

# Labour's Big Power Proposals

Plant for the new South Fremantle power station was the first order of its kind completed and delivered since the war by England's largest firm, Metropolitan Vickers.

This was because the Labour Government's plans for South Fremantle were so far advanced that long before the war ended the Government had an officer in England to order new and varied components for postwar delivery.

Opposition Leader Wise said this last night when, in his policy speech, he criticised the McLarty Government for its power supply policy.

Mr. Wise claimed that there was no credit at all due to the Government for South Fremantle station.

On the contrary, he held that the Government was due for blame for maladministration and weakness in all stages of the East Perth power breakdown.

Designed in 1934 and completed at a cost of £600,000, the present East Perth power station opened in January 1939, he said.

With its capacity of 57,000 kilowatts and surplus of 17,000 kilowatts it was acclaimed, when opened, as the most modern of its kind.

The Labour Government planned for its progressive duplication in seven years but the war prevented that being done.

## POWER UNIT TENDERS

### Opposition Leader's Comment

"I object strongly to "The West Australian" giving credit to the McLarty-Watts Government for the second section of the South Fremantle power station," said the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Wise) yesterday. He was referring to the leading article in our issue of March 7, headed "Railways and Power."

Before his Government left office a recommendation submitted by the chairman of the Electricity Commission to call tenders for the additional generating plant for the second stage of the South Fremantle power station had been approved, Mr. Wise said. This approval followed months of deliberation by the Electricity Commission.

"In the Budget speech delivered on November 11, 1946," continued Mr. Wise, "an outline of the Labour Government's attitude was given by me. Plans were then being reviewed for the second section of the South Fremantle power station, and approvals to call tenders were given by my Government. The present Government approved of a tender from among those received.

"It is, therefore, not correct to imply," concluded Mr. Wise, "that the McLarty Government was responsible for preparing for the second section of the South Fremantle power house. This was all in progress by the Labour Government immediately following the ordering of the first section. The approval for the calling of tenders is over my signature."

[If "The West Australian" gave credit for the second section of the South Fremantle power house where it does not belong it sincerely regrets the

belong it sincerely regrets the error. We quoted from the Premier's review of the Government's first 12 months in office which we published on April 1, 1948. In that review Mr. McLarty said: "We authorised the construction of and accepted tenders for the second section of the South Fremantle power station at a cost of over £2,000,000.—Ed.]

## ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES

### Premier Replies To Mr. Wise

Referring yesterday to a statement by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Wise) regarding the electricity position which the present Government had inherited from the Labour Government, the Premier (Mr. McLarty) said that beyond question the authority for the second section of the South Fremantle power station had been given by the present Government.

It was one thing for a Government to authorise that tenders be called, which might or might not lead to subsequent action, and it was quite another thing for a Government to make a vital decision carrying responsibility for the expenditure of over £2,000,000.

The present Government, Mr. McLarty said, was entitled to the full credit for authorising the construction of the second section of the South Fremantle power station. No previous Government could make such a claim and substantiate it.

So far as he knew, no-one was complaining about the various "preliminaries" which Labour Governments had toyed with for many years. What was complained of was the failure of Labour Governments to make the many big decisions which were left to the present Government.

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**WATER CHARGES:** Unless amounts outstanding for water rates and charges for excess water were paid forthwith, the water services might be cut off or legal proceedings taken for recovery, the Under-Secretary for Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage (Mr. J. C. Hutchinson) said yesterday.

## ALP URGES A POWER INQUIRY

**P**ERSISTENT rumours that extensive damage had been done to electrical equipment at the new South Fremantle power station should be answered by a Ministerial statement, delegates said at last night's meeting of the ALP State executive.

The meeting decided to ask the State Government to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the administration and management of the State Electricity Commission.

State ALP secretary F. E. Chamberlain said today that the meeting had decided "in view of the information that has come to the knowledge of State executive officers" to adopt the following recommendation:

"That the State Government be urged to appoint a Royal Commission of inquiry into the general administration and management of the State Electricity Commission and the justification or otherwise of the continual increase in price of gas and electricity to the public.

"That Works Minister Brand be asked to refute publicly the persistent rumours regarding extensive damage to the South Fremantle electrical equipment, or, if the rumours are true, to inform the public of such alleged damage."

## Applying The "Squeeze" To Fremantle Board

**That the State Electricity Commission was applying the "squeeze" to the Fremantle Tramway Board in an endeavour to make the board sell its electricity undertaking to the commission was alleged yesterday by Mr. J. B. Sleeman, M.L.A.**

He was surprised, Mr. Sleeman said, that the Minister for Electricity (Mr. Brand) had made no statement about frequency changes when he opened the South Fremantle power station on Wednesday.

Mr. Sleeman said that at an inspection of the South Fremantle power station a few weeks before the official opening, the chairman of the State Electricity-Commission (Mr. R. J. Dumas) and the general manager and chief engineer of the commission (Mr. F. C. Edmondson) had both said that Fremantle was to remain on 40 cycles. When asked why, they had replied that the Fremantle Tramway Board wanted to adhere to an agreement it had with the Government.

"What they should have said," Mr. Sleeman added, "was that, because the Fremantle Tramway Board refuses to sell its undertaking to the commission, the commission will squeeze the board as much as it can."

Many years ago, he continued, Fremantle had its own plant generating on a 50-cycle frequency, but Fremantle was induced by the then Government to abandon the plant in favour of 40 cycles to be supplied from the East Perth power sta-

tion. A Labour Government decided to erect a new station at South Fremantle to supply electricity of 50 cycles. The Government said at the time that it would bear the cost of changing the frequency and the Federal Government agreed to bear half the cost up to £300,000.

"I would be pleased to learn,"

"I would be pleased to learn," Mr. Sleeman concluded, "that the commission has decided now to stop its child's play and carry out the job as promised."

## Sleeman In Attack Over Powerhouse

AN attempt in the Legislative Assembly today by Fremantle MLA Sleeman to have the Loan Estimates reduced by £55,000 was defeated by 15 votes to 11, the House dividing on party lines.

Mr. Sleeman attacked the Government over the administration of the South Fremantle power station.

The fact that the power station during the frequency changer breakdown was using a plant with 50,000kw. capacity to supply 25000kw. of power showed that somebody had blundered, he said.

The big blunder was the dismissal of Mr. W. H. Taylor, the designer of the South Fremantle power station, before the station was in operation.

The Government had "put the squeeze" on the Fremantle Municipal Electricity Board to force it to sell out, Mr. Sleeman said.

Though a power line for 50-cycle current had been built from the new power station to Fremantle, current was still being taken to Perth, converted to 40 cycles and taken back to Fremantle.

Western Australia had the dearest power in Australia.

Works Minister Brand: It compares favourably with that in other States.

## Power Administration Attacked By M.L.A.

**Strong criticism directed at the administration of the South Fremantle power station was made in the Legislative Assembly by Mr. Sleeman (Lab., Fremantle) on Saturday.**

He was speaking during the general debate on the Loan Estimates.

His protest-move for a reduction of £55,000 in expenditure failed when a division was taken and the voting was 15 to 11 against the motion.

He said that the South Fremantle power station during the frequency-changer breakdown at the East Perth station was using plant with 50,000 kilowatt capacity to supply only 2,500 kilowatts.

Someone had blundered, he said, but perhaps the biggest blunder of all had been the decision to allow Mr. W. H. Taylor, the designer of the South Fremantle station, to retire from his post as general manager of the State Electricity Commission.

Recently, he said, the Government, through the State Electricity Commission, had "put the squeeze" on the Fremantle Municipal and Electric Tramways Board to sell out its agreement for the supply of electricity at 0.85d. a unit.

A power transmission line for 50-cycle current had been built from South Fremantle to East Perth for conversion to 40 cycles to be taken back to the district from which it came.

He declared that Western Australia had the dearest electricity in the Commonwealth.

Earlier in the sitting Mr. W. Hegney (Lab., Mt. Hawthorn) asked for the appointment of an independent authority by the Government to inquire into metropolitan area electricity and gas costs.

The Minister for Electricity (Mr. Brand) replied that the State Electricity Commission was continuously watching the position.