:  
1949-1952 \$4 573, new dam and catchment constructed.  
1952-1954 \$1 428, new tank and stand constructed.  
1954-1956 \$1 121, town reticulation construction.  
1957-1960 \$6 698, rehabilitation of bitumen catchment.  
1960-1962 \$2 057, replacement of service tank.  
1963-1965 \$3 302, new pump and pumphouse constructed.  
1965-1966 \$2 524, rehabilitation of bitumen catchment.  
1966-1969 \$1 749, improvements to dam and roaded catchment.  
1969-1973 \$9 292, bitumen catchment extended.  
1974-1977 \$7 874, tank and stand constructed.
- (b) Yes, and a departmental engineer is scheduled to visit the area early in November to select sites for exploratory drilling to evaluate the position.

## STATE ENERGY COMMISSION

### Coal Contracts

216. The Hon D. K. DANS, to the Attorney-General representing the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Will the Minister ascertain whether the Minister for Fuel and Energy has seen an advertisement by the State Energy Commission in *The Australian Financial Review* of Wednesday, the 10th August, 1977, asking persons or companies wishing to register an interest as prospective suppliers of coal to apply to the SEC?
- (2) Is it correct that the SEC intends to seek tenders for coal contracts outside Western Australia?
- (3) If a tender was received from New South Wales or elsewhere for coal at a cheaper price than it is supplied at Collie, would the SEC sign contracts with coal suppliers other than suppliers from Collie?
- (4) What would the effect be on the Collie coal mining industry of loss of contracts by Collie suppliers to the SEC?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (1) Yes. The Minister was aware of the advertisement which appeared in *The West Australian*, *The Australian* and *The Australian Financial Review* at the same time.
- (2) The State Energy Commission advertisement called for prospective suppliers to register their interest in supplying coal over a 15 to 20 year period. The advertisement was open to all prospective suppliers.
- (3) No tenders as such were called for or have been received. Registration of interest only was sought.
- (4) The SEC will not take action which could adversely affect the Collie area in any way. Demand for coal is currently expected to increase from 2 million tonnes to over 5 million tonnes by 1987, providing a firm future for the Collie area.

## TOTALISATOR AGENCY BOARD

### Geraldton Region

217. The Hon. H. W. Gayfer (for the Hon. TOM McNEIL), to the Leader of the House, representing the Chief Secretary:

As the Geraldton region is not now provided with a mid-week racing radio

broadcast, would the Minister please advise—

- (1) Why are Geraldton TAB staff reluctant to give race results to customers making enquiries by telephone?
- (2) On what authority did the TAB staff change their telephone service to an unlisted number?
- (3) Why cannot a telephone answering/monitoring service be installed to provide race results to customers enquiring by telephone?
- (4) What are the minimum and maximum amounts that can be deposited with a TAB agency to allow a client to place bets by telephone?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

- (1) To preserve work priorities and customer service.
- (2) The Administration.
- (3) For technical and operational reasons.
- (4) The minimum initial deposit is \$2. Thereafter the account must have a sufficient balance to cover any bets placed, but there is no upward limit to the amount that can be deposited.

218. *This question was postponed.*

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