

the country have been so administered that budgets have been somewhere near balanced. These remarks are a little off the track I am afraid, but there is no chance of my giving support to the measure because although there are some phases of it that might be acceptable—but Mr. Fraser has raised doubts in my mind—I think the sponsor of the Bill has been sadly led astray in his good intentions. I want it to be perfectly clear—

Hon. G. Fraser: You believe it might apply.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That is like the statement that two wrongs do not make a right. It does not get us very far. I shall vote against the second reading.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.8 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 12th November, 1946.

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QUESTIONS.

NORTH-WEST RIVERS.

As to Expert Investigation for Barraging.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for the North-West:

1, Have any investigations been made or surveys conducted (other than in the Kimberley Division) as to the practicability of barraging the rivers of the North-West of this State or otherwise conserving the waters that run to waste therefrom?

2, If so, by whom were such investigations made and were the investigators surveyors or engineers or both?

3, Had these persons any experience of water courses elsewhere in connection with which there exist difficulties similar to those that exist in our North-West?

4, Was their report favourable to such work on any of such rivers, and if so, which?

5, If the reports were unfavourable, or no investigation made, does he not consider it desirable that an engineer of international repute and experience in such matters should be engaged to investigate the possibilities and plan for the work?

6, Will he, in the interests of the development and populating of these areas, recommend to the Government the appointment of such an engineer as mentioned in Question (5) with a view to early consideration of the matter?

The MINISTER replied :

1, An inspection has been made of a site in the Gregory Gorge through which the Fortescue River runs and of the basin and portion of the catchment including Mill Stream. Aerial inspection has been made of sites on the Margaret River, Leonard and other North-West streams.

2, Inspections of the Gregory Gorge site and catchment were made by the Director of Works and the Government Geologist.

3, Yes.

4, Inspections were preliminary only. It is considered that investigations should be concentrated on the Ord River area in order to demonstrate the possibility of development of the North-West by conservation of water and irrigation. Assuming this is successful, other schemes will then follow.

5, Aerial surveys of the Gascoyne River are to be made shortly. These will be fol-

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2 p.m., and read prayers.

lowed by land surveys if a suitable site is located by the aerial photos. Similar procedure will follow regarding the De Grey and other North-West rivers. After the complete survey information has been obtained the question of engaging an engineer to investigate the possibilities can be given consideration.

6, Answered by No. 5.

HOUSING.

As to Report on Release of Building Materials.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Premier:

1, Has Mr. Wallwork completed his inquiry into the release of building materials for the purpose of expediting the house building scheme?

2, If so, will his report be laid on the Table of the House?

3, If not, will he amplify the statement by Mr. Wallwork recently published in "The West Australian"?

The PREMIER replied:

1, 2 and 3, A final report by Mr. Wallwork was not contemplated. He has made three interim reports and from time to time he has furnished an account of his activities and what has been accomplished, and has submitted a number of recommendations.

The release of building materials is tied up with the supply position and is dependent upon both the local and Eastern States supplies. Mr. Wallwork will continue to make such investigations as requested by the Government.

RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK.

As to Mortgage Securities.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Lands: How many mortgages other than first mortgages are held as security by the Rural and Industries Bank both in respect of the Government Agency Department and other departments of that bank?

The MINISTER replied:

None. Section 58, paragraph (c) of the Rural and Industries Bank Act, 1944, precludes the commissioners from making advances other than on the security of a first mortgage.

BILL—TIMBER INDUSTRY REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Minister for Labour and read a first time.

BILL—TIMBER INDUSTRY (HOUSING OF EMPLOYEES).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th November.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [2.5]: The Bill can best be described as one of a revolutionary nature.

The Minister for Lands: Good God!

MR. LESLIE: It is—despite the pious expression of the Minister. It is surprising, too, in that the timber industry is one of major importance to Western Australia, yet has been singled out for what might best be described as a trial of the new order.

The Minister for Lands: Do you not believe in a new order?

MR. LESLIE: I want it to be clearly understood that I am indeed surprised at the fact that such unsatisfactory conditions have existed in the industry for so long. It is all the more surprising to me in view of the fact that a Labour Government has been in power for so many years in Western Australia and that such an Administration has been prepared to allow those conditions to continue.

The Minister for Lands: We have just become revolutionary!

MR. LESLIE: In that case, the Government has become revolutionary to the umpteenth degree, and for that purpose has singled out this one industry rather than engage in an overall examination of all industries where the employer is required by custom to provide housing accommodation for the employees. It would have displayed far more sincerity in this matter had it first put its own house in order.

The Minister for Lands: We have presented a fair number of Bills, you know.

MR. LESLIE: Yes, but it would be far easier to compel observance of the law if the Government, like Caesar's wife, were itself above suspicion. The report of the Royal Commission discloses that the evidence revealed a rather sorry state of affairs in many respects in the timber in-

dustry and did not in any way exempt the Government from its share of responsibility in that regard. For my part, I have been fair in dealing with the housing problem by looking over the whole sphere of the Government's operations. While it is not free from blame in connection with the timber industry, if an examination of the position regarding the housing of Government employees generally were undertaken, I am afraid the Government would present a very sorry picture. I venture to suggest, as I look at the Minister for Education, that the house provided for the teacher in the average rural school is the meanest in the country town concerned.

The Minister for Education: No, not the average.

Mr. LESLIE: One would have to go a long way in search of a country school-teacher's dwelling to which the residents of the country town where it was situated could point with pride. The same state of affairs exists in connection with the railways. These two activities represent the two major operations of the Government in connection with which it is in honour bound to provide housing for its employees.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that we are not dealing with the railways at the present time.

Mr. LESLIE: No, but I am dealing with the housing question generally.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Bill deals with the provision of proper and sufficient housing accommodation for sawmill employees engaged in the timber industry.

Mr. LESLIE: Very well, Mr. Speaker! All I can say is that the housing provided by the State Saw Mills for employees in the timber industry represents merely a reflection of the housing provided by the Government for its employees in other directions.

The Minister for Lands: And that is not correct, either.

Mr. LESLIE: A similar Bill was introduced last year, and the Minister, when presenting this measure to members this session, was content to refer to the second reading speech of the Minister for Lands last year. The Minister, in moving the second reading,

made out a case to some extent for these employees, but his remarks might well be applied to other Government employees for whom housing is provided. Because of that, I say this is a revolutionary measure and one that should receive careful attention to ensure that it will not impose upon this one industry a far heavier burden than it is able to bear.

The average sawmill, in order to comply with the requirements of this measure, would have to lay out anything from £20,000 to £50,000 for the housing of its employees. That is a very large sum to ask any company to provide, and I am worried lest this might lead to one of those things which the Ministry is pledged to oppose, namely, the creation of a monopoly. What small company is in a position to undertake a capital investment of those proportions, especially when it has no security of tenure? Timber companies operate on a year-to-year permit basis, and the whole of the money would have to be subscribed. It could not be obtained by loan, because the most necessary condition of security, namely, tenure, is absent.

I admit that so long as the companies behave themselves, there is no question of their being put out of business but, all said and done, these permits are subject to the whims and fancies of those who grant them. Although the companies may believe they are doing all within their power to comply with the law and meet the demands of the Government, yet for some obscure reason their tenure may be terminated or conditions may be prescribed impossible for them to comply with. While the permits may have a continuity of tenure, from time to time the conditions are varied materially, thus altering the life or sphere of the companies' operations. Therefore, before the Government attempts to impose this burden upon the industry, or indeed upon any industry, it should be careful to ensure that those concerned are in a position to bear the burden.

The standard set in the Bill, having regard to the original housing accommodation provided by sawmillers for their employees, is undoubtedly a high one. I do not say that, as compared with housing generally nowadays, the standard is high, but it is high compared with what originally obtained in the industry. I find that the sawmilling companies are steadily improving the conditions

on their mills. Much of the accommodation used by their employees was provided in the days when the industry was not blessed with a secure future but was subject to severe fluctuations. Because of this, employees were provided with such accommodation as the companies in the circumstances then existing considered it advisable to make available. As the industry has become more securely established, the companies have provided and are providing increased and improved accommodation. This fact is revealed in the evidence that was tendered to the Royal Commission by representatives of the employers and employees and by what the members of the commission saw for themselves.

I suggest that, in view of the housing position generally, the Government would do well to tread warily when bringing the provisions of this measure into operation. At present we are faced with a very serious shortage of building material all over the State, and there are people literally without homes and without accommodation anything like equal to the poorest of the housing on the timber mills today. So, I suggest that, in the existing circumstances, the Government would do well to proceed slowly. When the Bill reaches the Committee stage, a very serious overhaul should be made of the conditions laid down. It is proposed to appoint a housing inspector, one who, according to the measure, must know his job, but I doubt whether there is any other public officer in the State who has power equal to what is proposed for this inspector. He will be supreme. One part of the Bill provides that the Minister shall take certain action upon the approval of the housing inspector. That provision, I consider, is certainly revolutionary. The Minister shall act on the approval of one of his officers. I do not know whether that is an error or whether it is deliberately designed. If it is so designed, we are reaching a sorry state of affairs if the Minister, regardless of his own discretion, shall act upon the approval of the housing inspector.

I mention this portion of the Bill only to emphasise the enormous power that will be entrusted to the housing inspector. True, one part of the Bill provides for exemption for certain mills or portions of mills, but the power to grant exemption

will lie in the hands of the housing inspector. Doubtless the mill-owner will have the right of appeal to the Minister, but if the Minister shall act on the approval of the inspector in one direction, I assume that he shall act on the approval of the inspector in other directions, and from this Caesar there will be no appeal whatever. There is a possibility that, if a mill-owner fails to live up to the housing conditions envisaged by this powerful inspector, his permit will be affected. So we find that, in addition to the insecurity of tenure that exists by virtue of the fact that the mill-owners operate under an annual permit and that the permit is subject to variations from year to year, they will be at the mercy of the housing inspector. If they cannot see the necessity for complying with some of the inspector's demands, the renewal of the permits under which they are operating may be affected.

In the evidence tendered to the Royal Commission, I have been unable to find any information as to whether the industry is in a position to bear the financial burden that will be imposed upon it. If it were intended to make somewhat similar conditions apply to all industries throughout the State where housing accommodation is provided by employers for their employees, doubtless there would have been included a provision for varying the conditions applicable to each industry. But this is a sectional measure and one which lays down a minimum standard for housing. Whether that minimum standard is to apply generally or not is a matter which the Minister may have in mind in connection with his own future policy; but in laying down that standard for one particular industry there is not only the danger that it may be imposing too great a burden on the industry, but also the danger that, regardless of what the Government or employers in the sawmilling industry may be required to do for their employees, circumstances will arise such as arise in every case where a minimum is provided—that minimum becomes the maximum. That evidence is with us every day. We find it in the conditions of the workers in this and other industries. A minimum wage is laid down and it immediately becomes the maximum. I am afraid that the same thing will happen in this industry and that the employers will

not provide anything better than the standard laid down in this measure. Although one particular mill might be inclined to provide a higher standard, we will find that it will simply comply with the provisions of the Act and go no further. In the end the worker is always the one that suffers. That is a further danger I see in the measure.

It has not been possible for me to ascertain accurately the number of houses likely to be required and their cost; but, taking the number of employees recorded as engaged in this industry, I should say, as a rough estimate, that the total amount will exceed £500,000. If the houses already erected on the mills are today below the standard and will have to be pulled down and houses of the standard provided put up in their stead, I leave it to you, Mr. Speaker, to judge what the effect is likely to be on the industry. Before the Government puts this measure into effect, I urge it to make a careful survey of every mill in order to ascertain its financial ability to carry out the work involved. If some mills are unable to bear the expense, some statutory modification will have to be made. The matter should not be left in the hands of one individual, who could thus decide the fate of important sections of the industry.

In my opinion, the Bill will require considerable amendment in the Committee stage. For instance, while the Government can compel mill-owners to alter existing accommodation to bring it up to the standard laid down in the Bill, no time is specified within which the work shall be done. The measure does exempt certain buildings; the others, as I read the Bill, must automatically be brought up to the standard required by the Bill. Under present-day conditions, with building materials in short supply, that will create an impossible position. It is no use the Government saying that the inspector will be reasonable and will take that aspect into consideration. I say again that that is too big a power to place in the hands of an inspector where large sections of a very important industry are concerned.

Mr. Cross: You are not too enthusiastic.

Mr. LESLIE: I am, but what I am afraid of is that the Government has bitten off a little more than it can chew, or than the industry can chew.

Hon. P. Collier: Bunkum!

Mr. LESLIE: It is not bunkum. A number of other improvements will have to be made in the Committee stage; but one point I would like the Minister to explain in his reply is why it has been found necessary to include in the Bill a provision that it shall be illegal, or an offence, for any employer to make it a condition of employment that the employee shall find his own accommodation. I think the wording of the clause should be improved. I know what the Minister has in mind, but it seems to me to be the beginning of an awkward situation. An employee seeking a job at a mill might be told by the employer, "Yes, there is a job here for you, but unfortunately I have not got a house or accommodation for you. I suggest that accommodation is available at a nearby townsite." Quite possibly the worker lives in the townsite and so the mill-owner might say to him, "Yes, I can give you a job as long as you do not want a house here on the mill and will keep the one in town." If the employer were to do that, he would be committing an offence against the Act.

I am fully in sympathy with what I believe to be the Minister's idea. It is to obviate the position arising where an employer will tell the worker, "I can give you a job, but have no accommodation. You can gather up what timber you like. I will let you have it and you can build a place for yourself." I quite agree that that position should not be allowed to arise, but it has been guarded against by a previous clause which provides that the construction of every house shall be undertaken by qualified tradesmen. Therefore hardly see the necessity for including this later provision, which will place the employer in a very awkward position should the circumstances I have mentioned arise.

I would like to see something done, apart from coercion or compulsion, to encourage sawmillers to provide the highest possible standard of comfort for their employees, who should be given a greater degree of comfort than they get today. If they had that, we would not require to exercise compulsion to make the employers provide housing of a standard higher than that set out in the Bill. It certainly is not very encouraging to me to find that the Government itself has not done better for its own employees. An examination of the records

of our State will disclose that, generally speaking, the private employer has always been a step ahead of the Government in providing amenities and facilities for the workers. I propose to support the second reading of the Bill and hope that the Minister will, in the Committee stage, see his way to adopt a number of amendments which, as soon as the opportunity presents itself, will appear on the notice paper.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [2.30]: As a member of the Select Committee that was appointed last session to make an inquiry into this matter, I would like to pass some observations on its recommendations. It is unfortunate that every member has not been provided with a copy of the report of that Select Committee, which afterwards became an honorary Royal Commission, because if members had received reports they would have been able to read about some of the conditions the commission found on the various mill sites, and the recommendations of the commission in that regard that have been embodied in the Bill.

I listened with interest to the criticisms of the member for Mt. Marshall and thought they were particularly mild. If the Bill contains an incorrect word that might convey a dangerous meaning, that word can be removed, because we are not wedded to every word of it. With many of the remarks of the hon. member I entirely disagree. He said it would appear that this is the trial of a new order, and he advanced exactly the same objections to the recommendation that mill-owners should provide better housing for their employees as were raised by the representatives of the Sawmillers' Association. They asked why the saw-milling industry should be singled out as the only one to be compelled in the first place to provide housing for employees, and in the second place to provide housing of a required standard. I was born on a timber mill and in one of those contraptions that are designated houses; and some of those buildings are still in existence.

The custom in this State has always been for the sawmillers to provide housing accommodation for their employees. As a matter of fact they are granted a certain area of land as a mill site, and no-one else

has the right to erect a building thereon; so the logical and natural sequence is that the employer must erect buildings for the housing of his employees. I very seriously doubt whether the proprietors of any saw-mill in this State would be agreeable if it were suggested that permission should be given to an employee to erect a building on a mill site. Without any idea of disparaging what has been done by the sawmill owners, I want to say that there had never been any objection to that state of affairs until we said that a good standard of housing should be made available. In the past the owners have been quite prepared to have the sole right to erect dwellings on a given area of their mill sites. They have been quite satisfied to accept that monopoly and to provide in many instances a very inferior type of housing accommodation, but now that the Government says they must provide a better type of house, they are evidently going to quarrel with the principle involved. On that ground, however, their objection falls down.

In spite of the opinions expressed by the member for Mt. Marshall that this appears to be the trial of a new order, I feel that had he accompanied the commission and seen some of the deplorable conditions under which mill employees have to work—conditions that nothing but financial necessity and economic pressure would compel men to live under and ask their families to live under—he would have agreed in a great measure to the recommendations of the commission. The reference by the hon. member to the housing provided by the Government on its mill sites was only a red herring which he endeavoured to draw across the trail and does not carry much weight; because, with the exception of the houses at Holyoake, the standard of accommodation provided on the State Saw Mills, while in some instances not coming up to the standard required under the Bill, is certainly much superior to that which we found on many of the other mill sites. At Holyoake the vast majority of the buildings are sub-standard; but they were more or less inherited by the State Saw Mills which bought the mill, including the dwellings, as a going concern. The accommodation is sub-standard and should be brought into conformity with the requirements of the Bill.

No burden whatever is imposed on the owners of sawmills in providing this accommodation. They are not being asked to supply something for nothing. The employees are prepared to pay a rental which will return a fair average rate of interest on the dwellings erected for them. We made it a particular point of inquiry of the womenfolk, and also of the male employees with whom we came in contact, whether they preferred to carry on with the admittedly very low rent for the present inferior accommodation, or whether they would be prepared to pay a higher rent for a better class of accommodation; and they were unanimous in expressing the view that they would prefer to pay a higher rent for better houses. The industrial agreement, one of the means by which rents paid by employees to the owners are fixed, permits a return of nine per cent. on the capital invested in any particular dwelling. I do not think it is imposing any great hardship on an employer to ask him to provide a reasonable standard of comfort for his employees for a return of up to nine per cent. on his outlay.

I do not know that there are many dwellings in the metropolitan area, particularly those of a better type, that return to their owners nine per cent. So no burden is being imposed on these people at all. If we were asking that better class accommodation should be provided at a rental that would not give a reasonable return on the capital value, there might be something in the contention of the hon. member; but that is not the case. As a matter of fact, I should say that this would be quite a good investment from the mill-owners' point of view. The hon. member also said that if houses had to be dismantled and others erected in conformity with the standards laid down in the Bill, a tremendous amount of money would be involved. I do not know where there is anything in the Bill to lead the average person reading it to that conclusion, because we studiously refrain from making any recommendation that existing buildings should be dismantled.

Members will find a difference in the recommendations concerning the standard for new dwellings and that for buildings already in existence. It is recommended that certain things shall be done to provide a reasonable standard of comfort in exist-

ing buildings, but no proposal has been made for the dismantling of any house. The hon. member thought the standard was a high one. Anyone who carefully considers the type of house recommended by the Royal Commission, or its recommendations in regard to buildings already erected, and still considers the standard to be high, must have a mind belonging to the dark ages, because the Royal Commission suggested a modest type of cottage which, in most cases, could be erected—according to the mill-owners' own estimates—for about £340 to £450.

Mr. Leslie: My information is that the cost would be over £500.

Mr. STYANTS: If the hon. member would look at the back of the report of the commission, he would see about four plans and specifications of houses, together with the estimated costs, supplied by the State Saw Mills, Millars Timber and Trading Co., Bunning Bros., and Whittaker Bros.

Mr. Leslie: That has not been made available to the House.

Mr. STYANTS: The report has been on the Table for the past fortnight. Those houses comply in almost every respect with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, and the average rent necessary to give a reasonable return would be 12s. 6d. per week, which the employees say they are prepared to pay. I do not think the standard is too high. The member for Mt. Marshall mentioned the improvements that would have to be made. Well, a pleasant feature, to me, was the attitude adopted by most of the representatives of the larger sawmilling companies when giving evidence. They realised that, in order to get a good reliable type of employee who would stick to the industry, they would have to provide better housing accommodation and more amenities and amusements than at present.

Mr. Fox: This would be a good investment for their money.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, an excellent one. Take the case of a new mill with a life of 25 to 30 years. The management of such a concern would have an excellent investment by erecting houses at £430 and letting them at 12s. 6d. a week. I would say that practically all the present houses, some of which have been erected for 45 years, have paid for themselves many times. The member for Mt. Marshall said that it would be an offence for

a mill-owner to make it a condition of employment that the employee should provide his own accommodation. He was drawing the long bow when he said that it would be an offence for an employee to go to a mill-owner, who might not have accommodation, when he, the employee, already had a house in a village nearby. The obvious thing would be for a prospective employee, when applying for a job, to tell the mill-owner that he already had accommodation when, of course, no offence would be created.

The commission held 13 meetings in 13 different locations, and 26 witnesses, representing all interests, gave evidence, covering 279 pages. Generally, the standard of the houses we inspected was poor. Some were quite comfortable and came up to what is required by the Bill. Others were of medium standard. They were mostly houses that had been built 30 or 40 years ago and would have been regarded in those times as being quite good accommodation, but they are not up to the necessary standard today, though they could be made to conform to it at little expense. Other houses we saw could only be described as deplorable; they were nothing better than hovels! It must be sheer economic necessity that compels a man to take a young wife and family to live in such wretched conditions. The commission realised, and it was borne out by the evidence, that great difficulty was experienced in coping with current repairs to the better type of house, and that the repairs had been seriously retarded by the shortage of tradesmen and materials during the war. That position will continue for some time.

We also heard a lot of evidence from the employees as to the possibility of abolishing bush camps. But as that question did not come within our terms of reference—the contents of the Bill last year comprised the terms of reference—we made no recommendation in connection with it. My impression, however, is that if it were possible to abolish bush camps it would be better for everyone. By so doing, we would get much more contented workmen, and have the position of the father of the family coming home at least each night and going away each morning instead of the present position of the husband leaving early on Monday morning and not arriving home until Saturday night. I believe it is the ideal that a husband should live with his wife

and family and that the children should have the benefit of his companionship and guidance.

A small number of employees would prefer to live in bush camps, and they are to be found amongst the fallers. The fallers themselves represent only a small percentage of all the men employed in the bush and, again, there is only a small percentage of the fallers who would prefer to live on the job. These men are mostly contract workers operating on a piecework basis. Some said they would prefer to live in the bush so that they could work hours to suit themselves. Even among the fallers the great majority said they would prefer to be taken to work and brought back home each night, but I do not think a hard and fast rule for the abolition of bush camps would be practicable. I was born in that country and have worked on the mills, and I think it would be difficult, in some localities, to transport the men by motor vehicle to and from work, as the country would be too swampy in winter and it would be almost impossible to keep the roads open. To the greatest extent possible the bush camps should be abolished. That would bring about more contentment and efficiency than exists at present in the timber industry.

I say without hesitation that the conditions that we inspected in the bush were unfit for women and children, and the housing standard was deplorably low. Some of the bush houses that we inspected had 7ft. walls, with corrugated iron roofs. Some of the rooms were neither ceiled nor lined, while others were ceiled with chaff bags. Chaff bags had been split, sewn together and put up as a ceiling. The occupants of those camps said that on cold mornings the condensation from the corrugated iron dripped down on them. The bags were put up to prevent the drips coming down on the beds, furniture and floors.

Mr. Doney: Did you find that that was happening often?

Mr. STYANTS: It was characteristic of the accommodation for married people in the bush camps. There were no schooling facilities available and no ablution or laundry facilities provided. It was a mystery to me how the housewives managed. No baths, showers, coppers or troughs were provided. At such camps the water supply is from a tank placed alongside the bush line. The

present bush conditions are not suitable for married people, and certainly not for women and children.

I will deal now with the single men's huts. In the majority of cases one would have to see the accommodation to realise what deplorable conditions such men live under. It is no wonder that the Premier, when speaking on the State Housing Bill recently, said there was a reluctance, even on the part of fallers—who are the biggest wage-earners in the timber industry—to go back to that calling after having seen service in the Forces. In one instance that the Premier mentioned the faller concerned said he would be prepared to work in the city, in an ice-cream factory, rather than go back to the bush as a faller. Having seen the conditions under which the single men work, I do not wonder they have no desire to return to the bush, as I did not see in any place really good accommodation for them. The best that I saw was at the railway mill, where there is a mobile camp provided, mounted on a railway truck chassis. For the rest, we saw deplorable conditions. In most cases the men are living in small camps measuring about 9ft. by 8ft., and in some cases 9ft. by 7ft., without either linings or ceilings. No ablution block is provided to give them facilities to wash either themselves or their clothes. It must be remembered that when these men go into the bush there is scrub up to their waists, and even if it is a fine day the bush is wet.

When the men return to camp they have to set about cooking their evening meal, as no boarding house is provided, except at the railway mill. On arriving at their camps they have to change into dry clothing. There is no cover provided, either by way of a lean-to or verandah, so they must go into their camps to change. There is nowhere for them to put their wet clothes, except on a box alongside the fire. They have to eat, sleep, and dry their clothes in a 9ft. by 8ft. cubby-house. There is no ventilation provided, except for what comes down the chimney. If the fire is alight and there is a draught down the chimney the camp is filled with smoke.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: People are sleeping on verandahs in the city.

Mr. STYANTS: This is much worse than sleeping on verandahs. I sleep on a veran-

dah, in both summer and winter, as a matter of choice, rather than stay in a closed-up room.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: In the city families are living on verandahs.

Mr. STYANTS: These conditions will have to be altered if the timber industry is to be kept going. Men will not go out to the bush to work under such conditions. The recommendation of the commission is that the least that can be done is to provide an ablution block and some shelter for the men, and that when they come in wet from the bush at night hot water should be available. The company employing them could easily send a man along, about an hour before knock-off time, to stoke up a copper in order to provide hot water, and a place should be provided in which the men could hang their wet clothes, in order to have them dry and ready for the next day. They should not have to dry their wet clothing in the cubby-house in which they sleep. Bunning Bros.' bush camps at Nyamup provide the best type of accommodation that we had seen. They provide a double camp for two men, with a vestibule in between, for protection from the weather. That is the type of accommodation that we think should be provided for the bush workers. Mr. O'Byrne, secretary of the Timber Workers' Union in New Zealand, referring to the W.A. forests, said—

Lack of good accommodation in the bush is, I feel, one of the main reasons for the shortage of timber workers.

Men do not mind working in the bush if they are able to be comfortable when they get home at night, and it pays an employer to have men happy and contented in their homes. They do not mind working under arduous conditions during the day, and the least they are entitled to is a decent amount of comfort after finishing a day's work. The camps we saw were disgraceful and not only was that condition of affairs in evidence at the private mills, but also in the case of the State Sawmills, and particularly at Dean Mill. The bush conditions there were as bad as we saw anywhere.

Reference was made by the member for Mt. Marshall to insecurity of tenure. It was also put up to the commission that the sawmillers only got their permits from 12 months to 12 months. The commission

thought there might be a lot in the contention that the millers did not know whether their permits would be renewed but, on returning to Perth, it called Mr. H. V. Telfer, Registrar, and Mr. A. C. Shedley, Assistant Conservator of Forests, in order to find out what the position was. After hearing their evidence and getting the full gist of the provisions relating to permits, we were satisfied that there is no insecurity of tenure. As a matter of fact, over a 28-year period there has only been one minor case in which the permit was not renewed. I therefore think that the complaint of the Sawmillers' Association, that there is insecurity of tenure, is without foundation. As a matter of fact I believe that the only reason why the permits are issued 12 monthly is to secure a guarantee or assurance that all the provisions of the permits are carried out. That was the unanimous opinion formed by members of the Royal Commission after hearing the evidence of these two forestry officers. If members peruse the commission's report they will ascertain the conditions as we found them at each centre, and we visited practically the whole of the timber milling centres in Western Australia.

The members of the Royal Commission are indebted to many for the assistance they obtained throughout the inquiry. I wish to make this acknowledgment particularly in my capacity of chairman of the commission. I thank my colleagues for the help they gave me on all occasions. They always applied themselves zealously to the task in hand. Had it not been for their co-operation and assistance, my position might have been much more difficult. I was particularly pleased with the work rendered by the secretary of the commission, Mr. Islip, and his assistant, Mr. Hawley, who acted when Mr. Islip was not able to accompany us. I wish also to thank the "Hansard" reporters who took evidence on many occasions under very difficult circumstances. I remember that on one occasion they had to make use of a big log that had been fallen alongside a mill site, and they took evidence from a number of witnesses under those extraordinarily difficult conditions. I do not desire to forget the motor drivers who took us along many tortuous and hazardous trails and never failed us on one occasion.

The thanks of the commission are also due to a number of others among whom was Mr. Sweeney, the secretary of the Timber Workers' Union and his representatives. Mr. Sweeney always made contacts for us so far as his union was concerned. Another was Mr. Whyte of the Sawmillers' Association and his managers. The last mentioned were most co-operative and assisted us in every possible way in the matter of inspections and the securing of evidence. Mr. Gomme and other officers of the State Saw Mills were equally co-operative. Mr. Huxtable of the Railway Mill, Banksiadale, not only accompanied us around his mill and explained everything to us, but he also accompanied us to their bush camp some 14 or 15 miles distant. Mr. Craig, of Millars' Timber & Trading Company, was particularly co-operative. That company's mills are widely spaced throughout the timber areas, but in every instance he accompanied us to the mill we visited and provided every facility to assist us in our investigation. Mr. Johnson, representing Bunning Bros., was also very helpful and so were all the other managers.

I want to deal briefly with the provisions of the Bill. But for the fact that printed copies of the Royal Commission's report could not be made available to members, it would not be necessary for me to go over the details. On account of the unavoidable circumstances that prevented the report from being printed, it is necessary for me to go into matters at some length. Last year's Bill provided that the present supervisor and inspectors should be the supervisor and inspectors under the measure now before members. We quickly realised that in view of the volume of work these officers are already undertaking, it would be merely putting the proverbial last straw on the camel's back if we were to ask them to undertake the task involved. In fact, it might mean that quite possibly the work would not be done in the manner we regard as essential. For that reason the commission recommended that a special supervisor should be appointed.

I agree with the member for Mt. Marshall that the supervisor will exercise a great deal of power. In fact, much of the success of this legislation will depend upon the right man being appointed to fill this

position. He will require to be a man possessed of a knowledge of health and buildings laws, to be very diplomatic, and on some occasions to be resolute in standing up for what he considers right. When he says something has to be done, he must be a man who will see that it is done. If he considers that conditions do not warrant certain things being done, he must be able to stand up to those who say that those things ought to be carried out. In last year's Bill no provision was made for the State Saw Mills to be brought within the scope of the legislation. The Royal Commission recommended that the State Saw Mills should be bound by its provisions equally with private employers, and the Government has accepted that principle and embodied an appropriate clause in the Bill.

The distance that a dwelling should be from milling operations was not dealt with in the legislation submitted last session, and when we visited the mill centres we ascertained that there were no complaints with regard to the noise from the mills, although many of the existing houses are within 200 yards of where sawmilling operations are carried out. However, the commission considered that when new mill sites are being planned dwelling-houses should not be within 200 yards of any building or place where sawmilling operations are to be carried on. There is also the question of the yarding of horses. I want to draw a distinction between the yarding and stabling of horses. Under the health regulations that apply in the city stables must not be within 40 feet of living accommodation. In the Bill under discussion we are not asked to deal with the stabling of horses but the yarding of horses, where 30 or 40 horses may be yarded in an area of three or four acres.

Next there is the question of the height of ceilings in the dwelling-houses. In the Bill submitted to members last year the height prescribed was 10 feet 6 inches. The commission looked at some new dwellings erected by Millars' Timber & Trading Company and Bunning Bros. where the ceiling height is 10 feet, and we were satisfied that that height fitted in well with the requirements of hygiene and health conditions. Instead of a height of 10 feet 6 inches the commission recommended that 10 feet

should be the height specified in the Bill. I discussed the matter with the Town Planning Commissioner and found that he also considers that a height of 10 feet is ample. Bearing in mind the opinion expressed by the Institute of Architects that a ceiling height of 9 feet 6 inches in connection with the Commonwealth-State rental homes was sufficient to fulfil health requirements, we had no hesitation in recommending a ceiling height of 10 feet instead of 10 feet 6 inches.

Then again, the matter of window space is slightly different in the present Bill compared with the proposed provision under last year's legislation. The earlier suggestion was that the window space should not be less than one-tenth of the floor area. We found that in some places there were rooms as large as 14 feet by 12 feet with a window sash 5 feet 9 inches by 2 feet 9 inches, which we regard as big enough for any room in a country dwelling, although it did not quite reach the standard specified in last year's Bill. In the circumstances the commission recommended that in any room having 144 square feet or more of floor space a window sash 5 feet by 9 inches by 2 feet 9 inches should be sufficient. In a room of smaller size than 12 feet by 12 feet, it shall be 10 per cent. of the floor area. Ventilation was practically neglected in most of the houses and, in those places where t. and g. jarrah had been used for ceilings and linings and good jobs had been made of them, there was no ventilation when the window and door were closed, except down the chimney. We recommend that the correct type of ventilator be provided in all rooms.

We found that all sorts of materials were used for ceilings and linings and we even found three different types in one room—hessian, paper, wood and in some instances even linoleum was used—so members can imagine the squalid effect of it. In many cases we found the very old system of using cover strips still obtaining, which we consider most objectionable and we recommend that their use be not permitted, and where they are in use, they should be discarded. We recommend that where t. and g. wood is used, it should be permitted to remain, but we do not approve of that type of ceiling or lining, which should be of asbestos or some such material generally approved of for lining.

It is interesting to read the evidence of Mr. Craig, the general superintendent of Millars' Company. He said that in his opinion asbestos, plasterboard and similar types of lining and ceiling were no more expensive than jarrah and his company would not use wood for those purposes even if permitted to do so. He approved of the re-lining of the old dwellings with plasterboard or asbestos or other suitable material. Where the t. and g. jarrah is already in use and a good job has been made of it, it imparts a most drab and darkened appearance to the interior of the room, and we recommend that at least two coats of light paint should be used to brighten the room.

In many cases we found the floors to be of undressed jarrah, which had warped badly and showed big cracks, and when linoleum was laid on such floors, it wore through in no time. The cracks in the floor provided the only ventilation in some of the rooms apart from the window, door and chimney. We recommend that all floors of undressed jarrah should be replaced with t. and g. jarrah and that all new houses should have floors of t. and g., and that in no case should the floor be less than one foot above the ground level. Many of the floors run down to ground level and mud, earth or debris was carried in on the boots or blown in. This was disapproved of by Mr. Craig, who considered it quite a reasonable proposition that the floor should be set at the lowest point at least one foot above ground level.

The installation of electric current for mill houses was provided for in the Bill of last year. This is one of the proposals that was strenuously opposed by the mill-owners. The representative of Millars said that, in his opinion, it would cost up to £20,000 to provide electric lighting plants at all of the company's mills. In view of the fact that the South-West power scheme will probably serve the districts where the sawmills are situated, we decided to recommend that, where the current could be made available from an existing supply, or from the Government scheme when installed, it should be provided. We agreed with the mill-owners that it would not be reasonable to require them to spend large sums of money in installing plants at the various mill sites seeing that in a few years the Government scheme should be an accomplished fact.

Some of the fireplaces in the mill cottages are of wood and, apart from being very draughty, are a source of danger from fire. For this reason the fireplace has to be made very large. These fireplaces should be of iron or brick. In existing houses where there is no great number of fireplaces of wood, they should be replaced by brick or iron, but all new houses should have fireplaces of brick. The provision of water supplies was the most serious complaint, with the exception of leaking roofs, that was brought under our notice. There are various reasons for a shortage of water on mill sites. Some of the mills had a water supply laid on to the houses, but owing to corrosion of the pipes or insufficient storage accommodation, there was an inadequacy of water, particularly at certain times of the day.

At Jarrahdale we found that, although there was an abundance of water, there was a shortage at the houses owing to lack of sufficient storage tanks and the water was shut off at various times of the day and all night. I cannot see any legitimate reason why there should not be a plentiful supply of water at any mill site in the South-West. It is merely a matter of blocking a water-course to provide the requisite quantity or sinking a bore or the necessary wells. When one considers the heavy rainfall and the plenitude of water if sufficient trouble is taken to provide it, one can only describe the water supplies as deplorable. In some places, however, the water was not potable or was not very palatable, and we suggest that the same provision should apply in such cases as at the State mill at Hakea, namely, that sufficient rainwater tanks should be installed in addition to the water reticulated for use for gardens, washing and shower baths.

The sanitary conveniences were mostly very crude and should be attended to by the local health authorities to a much greater extent. In one place the union complained to the mill-owner about the sanitary conveniences, which we inspected, and found there was ample cause for complaint. When the mill-owner took no notice, the union complained to the local road board, which was the local health authority, but the chairman was the owner of the mill so it was a classical example of appealing from Caesar to Caesar. In the matter of erecting mill cottages or making additions to them, we say that a com-

petent tradesman should be employed. We had ample evidence of the unsuitability of the houses erected under the system where the company supplied the material and the employee erected the house. The man had little or no knowledge of the work and fearfully squalid slum conditions were the result. We do not ask that a tradesman be employed for making all repairs because the employee could nail a board or put a picket on the fence or do other small jobs of that sort.

We found that in many instances the employee, probably a young married man, started off with a cottage of four rooms and found them too many for him, but, as his family grew, we found that all kinds of makeshifts were provided to secure additional accommodation. We made recommendations to prevent that taking place as far as possible. We believe that where an employee requires further accommodation it should be supplied by the employer and additional rent charged for it, if necessary. We also recommended that if, in very unusual circumstances, a sawmilling company permitted a worker to build a house privately on the mill site, then the building must conform to the provisions laid down in the Bill.

The chief complaint and the greatest annoyance to housewives were leaking roofs. Many of these mill houses have been erected for 30 or 40 years and the galvanising element over the iron has worn away. We saw many houses where the furniture and the linoleum had been ruined, and probably the health of the people impaired, because of leaking roofs. We realise there has been difficulty in obtaining galvanised iron, but on making inquiries I found there is a type of roofing cement that can be applied to these roofs to prevent them from leaking. This cement could be used until such time as new iron becomes available. The Bill provides that each house shall be provided with a bathroom, bath and shower. It is remarkable that in most of the mill houses there is no bathroom, bath or shower or laundry facilities provided by the mill-owners. Where they exist, they have been supplied at the expense of the tenant himself. We think that is wrong. In our opinion, a house in these modern times should have a bathroom, bath, shower and laundry.

In plans which were submitted by the sawmilling companies to the commission provision is made for these facilities. No one will deny that they are essential in any class of home. There was also the matter of roads and footpaths. We found at nearly all the mills that no attempt had been made to provide a road or a footpath, notwithstanding that there was quite a little township attached to the mill. The commission thought that roads and footpaths should be provided, so that the tenants, particularly a woman with a perambulator, could have reasonable access to and from their homes. We recommended that a road 12 feet wide and a footpath five feet wide should be made.

Mr. Seward: People could do with them in plenty of the suburbs.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes. But most of the suburbs in the metropolitan area that have been in existence for 35 or 40 years have roads and footpaths. We also recommended that at all new mill sites an area of not less than one-quarter of an acre should be set aside for each house. We found instances where houses were built close together on blocks of land less than one-quarter of an acre in area. With unlimited land available, we see no reason why the houses should be crowded together, particularly as there is the fire hazard to consider. If each dwelling were erected on a block of a quarter of an acre, ample opportunity would be given to the tenant to plant a garden and keep fowls. There seems to be a total lack of anything in the nature of town planning on the mill sites. The houses are scattered over a wide area, without any thought having been given to the forming of streets or the planning of the site. This must render it very expensive to provide essential services, such as a water supply. If the Bill passes, it will become increasingly expensive to mill-owners if they neglect the proper planning of new sites.

I wish now to deal with sleeper mills and temporary accommodation for workers there. These mills do present a great difficulty. They are not usually located at the same place for any length of time, and we found the housing conditions exceedingly poor. We are of opinion that they should be improved, because, while it is admitted that the location of the mill is only tem-

porary, the worker often follows the mill-site from place to place and the standard of his accommodation is not of a temporary, but of a permanent, nature. It should be possible to get a type of hut after the style used by the Military Authorities. These huts could be bolted together for erection; they could be dismantled cheaply and shifted from place to place without trouble. We are also of opinion that better water supplies could be provided at these mills. For a small additional expenditure an adequate supply of water could be provided.

I would not have spoken at such length on the second reading debate were it not for the fact that, as I have said, each member has not received the printed report of the Royal Commission. The Bill is long overdue. The time has long since passed when we should permit such deplorable housing conditions to exist. I repeat that it was pleasing to hear the representatives of the larger timber milling companies, such as Bunning Bros., and Millars Timber and Trading Company, say that they realised the necessity for improving the housing conditions at the mills. They believe that if they are to get the right type of employee and keep him, those conditions must be altered. To hear out what they say, they supplied the commission with particulars of the types of houses they will build on any new mill site. The Bill may not provide for everything that is required by the employees. They will probably be disappointed that provision was not made for the compulsory supply of electric light. By and large, however, the recommendations of the Royal Commission will neither be found to be extravagant nor unreasonable. The recommendations will be for the good not only of the worker but of the timber mill-owners as well. The latter will secure a better class of worker, a more contented worker, and the general efficiency will rise in a great degree.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [3.39]: This Bill is long overdue. The milling companies have been extremely lucky that a measure like this was not brought down years ago. In the last few years I have visited nearly every timber mill in the State, and I do not know where one could

find housing conditions as bad as those at Nannup. I recollect making a visit there some three years ago. It was a wet evening when I got to the bush landing. I camped there one night. The houses for the men are about eight feet square, and the ceilings are about seven feet high. The men come in from work with their clothes wet, and these are the conditions under which they have to dry them. Those are the places in which they have to eat and sleep. Such conditions are absolutely shocking, and I defy anyone to find any that are worse, except perhaps those in the backyard camps at Kalgoorlie, which were established a year or two ago and which are pretty bad.

I am satisfied that the member for Mt. Marshall has not seen many houses on the timber mills; or if he has seen them, he has not been interested in them. He spoke of some timber mills being poverty-stricken, but he forgot to mention that all that they have had to pay for their product over the years has been royalties and the cost of labour required to fashion the timber into a marketable condition. All the houses that have been erected have been built from timber on the spot, and mostly from waste material that could not have been sold. Members can go to any one of these mills—whether it be at Nannup, Warraming, or Jarrahdale, which is quite near Perth—and they will find few of these places lined. They are mostly unlined, the exceptions being lined with hessian or paper. That is a shocking state of affairs. The report of the Royal Commission sets out in a general way what applies at most of the mills. There is a reference to Buckingham's Mill. That has been established for 40 years; and surely there has been sufficient time for the owners to do something to improve conditions there! Yet this is what the commission has to say on page 29A of its report concerning conditions at this mill when it was visited—

The only way to describe the housing here is to state that it is deplorable.

Rooms in some cases are neither lined nor ceiled, the corrugated iron roof in one case being only 9 ft. high. Some rooms are of fair size, but in a shocking state of disrepair. Linings and ceilings, where provided, are of all types of materials. White ants are prevalent and floors eaten away. Leaking roofs are commonplace; floorings are generally undressed jarrah with wide cracks and in some cases roofs are of this material.

Windows in some cases are only about 15 in. square, and have no glass, hessian being used to cover the opening. In some houses the verandahs and floors are unsafe to walk on. Five children and two parents were found occupying one of these hovels.

No baths, showers, or washing facilities are provided, and generally these places defy description.

Of the mills I have visited, I particularly recollect those at Yarloop, Wuraming and Nannup.

Mr. Willmott: There are many worse than that.

Mr. CROSS: There are some worse than that; but they are pretty bad. There are some old places at Jarrahdale, only 40 miles from Perth, that are a disgrace to civilisation. The time has arrived when something should be done. The principal material required to effect improvement—namely, the timber—is on the spot, and quite a lot of that which could be effectively used is timber that is not marketable. The cost to the timber companies will not be great. It is only a question of the payment of royalties and the expenditure on labour. But from the way the member for Mt. Marshall apologised for the companies—bless my life!—he would have everybody overlook the fact that the companies paid very little for the raw materials; and they have enjoyed fixed prices for years and have reaped a golden harvest.

The timber industry is recognised as one of the biggest monopolies in this State, and it is time the mill-owners provided decent living conditions for the people in the industry. The absence of such conditions is one of the reasons returned men will not go back to the timber mills. I have previously pointed out here that I have met quite a number of men who will not return to the mills. They cannot be expected to live in the dens and hovels provided for them. As for the rents paid to the timber companies, having in mind the class of timber used in the buildings, the companies have been paid three or four times over. I support the Bill, and hope it will be carried.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [3.45]: I think all members will feel that the Royal Commission has made a sincere and sympathetic approach to the problem of housing in the timber industry. The commission has shown that the accommodation of

men and women who are engaged in the industry is far from what anybody would desire it to be. It is interesting and encouraging to know, from the thoughtful speech of the member for Kalgoorlie, that the timber companies are of the same opinion. Both the Royal Commission and the timber companies frankly agree that the housing conditions in the timber industry are in need of improvement, and that the improvement should be made as soon as possible. The main question affecting this Bill is, apart from some of the details contained in it, not so much the objective of much improved housing in the timber industry, as when and by what method that is to be achieved. There is no question of mutual recrimination about this matter of timber housing. I notice in the report of the Royal Commission that Government instrumentalities as well as private operators have provided a standard of housing which is not what is desired. The report says—

While the accommodation at State and Railway Department mill sites was generally above the standard elsewhere, some bad examples of housing were seen, particularly at Holyoak and the bush hut conditions were shocking at Deanmill. Houses for married men in the bush at Banksiadale were considered to be much below a reasonable standard.

So both State instrumentalities and private owners have to realise that the condition of housing on their timber areas in the past have not been as good as would be desired, and both have to share responsibility for creating better conditions in the future. The member for Canning, whose speech was not in the same responsible tone as that which is, I think, always adopted by the member for Kalgoorlie, was inclined to go back into the past and to apportion a certain amount of blame for conditions that exist; but I think all members who know something of the timber industry will agree that it has undergone a change from the point of view with which it is regarded, not only by the Government and the mill-owners but by the general public.

In the early days of the industry, our valuable timbers—our jarrah timbers—were cut out under permits issued by the Government department concerned at a rate which threatened the continuity of our hardwood preserves. But some 26 or 27 years ago the Government saw the timber industry in a new light; it was seen as a permanent

asset and an industry in which the timber could be restored by reforestation so as to maintain at all times our hardwood assets and have the timber cut as a continuous crop without depleting the capital reserves of timber growth. So the new Forests Act came into operation with beneficial results to this important industry. In the same way the timber industry was regarded by sawmillers and timber getters very much as it was by earlier Government policy. Licenses were issued from year to year. The experience gained in the last 20 years was not possessed then, and no sawmiller knew but that his license might be terminated, for some reason or other, within a year, so he looked upon his mill operations in somewhat the same way as a prospector looks upon a goldmine—as being here today and gone tomorrow—and that it would be imprudent to embark on large capital expenditure on housing, buildings or anything else beyond the essentials in the way of machinery and plant to deal with the timber. The whole industry was looked upon as a short-term enterprise and, I think, pardonably so.

I have no interest at all in the timber milling industry and do not pretend to be an expert in the matter, but I have been to large sawmills and know a little of the conditions. I do not think we can fairly blame the pioneers of the industry, who had only annual permits for their timber areas, for looking on the enterprise as having a life of only a few years and not justifying an expensive outlay. As a matter of fact such an outlay might have been impossible or have led straight to the bankruptcy court. Just as the Government, some 20 odd years ago, adopted a new policy towards the timber industry, so our timber merchants now are seeing the industry in a new light. I think that for a good many years past they have been desirous of improving the housing conditions of their employees. They have felt a greater degree of confidence in their security of tenure, and can now look upon a mill site as having a life of some decades, and being something that would justify much more expenditure on housing and amenities than was thought possible or prudent in past times. However, conditions in the last eight or 10 years have made it impossible to do much to carry out these new ideas.

The war intervened and the industry became depleted of manpower as did other building industries. The products of the timber industry were required urgently for all kinds of defence purposes and they could not, by any stretch of imagination, have been retained for building houses for mill employees who were already housed, even though inadequately. So the six years of war put the question of any improvements completely out of the picture. The short period that has elapsed since the cessation of hostilities has been no better—if anything worse—from the point of view of executing improvements of the kind I have mentioned. So we meet the situation today where the Royal Commission, the Government, the timber employees and the timber owners are all at one in agreeing that there should be improved housing conditions and amenities for those engaged in the timber industry on the mill sites. It comes, therefore, to be a matter of balance because the housing of timber employees is only part of the general picture of housing in this State.

The member for Kalgoorlie, in the course of his remarks, said that there was an urgent need for improvement in the housing conditions of the timber mill employees. But there is an urgent need for improvement in conditions in many other directions, for instance, in the houses of school teachers and the accommodation of railway employees in the country, mentioned by the member for Mt. Marshall. But we do not need to go far from this Chamber—no more than a few hundred yards—to find people living in conditions that are as bad as, or perhaps worse than, those of timber mill employees. The Bill proposes to give preference to timber mill employees already housed, inadequately in most cases, but still housed, as against many people who have no houses and are living, man and wife, and sometimes children, in a single room. So it comes to a matter of balance and that is why, with all the sympathy in the world with the views of the Royal Commission, I approach the Bill in the light of the over-all picture of housing conditions and the interests of the people in the city and in other parts of the country. The position of these people must be weighed in the balance with the interests of mill employees whose housing

is far from desirable but who, in fact, have houses today.

Let us look for a moment at what is involved in the Bill. Like the member for Kalgoorlie I have been to see Mr. Whyte to get what information I could to guide me in this matter. There are 2,800 employees in the timber industry, of which number some live in towns or cities. It is estimated that there are 1,200 married men in the industry, and more than 800 single men, giving a total of 2,000 who are probably in the country areas, on timber mills or in the vicinity of them. It would not be too much to say that, under this Bill, the timber industry would be required to provide 1,000 houses for married people. Those are only approximate figures, as the exact figures cannot be obtained.

Mr. Styants: I would say they are inaccurate.

Mr. McDONALD: It is estimated that there are 1,200 married people in the industry.

The Minister for Forests: There will be a fair percentage of the houses already built that would comply with this measure.

Mr. McDONALD: Not a very large percentage. If I took off 16 per cent., that would bring my estimate down to 1,000 new dwellings required, which would involve an expenditure of nearly £500,000. In addition to that there are several hundred single men employed in the industry who are entitled to camps, the estimated cost of which is £50 each, so it is proposed to withdraw from the housing obligations of the State, and concentrate in the timber areas housing which, with materials and labour, is going to cost something like £500,000 or £600,000. I speak subject to correction, but those are the figures supplied. If we take only half that number of houses, we have an amount of £250,000 or £300,000 of material and labour to be withdrawn from the general pool and, as the member for Kalgoorlie has said, it is expert labour. He wants tradesmen—the carpenters and others involved—to go down to the timber areas and take part in the construction of houses and the other activities involved under the Bill. I refer to such things as the provision of electric light, where power is available, the reticulation of water, tanks, coppers and troughs,

ablution arrangements and so on, which are eminently desirable, but which involve the work of tradesmen who would have to be taken from the requirements of housing in other parts of the State and sent to the timber areas.

I mention this matter, not to detract from the ideals contained in the Bill, but to ask whether we are entitled to withdraw such a volume of material and labour from the housing industry generally and concentrate it in one selected section of the State for people who are already housed, badly housed in some cases, but already housed, as against people in other parts of the country who are without houses. The Bill is not to be dismissed as a trifling or slight measure with local and limited effects. It involves large sums of money—not far less than, and perhaps more than £500,000 in labour and material—to carry out its provisions, as well as the services of a considerable number of expert tradesmen who are to be withdrawn from other sections of the building industry.

Mr. Styants: It is not proposed that all the employees should have new houses.

Mr. McDONALD: That is so. There are some houses already built, particularly at Nyaming mill, which are up to the standard, and Millars also are building houses as fast as possible to comply with the new standards.

Mr. Styants: The State Saw Mills are also endeavouring to comply with the Bill.

Mr. McDONALD: That is so, but from listening to the member for Kalgoorlie and reading the report of the commission, I have gathered the impression that 75 per cent. of the dwellings at timber mills in this State would not be capable of being re-conditioned—that they would have to be replaced by new dwellings.

Mr. Styants: They require something to be done to them, but they have not to conform to the Bill. We do not ask that.

Mr. McDONALD: On reading the Bill and finding out the requirements, which are eminently desirable, such as the height of walls and the nature of various parts of the construction, I would be surprised if the majority of the houses in those areas would not require to be replaced altogether.

Mr. Styants: Those provisions do not apply, and are not intended to apply, to existing buildings.

Mr. McDONALD: There is a clause that gives power to exempt certain timber areas from the terms of the Bill, but unless an exemption is obtained from the Minister—it is entirely at his discretion unless I read the Bill wrongly—we are to impose an obligation as to the housing of employees in all other areas concerned.

Mr. Styants: There are certain exemptions for existing buildings.

Mr. McDONALD: I will examine those provisions more carefully, but so far that is not my impression. Exemptions are provided in one or two cases regarding certain timber areas of less than 10 years' life, but otherwise—as I read the Bill—the obligations are not confined to future buildings. The Bill says—

This Act shall apply only to buildings for residential purposes erected or to be erected on timber holdings.

So by the initial words of the measure it applies to both existing and future buildings, but I will bow to the hon. member's superior study of the matter, and will be corrected by him later if he can demonstrate that I am wrong in my assumption that the obligation, unless suspended by the Minister, will apply to existing buildings.

Mr. Styants: There are eight or ten exemptions for existing buildings.

Mr. McDONALD: There is an exemption as to the chimney, for example, where the requirements for a brick chimney do not apply in the case of concessions having less than ten years' life, but I do not see any exemptions of an extensive nature. The majority of the sawmills in this State are small, mills with a small output and a short life. Such millers go to an area with a small plant and do not put down any great length of tram lines. They estimate on a short life before moving on to a new area. The majority of the mills in this State consist, I am told, of mills of that character.

My informants, the timber mill proprietors whose information was given to the commission, have supplied me with a table that I would be glad to show to the member for Kalgoorlie or any other member. The member for Kalgoorlie may have had it in the course of evidence, but I missed

it, if that were so, in the volume lying on the Table. The statement deals with two classes of small mills. One is a sawmill having an output of five loads per day, and a life of five years, one of the class of mills to which I have just referred. In the case of that mill, it is estimated that there would be 14 employees, of whom eight would require houses and six huts. The cost of the accommodation of the type required under this legislation is estimated at £3,840 for the housing of the 14 employees. The table also contains figures showing the capital cost of the buildings, the break-up values when the mill moves on, the amount to be written off over the life of the mill, and the total annual rental to be gained. It shows the capital charges, repairs, maintenance and various other items that are involved.

Mr. Hoar: Can you tell me the number of mills only cutting five loads per day and employing 14 men?

Mr. McDONALD: I cannot do so. The information I am giving came from a saw-milling expert.

Mr. Hoar: I would very much like to see the details.

Mr. McDONALD: I will endeavour to get the information for the hon. member. For a mill cutting five loads a day, with an estimated life of five years, the loss on the housing project, allowing for the break-up value, would be £3,047, in respect of the capital outlay on housing of £3,840. In other words, a mill of that type would lose practically the whole of the cost of its housing project. Another table given to me deals with a sawmill having an output of 10 loads per day, with an estimated life of 10 years. This mill employs 25 men, of whom 15 would require houses and 10 huts. The housing for those 25 employees would cost £7,150, and, allowing for rentals and the break-up value of the buildings when the mill ceased to operate on that site and for other relevant charges, the loss on that housing project would be £4,585. In other words, on housing accommodation put up at a cost of £7,150, and allowing for the value of materials for removal and so on at the end of that 10-year period, the loss would be £4,585, on an initial capital outlay of £7,150.

It is suggested to me that on the economic side this Bill has not received sufficient consideration in relation to the smaller mills.

A representative of one of those type of concern saw me today and told me that his company had two small mills. He said that to accommodate its employees with the prescribed houses and huts would cost the company £16,000. He said, "My company just cannot find the money. I do not know what is going to happen to us." Of course, it may be said that the company could go to the Minister and say, "We cannot do what is required. We will be forced out of business and, in the circumstances, we want exemption." In the matter of the life or death of a company and the preservation or destruction of the value of the proprietors' or shareholders' money, I think it is a bit too much to put the matter entirely in the hands of the Minister. It is too big a responsibility for him to carry, and there should be some other criterion. I believe the Bill should be explicit and should not embody provision for discretionary exemption. It should state clearly what has or has not to be done on a reasonable basis in connection with the provision of necessary and reasonable housing accommodation in the timber industry. If the representations made to me on the economic side have substance, what will be the effect? The big companies will survive. They may have to go slow and may have to suspend dividends and profits or possibly reduce them—but they will survive.

The smaller companies will go to the wall. The industry will tend more and more to become a monopoly for the big companies that have accumulated assets and will be able to command the money to meet the requirements of legislation of this description. That would be a state of affairs that I am sure neither the Minister nor the House would like to see brought about. Legislation of this kind constitutes a very real danger, just as the recent Bill dealing with the Factories and Shops Act does, in making it more and more impossible for small people to enter or survive in industry and limiting it more and more to the big concerns already operating and possessing reserves enabling them to meet the demands that new legislation will make. I have been informed by a lawyer who, as far as I know, is not in any way interested in the timber industry, that one of the difficulties of the Bill under discussion—he kindly drew my attention to it—is that there is no provision for depreciation as a deduction under the Commonwealth income tax legislation. Thus, although buildings on

a timber site may have a life of five, 10, 25 or 30 years, one cannot deduct depreciation covering the life of the buildings for income tax purposes. The lawyer I refer to informed me that representations had been made to the Federal Treasurer, Mr. Chifley, from time to time over the past three years, but that he had declined to make any modification in the existing law. That is one factor that makes the position more difficult for the smaller mills. It is a matter that, I think, requires some consideration.

Mr. Styants: I do not get any deduction on account of depreciation on my house.

The Minister for Lands: Neither do I.

Mr. McDONALD: I am in the same boat. I do not get an allowance for depreciation, but my house and the member for Kalgoorlie's house, have a life of more than 10, 20 or 30 years, we hope; and our houses are not used for business purposes. Were we to put up buildings that might have only a salvage or scrap value at the end of a period of 10, 20 or 30 years, and the building would cost £450 for the type prescribed by the Bill, then the fact that we would get no allowance for depreciation would make a considerable difference with respect to our solvency at the end of that period.

Mr. Styants: But it would pay for itself in about 12 years.

Mr. McDONALD: No. I heard the hon. member's allusion to 9 per cent. The 9 per cent. did not take into account the depreciation of the building and the fact that after 10, 20 or 30 years, whatever the time may be, the building has no value apart from the breakup value, unless means are devised by which it can be taken to pieces and re-erected at some new site, a practice that has not been developed on any large scale. Even if it is developed, this cannot be done without a fair amount of expense. The figures supplied to me show that, allowing for depreciation and for 12s. 6d. rental for the standard dwelling and 1s. a week for a bush hut, there is a loss year by year and, in the case of a mill having a life of 10 years, something like 80 per cent. of the original outlay in providing housing accommodation.

The hon. member said that the companies accepted the right to build on the townsite, and I think that is true in one sense, but they also accepted the sole responsibility of building on the townsite, and if employees

had indicated a desire to build at their own cost or under their own arrangements on the townsite, that view would have been sympathetically entertained by the companies. I do not think the companies endeavoured to exclude people from so building, but they rightly accepted responsibility for housing for their own sake as well as for the sake of their employees, and notwithstanding the insecurity of the industry that prevailed in the early years, they discharged that responsibility by providing dwellings which they admit are not now of the standard that, in view of the changed outlook, should exist in the industry. I do not propose to discuss in detail the terms of the Bill. If the measure goes into Committee, those matters can be dealt with then.

The Minister for Lands: Do not suggest that it will not get as far as that!

Mr. McDONALD: As yet I do not know how members of the Government will vote on the Bill. Several of the matters referred to by the member for Mt. Marshall and the member for Kalgoorlie require consideration. One is within what time, if the Bill becomes law, are these onerous requirements to be fulfilled. Apparently once the measure is proclaimed, the companies will be entirely in the hands of the Government, and this will mean, as the member for Mt. Marshall rightly pointed out, almost entirely in the hands of the inspector, who is to be clothed with powers that may be used as powers are often used by people who seek to get authority over others.

Mr. Styants: He would not be too hard on the companies.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not believe in trusting people with too much power. To do so is most dangerous. I shall not quote all the very wise things that have been said about what happens when people get unlimited power. I shall not deliver a lecture on constitutional law, but the whole basis of democracy is that there shall be a check and balance and that, if people are vested with power, they should be restrained from the undue exercise of it.

Then there are questions like water supplies to be considered. I am told that one mill has to cart water for 25 miles. There are difficulties, of which no doubt the commission was told that ought not to be en-

tirely ignored. There is a quotation that might well be brought to the notice of the House to correct any impression that might have been gained from the remarks of the member for Canning and to show how even in the view of a very eminent judge of the Arbitration Court, looking at the industry through the spectacles of those days, the position appeared to be not so bad as it now seems to us looking at it in the light of these days. Mr. Justice Lukin, of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, inquired into the sawmilling industry in 1929. He inspected mills in Western Australia, and this is an extract from his judgment—

I found during my inspections, particularly in Western Australia, that the houses provided by the employer were, generally speaking, of a standard above those usually occupied by ordinary workers throughout Australia. At Pemberton, Nanga Brook, and Jarrahdale, the houses were built on allotments of suitable size, and if properly kept and attended to by the tenants, are amply sufficient to provide the necessary comfort, convenience, and privacy of a habitable house. The rents of these places are generally at the rate of 1s. per room per week. In the bush away from the mills, the accommodation was in the form of huts, that is, camping huts, for which no rent or a nominal rent of 1s. is charged.

Mr. Styants: He picked his three centres all right.

Mr. McDONALD: Perhaps the union took him to those centres. If it did not take him to other centres, nobody but the union is to blame.

Mr. Holman: The award was just as satisfactory as those remarks.

Mr. McDONALD: As confirmation of the remarks I made some little time ago, we approach this matter in the light of a new view of the timber industry, as a permanent industry, and therefore justifying permanent installation of a much better class than it had before. I consider that a much improved class of housing in this industry should be our objective. I think the commission has rendered a valuable service to all concerned in the industry in the suggestions which it made for the type of house and the type of amenity that should be provided. I am not sure that its remarks are the last word on the matter. In fact, the member for Kalgoorlie, who was the chairman of the commission, indicated, very properly, that he did not pretend they were the last word on details

of accommodation. But I do think the Bill is one of particular severity and difficulty at the immediate present, by reason of its diverting skilled labour and materials from a fair application over the whole of the community to the houseless, or under-privileged regarding houses, into one particular avenue where, although the people are not adequately housed, they at least have accommodation.

I do not want to see undue difficulties imposed upon the smaller concerns, as that may mean the employees of those concerns losing their jobs. Their output would be lost; and in any case, if this Bill becomes law in its present form, the output for the rest of the State is going to be curtailed by the provision of several hundred four-roomed dwellings for this particular section of the timber industry. They are to be No. 1 priority against everybody else in the State. There is no limit. There is no saying that this shall be done for the next 10 years, like the Treasurer's housing programme. The Bill says, "This shall be done as soon as the Bill is proclaimed, as fast as you can; and as you have the timber you can keep it and let other people wait for it."

I would like the Bill—in principle entirely favoured by me—kept back until conditions are more normal, until materials are more adequately distributed among other people in need, bearing in mind that the companies are, as fast as they can today, building the type of house that we want by this Bill, or something approaching it. They realise it themselves and, within the limits of their obligations to the rest of the community and the demands of the Workers' Homes Board and other people in the State who are desperately in need of accommodation, they are doing their best. I think the chairman of the commission admits that they are doing their best to improve the living standards of their workers as quickly as can reasonably be expected in the circumstances. Failing that, let the obligation apply to the future houses to be erected on mills, but give some breathing-space to the companies, large and small, to make the necessary substitutions for the existing houses or the repairs to those houses. I think the commission will entirely agree with me—in fact I understood the hon. member who

was the chairman said this—that the companies are anxious to raise the standard of the housing at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Styants: Some of them are. Some of them are not doing anything.

Mr. McDONALD: I think the majority are. The larger ones certainly are.

Mr. Holman: Would it not be better to provide a standard, so that when the existing houses are pulled down the companies will not erect houses in their place that will have to be pulled down later on?

Mr. McDONALD: With regard to future houses, no doubt the companies will be anxious that they should be constructed to a comparable standard. My difficulty in regard to the Bill, which, if passed to the Committee stage, as the hon. member seems to think it should be, might be amended suitably, is as to its singling out one part of the community for prior treatment in regard to a basic material which, of all materials, is in short supply for building purposes. No period of time is given to say that other people can come in side by side with their requirements. There is a statutory obligation that the people controlling the timber as producers shall apply it immediately for the improved accommodation of one section of the State, and that appears to me to be a very serious difficulty.

MR. HOAR (Nelson) [4.26]: I listened with a great deal of interest to the member for West Perth. For one who claims so much sympathy for the timber worker and the necessity to provide for him a reasonable standard of dwelling, it amazes me how many objections he has been able to find. One of the main things, as I understand him, that he really objects to is the singling out of this industry for special attention not only against all others, as was also suggested by the member for Mt. Marshall, but also as against the difficulties of the present housing shortage. All sections of the people today are suffering to some extent as the result of six years of war, and I agree that housing is an acute problem for all, but I do not believe that that is a fair approach to the Bill. I think the person approaching it in that way would oppose it at any time, because the present situation,

although serious, does not alter the fact that if the timber industry is to expand at all—and a week ago the Premier said in a previous debate that in the district of Nelson alone four or five new mills were being erected where 700 people would have to be housed as soon as they could be secured—I repeat, if the timber industry is to expand at all, and if the mills are to continue operating, the workers must be provided with houses comparable with those of workers in the city or as close to that standard as is possible. This must be done to solve the State-wide housing problem; in other words, the two have to run side by side.

For anyone to say that a Bill of this nature should not be treated on its merits, but should be held back until some future date, appears to me, as one who has been connected with the timber industry for many years and forced to live in the type of house that the commission inspected and reported on, to be too ridiculous for words. I wish also to refer to a statement made by the member for West Perth with regard to one of the small mills. He feels, as I do, that in regard to small mills something definite must be done; but he made a mistake, in my opinion, in referring to a mill that cuts five loads per day and that has a life of five years and yet employs 14 workers. It is an accepted fact that unless a mill of this kind can produce one load of timber per employee it is not a business proposition. I would like the member for West Perth to examine his figures again and question his informant still further on the matter.

The hon. member also quoted one small company which had said that it would cost £16,000 to house its employees. I do not know whether he intended to convey that the company had one mill or a number of mills. If it had one mill, then that estimate, on the basis of the Employers' Federation's costing for the new homes for the timber industry—roughly £500 each—implies that 32 married men are employed by the company. A mill with 32 married men would, allowing a proportion of one to every two of single men, have a complement of no less than 50 employees, and that is no small mill.

Mr. Willmott: That company had two mills.

Mr. HOAR: Then there would be at least 25 to 30 men in each of the mills, which would be general purpose mills and could afford to come within the scope of the Bill. The whole outlook of the hon. member appeared to me to be that if the Bill became an Act it would not only apply immediately to the whole industry but would make it obligatory on all employers to build homes for all of their employees at once. That is absurd. Nothing was further from the thoughts of the commission, or from those of the Minister when drawing up the Bill, than to say that, because it is estimated that there are 1,200 married men, 1,000 homes would be required immediately. It simply means that the hon. member could not have examined the Bill very carefully or have read closely the report of the commission.

I think there is an argument in favour of providing a special standard of house for the small mill mentioned by the hon. member. He seemed to have a great deal of sympathy for the small mill and was anxious, as we all are I hope, to do something about the position. Unfortunately, having made many statements about the small mills, he referred to Judge Lukin's report of 1929. In that year there were very few, if any, small mills in the State; we were working with sleeper-cutters in those days. Since then, the policy of the Forests Department has brought into being the small mills. But I agree that something should be done in regard to the small mills—and there are many of them; there are 128 mills operating in the State and only about 35 or 40 are general purpose mills, the remainder being small mills, and these must be brought within the scope of the Bill in some way.

My idea is that, as a result of the prefabrication idea that went through the Army in the last war, it would be quite possible, and well within the financial means of the companies operating in small cutting areas to purchase comfortable houses that could be bolted together. These houses need not be elaborate, but they would be superior to what we have today. A company's mill site might be changed, but if it had properly prefabricated houses they could be dismantled and re-erected when necessary, and such houses might have as long a life as the permanent struc-

tures mentioned in the Bill. I see no reason why, if a permit is issued for only five years, men should have to live in bag huts. Those days have gone and have been proved to be unnecessary by the experience of the war. Although the whole of the timber industry is to come under the terms of the measure, there is no question that the Minister, in using his discretion, would give the small mills some consideration—and they need it.

When I commenced speaking I felt there would not be much for me to say because the member for Kalgoorlie had fairly completely covered the Bill and the commission's report, and all I wanted to do was formally to support the Bill. I do, however, welcome the measure as a serious and earnest attempt by the Government to give this industry housing conditions of a standard below which no sawmiller may go in the future. The need for improved housing conditions in the industry has been recognised by the employees these many years. I can go back 25 years—long before the war—when timber companies had every opportunity to improve the lot of their workers, but I have always found them reluctant to do so. Some of the bigger concerns, such as the State Saw Mills, Millars, Bunning Bros. and the Kauri Timber Co., have, to a large extent and according to the housing conditions of the day tried to contribute something towards the comfort of the men, but the standards of those years are no longer suitable. We want something better, and it is possible to have it without strain on the industry.

In looking back over the years we can find instances of mill towns like Pemberton with a water supply and others, 25 miles away, where there was no intention to establish a water supply for the homes. These anomalies have crept in all through the State. There is no uniformity and no great desire has been evident on the part of the employers ever to give to the workers much more than the minimum requirements of the Health Act. I believe that the employers, of their own volition, are beginning to wake up and see the error of their ways. Even the member for West Perth has referred to the fact that most of the large sawmilling employers have had plans drawn for improved housing conditions. That is true. The

four companies that I have named come within that category. They have drawn up plans and specifications closely approximating what is required by the Bill. The reason for doing so is that sawmillers today know that unless something is done to induce workers to go into the bush to work the mills, this valuable industry will gradually die. That is no exaggeration. The Premier the other night said that no less than 700 men were required in the Nelson district, and that the State as a whole faced a serious employment problem in the timber industry. He also said that we had lost one generation of workers. We are losing more than one generation, because those coming along will have nothing to do with the timber industry so long as the present conditions remain.

This outlook will tend to become intensified as the days go by. When the Minister for Education carries out his idea of raising the school-leaving age to 15, and later to 16, I cannot imagine any of the boys receiving that higher education thinking of remaining in the timber industry unless many important factors are taken into account, and one of them is housing. I have no doubt that the Government, in introducing the Bill, is doing something that will be widely acclaimed throughout the industry. This has been wanted for a long time, but the people thought they would never get it. There is no inducement for a man to seek employment in this industry. Unless housing which is the first consideration is improved, and the standards are brought up to date, and as many amenities as possible are provided in the bush, the industry will indeed become a dying one within 15 years. Most of the men employed there now will remain seeing that they are married and cannot get away, and are too old to learn any other trade.

We must have an influx of young people to the timber mills or we will have to shut down on the industry through a permanent shortage of manpower. That would be disastrous. Unless serious consideration is given to many factors, most of which I cannot mention here as I would be ruled out of order, that would be the effect, and definitely housing is one of those important factors. The position today is that there is no authority or law that the employees in the timber industry can appeal to in order

to get the position corrected. There is nothing mandatory or obligatory upon the employer to erect dwellings for his workers. We know that houses of a sort have of necessity been provided and are supposed to conform to the requirements of the Health Act, but that legislation has been flouted on all too many occasions. However, the point is that there is nothing mandatory upon the employer to erect homes for his men.

During the course of the debate this afternoon, I heard two members refer to the singling out of the timber industry. The member for Kalgoorlie replied to that contention to some extent, but there is another angle. It is that the timber industry is unlike any other calling. I defy anyone here or elsewhere to cite another industry that is in the same position as the timber industry, insofar as its nomadic life is concerned. The timber industry is constantly on the move. A permit area may last for 10, 20 or 30 years, but it is eventually cut out and the mill moves on. In such circumstances how is it possible for any man in the timber industry to buy his own home? To do so would be utterly impossible. Unless the employer is prepared to erect a dwelling for the worker, the latter has nowhere to live unless he goes to the fire chute, takes some of the waste timber, and runs up a shack for himself.

We have seen too many instances in the timber areas where the employers have been reluctant or have even refused to build homes for their men, and where the latter have had to do the best they could for themselves. That is the sort of thing that the Bill has been designed to prevent. It is specifically laid down that only competent tradesmen shall undertake the work of erecting these houses. If that is agreed to no longer will it be possible for men to go to the fire chute, pull out a few lengths of 3 x 2 and some facecuts in order to knock up rough shacks for themselves, and that is the sort of thing that has been done on countless occasions in this industry. That is what will be prevented in future if the Bill be agreed to. That is why we ask members to give serious consideration to the legislation and to pass it. The object is to provide better housing accommodation in the timber industry, better than it has ever known before and which

may be taken as a model, for instance, in connection with other sections of Government employees, to whom the member for Mt. Marshall referred when he mentioned the railway workers. If we are sincere, as I take it we all are, there is no necessity to delay the passage of the Bill or to vote against it. We, as members of this Parliament, believe, I take it, in providing as fair and as high a standard of housing as possible for the working class people; and if we do, it is our duty to vote for the Bill.

MR. MANN (Beverley) [4.44]: I cannot allow the Bill to pass the second reading stage without some comment, seeing that I was a member of the Royal Commission of which the member for Kalgoorlie was chairman. It is with my minority report that I desire to deal in the main. I listened with great interest to the speech of the member for Nelson, who made an appeal to the House to pass the Bill. This is the first time in the history of the State Parliament that sectional legislation has been introduced, legislation that is designed to promote the interests wholly and solely of one section of the people. What about the miners? If we ask the employers in the timber industry to build houses for their employees, what about the miners?

Mr. Triat: The employers have done it in many cases on the Goldfields.

Mr. MANN: And in many instances they have not done so. In any case it was not under compulsion and many of the men live in shacks.

The Minister for Mines: They do it without compulsion on the fields.

Mr. MANN: With the other members of the commission, I travelled throughout the timber centres and I admit the housing conditions in some respects were deplorable. On the other hand it is really the woman that plays the prominent part as regards the condition of the home. I pay this tribute of respect to the women in the timber areas, that most of the houses we visited were spick and span. Some of them were kept in remarkably fine order. During the course of our inspections I discussed with some of the women their feelings regarding conditions on the mills. They candidly admitted that they were quite satisfied. Some of the

houses had leaky roofs and some were badly built and in other respects the conditions were bad. On the other hand it is the people that live in the houses that help to determine the conditions that prevail.

If we are to pass this legislation and immediately turn round and compel the mill-owners to erect homes for their employees to conform with the standard type of house specified in the Bill, there will be serious repercussions. To build a house at a cost of £350 or £400 for which a rental of 12s. 6d. per week may be required will mean that the cost of living for the timber workers will immediately be increased. In the circumstances how many men will require these better houses? At present the men are paying a rental of 1s. per room and the rents work out roughly at 4s. to 5s. a week. I understand that on some mills a number of modern houses erected have not been tenanted on account of the increased rent that is demanded. Members will appreciate that in passing legislation of this description we shall be building up a fairly serious problem. Some of the workers on the mills will not appreciate having to occupy a house for which they will have to pay a high rental. This is extraordinary legislation to be introduced.

I and other members of the Royal Commission investigated the desire for better housing accommodation and we appreciate that there is an element of competition in the industry in that the companies desire to retain the services of their best men and are attempting to do so by providing them with better houses. In the majority of mills we inspected there has been an attempt to provide better housing conditions. I know that at Buckingham's Mill the conditions we saw were shocking. On the other hand, at the mills owned by Millars' Timber and Trading Company, Bunning Bros. and others a big improvement in housing conditions was apparent. I put a question to members and let them consider the matter for themselves. When Mr. Sweeney, the secretary of the Timber Workers' Union, was giving evidence I asked him whether, in the event of legislation of this description becoming law, it should be brought into force immediately or should not become operative for two years. His reply was: "I should say it should operate from the time it was passed."

If the Bill becomes an Act and is proclaimed within a fortnight and the provision of houses for mill employees is embarked upon, what will be the position in other parts of the State? There are hundreds of ex-Servicemen who cannot obtain homes for themselves and their families. This will draw attention to the housing shortage in other directions. There are many ex-Servicemen and their wives who are living with their in-laws. If there is anything that will tend to increase the divorce rate in this State, it is the domestic life of young couples in such circumstances. If we are to pass sectional legislation and force the sawmillers to replace the present shacks with better-class homes, we will starve the city and country areas with respect to materials for the erection of homes. I regard this as hasty legislation. The war has caused delays in building progress and I appeal to the Government to handle this matter with a certain amount of discretion. Naturally I want the workers to enjoy the best housing conditions that are possible, but I think the Government should take a commonsense view of the situation. If we enforce the provision of better housing accommodation on the mills and thereby absorb materials that are urgently required elsewhere, there are bound to be repercussions and adverse criticism.

We cannot use scrap timber for the type of house that will have to be built. The men are entitled to proper houses in which to live, so why this nonsense about scrap timber? That was one of the main reasons why I put in a minority report. If this Bill is passed without amendment, the Government will have occasion to feel sorry for itself. I have much sympathy for the timber workers; their life is a hard one, but it is no use for the member for Nelson to say that we shall have no-one to follow in their footsteps. Each man has a call in life and many men are not satisfied unless they are in the bush. I have no fear that if better housing is not provided for the timber workers we shall not after 15 years or so have any men working in the industry. Some men feel the urge to work in the bush; others have an urge to follow primary production. It is therefore nonsense for the member for Nelson to speak on those lines and to add a threat that in course of time we shall be without a supply

of timber. The greater the demand for timber, the greater will be the employment of men to meet it.

The conditions prevailing in the bush camps were vile; the men were living under the most deplorable conditions, and that remark applies as well to the Government mills as to the mills conducted by private enterprise. It will be difficult to cope with those conditions. The union apparently has tried to get a decision that the men should live at the mills. I discussed the matter with a mill manager of the Railway Department, who had worked out his own scheme, but he said that if the men went to work by road there would be a very considerable loss of man hours per week—I ask members to bear in mind that the faller is the most important man in the industry, as he really produces the timber—and in consequence the output of the mills would be materially reduced. I cannot see how men can live at the mills about 25 miles from the camp. Some of the camps on rails are well fitted up, and I think that these are the solution so far as these workers are concerned.

The member for Nelson raised the question of prefabricated houses that could be moved from mill to mill. This question was discussed with the men and we had brought home to us what happened in connection with bush huts. These were made in sections and were erected and pulled down many times until the timbers got out of alignment and became warped. The same fate would probably overtake the prefabricated houses of which the member for Nelson spoke, so that eventually the slum conditions now prevailing would again occur.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: That is no excuse for doing nothing.

Mr. MANN: I agree. I said in my minority report that if the sawmillers would not improve the housing conditions, I was prepared to support the committee's recommendation provided there was a lag of two years in order to give city people a chance to secure houses. The secretary of the Timber Workers' Union, Mr. Sweeney, said that the men would demand better housing conditions the moment the Bill was passed. If so, very few houses will be built in the city in the near future. The Bill is essentially

one for Committee discussion. I warn the Government that it will be sorry if it does not accept some of the sound amendments which will be moved to make it workable. I still have a great horror that this State, indeed Australia generally, will be ruled on the most extreme lines. We are rapidly approaching the time when we shall have control and still more control, until at last the people of Australia will feel themselves to be part of a machine so controlled as to warp their minds and smash the Commonwealth.

MR. WILLMOTT (Sussex) [4.55]: As I was a member of the Royal Commission I feel I must say something on the Bill. In some respects I am in agreement with the member for West Perth and the member for Beverley. However, having seen the conditions under which the timberworkers live, I must support the Bill, although some amendments may be desirable. In some instances both the Government and the private companies provide very poor accommodation for their workers. People living in the bush are entitled to far better accommodation, generally speaking, than they now have. We have put a safeguard in our recommendations to the effect that the improvements to the existing housing will not be enforced to the letter on a mill with a life under ten years. That is protection for the mills that have not long to run.

As I pointed out when we were preparing the report, it was not wise to force such mills to effect the improvements that the commission suggested should be done on mills with a longer life. I was of the opinion that if the mills with a short life were forced to do this work, it would mean their closing down. That, in turn, would mean the wasting of much valuable timber. As I have often said, our timber industry is one of the main and most profitable industries in the State. For that reason I believe we should do all we can to make the lives of the workers and their wives and families more pleasant and more in keeping with workers in the town. The member for Kalgoorlie, who was the chairman of the commission, has dealt with the Bill in detail and has explained the report from beginning to end. I therefore do not consider it necessary to speak at any length. I feel that the better accommodation we pro-

vide for the workers in the industry, the better will be the class of men attracted to it. We saw houses which were an absolute disgrace and in which young people with families were forced to live. Some of such houses were on the State mills.

I think the Government should have set an example, before bringing in this Bill, to show the private companies what ought to be done. Most of the companies were doing all they possibly could to improve the housing conditions. As the member for Kalgoorlie said, we got every support from the companies. The dwellings erected by Bunning Bros. at Nyamup were some of the finest we saw, and it is a credit to that company that it built such decent houses and has provided such excellent amenities. The hall was not quite completed when the commission visited the mill, but it was one of the best of its kind that one could hope to see in a country place. What we saw there proved to us that the company realised that if it provided better amenities for the men and their wives and families, it would secure employees who would remain at the mill to carry on the industry. I support the second reading of the Bill, but intend to agree to some of the amendments that will be submitted by the member for Beverley.

MR. HOLMAN (Forrest) [5.1]: I feel very pleased that the Government has seen fit to bring this Bill before the House. It was a very wise move to appoint a Select Committee whose personnel could see for themselves the living conditions in the timber areas. This Bill is a vast improvement on the one that was before the House last session. In its deliberations the committee wisely made certain alterations and fully set out its reasons for so doing in the report that has been tabled. It would appear from the discussion that has already taken place that the consensus of opinion is that some legislation should be introduced to effect these very necessary reforms in the living conditions in the timber areas, but some of the reasons given by certain speakers were very weak and, it seems to me, may be providing ammunition for another place.

The main objection from some members was that this legislation will deprive the State's building programme of an immense amount of money—£500,000 was mentioned

—and of the labour necessary to provide homes for people in the metropolitan area. This Bill, however, does not compel anybody to build; but when people do build they will have to do so under conditions set down. To my way of thinking it is ridiculous to say that if this Bill becomes an Act it will interfere with the building programme of the State. During this session certain legislation has been introduced to enable the Workers' Homes Board, as the governing body, to say who shall be given permits to build. No person or company is allowed to carry on building beyond a certain figure unless it has the necessary permit. Regardless of whether this Bill becomes law or not, all sawmilling companies, when they propose to build, will also have to receive the necessary permits from that authority. So it is ridiculous to say that this measure will interfere in any way with the State's building programme. Sawmillers will be governed by the permit system the same as anybody else. So that does away with the main argument against this Bill.

As chairman of the Select Committee, which was afterwards converted into an honorary Royal Commission, the member for Kalgoorlie has given a lucid explanation of its report, and also of the reasons for its recommendations, and for the alterations in the Bill. It is therefore unnecessary for me to repeat what he has told the House. But there are certain criticisms that have been made to which I, as a member of the commission, feel it incumbent upon me to reply. One, which has been used not only in this Chamber but also by the representatives of the mill-owners, is that this Bill should not become an Act because it is sectional legislation. I put it to members that we should not retard progress by rejecting the Bill on the score that it is sectional legislation. If we are going to stop every reform on the ground that it is sectional legislation, we shall not get anywhere. As a matter of fact, I could justly contend that all the marketing proposals that have been brought before this House constitute sectional legislation. The milk Bill, the potato marketing Bill, the onion growers' Bill, the barley growers' Bill, and numerous other measures of that kind that have been passed by this Chamber and by another place, are definitely sectional legisla-

tion, but those measures have in the main been for the benefit of the State in general.

Because we could not legislate for all primary producers at one time, who would say that we should therefore not legislate for any particular section? That is entirely ridiculous and cannot be substantiated. It is agreed that the mill employees are not the only workers who should have better conditions. I know that as well as other men. I am aware of the conditions of railway fitters and farm workers and men engaged in other industries, but I do not consider that is an argument against legislating for timber workers. At least we are making a start towards insisting that all workers should have decent housing conditions. This measure may be revolutionary, as was stated by the member for Mt. Marshall; but if it is, it has not come before its time. We must make a start somewhere, so I appeal to members not to take that opposition into account.

It has been stated that the sawmill companies are making an earnest endeavour to better the housing conditions of workers in the timber industry. Up to a point I entirely agree. Some of the companies are making a big effort to improve conditions. Some even did it during the war period, when we were told that materials were not available. Nyamup is only of recent growth, but quite a lot of that mill was built during the war at a time when other employers declared that they could not even make repairs because they could not secure labour and materials. So there must be a leakage somewhere, since one section of employers said something entirely different from what was said by another section. Who are we to believe? It is a fact, however, that not all of the employers are making efforts to better the housing conditions of their employees; and that being so, it is the duty of this House to see that those not doing so fall into line.

Reverting to the argument about this Bill interfering with the building programme of the State: We know full well, from the remarks of the Premier—I am reiterating what has already been said, but it is worthwhile repeating—that the timber industry is suffering from a scarcity of labour. I venture to say that until we demand that better housing conditions prevail, the shortage will continue. So, by not insisting that the

housing conditions of timber industry employees shall be made better, we will do harm to the building programme of this State; because until we can obtain the necessary labour in the mills, which are the source of much of the material necessary for building operations in this State, we will not be able to carry on the building programme that has been visualised.

Another point is that quite a large number of employees in the timber industry joined the Services early in the war, and they had to find homes for their families elsewhere. In the main, the majority drifted to the city. That applies not only to workers in the timber industry but also to those in other occupations. While in the city, those families had all the facilities that city dwellers enjoy. They had the comforts of city people. The children enjoyed a decent living standard and good educational facilities, and all the other amenities of city life. Now these people are asked to return to the primitive conditions prevailing at the mills, conditions under which they lived for years. That is not possible. In quite a number of instances these people had never previously had an opportunity to observe the conditions under which other folk were living. They were born and bred in primitive conditions; and because they had never had outside experience were, in many instances, agreeable to continue existing under those conditions. But because they were willing to do that, I do not consider that we should allow them to continue doing so.

This House, as well as other Houses of Parliament, prides itself on educating the people in proper moral and other standards. We should also educate them to the necessity of living under better conditions, and we can do that only through legislation of this kind. I venture to say that the suggestion of the member for West Perth, that the scheme would cost £500,000—which I think was initiated by the Sawmillers' Association—is ridiculous. In years to come it may exceed that figure, but how long will that take? We are at present concerned with what the provisions of the Bill would, in the near future, cost the industry. The proposed legislation lays down a standard of housing and we do not insist that the programme shall be carried out immediately, nor, by any stretch of the imagination, could

it be thought possible for it to be done immediately.

Mr. Leslie: The Bill does not say anything to the contrary.

Mr. HOLMAN: We must view the matter sensibly. An Act comes into operation when it is possible for it to do so, when all the forces and circumstances enable it to do so. I do not think the remarks of the member for Mt. Marshall will sway the commonsense either of members in this House or of the general public. We cannot wave a magic wand and say that all the new houses required shall spring up, but as soon as material and labour are available and as soon as the needs of individual mills concerned justify the expenditure, the owners of the mills should make every endeavour to do what the provisions of the Bill instruct them to do. Even though we cannot launch immediately an extensive programme of new house construction, we can launch a programme for making the houses that do exist decent for people to live in.

The member for Kalgoorlie said that in hundreds of cases it was noticed that the roofs of houses were leaking. That could be remedied immediately. Another repair that could be undertaken has to do with the primitive linings of these dwellings which are, in reality, only a harbour for vermin and disease, as has been freely admitted by representatives of the sawmilling companies. Mr. Craig, the representative of Millars, when questioned on this subject, said that the present linings were entirely unsatisfactory, and that any future buildings with which he was concerned would be properly lined with ceillite, plasterboard, or some similar material. There are ample safeguards in the Bill where, under certain clauses, some millers will not have to carry out the full programme. The administration of the measure must be left to somebody. It is the practice, with legislation passed in this House, to leave the responsibility with a Minister or Ministers, but now a red herring is being drawn across the path, and it is said that we should not give the Minister power in this respect. The fact is that someone must be made responsible, and if the House is not satisfied to give the Minister that responsibility, let some better suggestion be brought forward by the opponents of that course—perhaps another board.

Some remarks of Judge Lukin in a judgment in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in 1929 were quoted by the member for West Perth. Those remarks have no bearing on the present debate, and should never have entered into it. I know the member for West Perth did not initiate that idea, as those remarks were brought before the commission when the representative of the sawmilling companies gave evidence. The remarks referred to were made in 1929, but if Judge Lukin could see the conditions prevailing today at Pemberton, Jarrahdale and Nanga Brook, he would freely admit that his remarks were not worth the paper they were written on. Some years ago, Nanga Brook was burnt out. It is only a small mill at present, with the old houses which, in 1929, were perhaps not too bad. In the intervening period they have gone to wrack and ruin, as they were uninhabited for a long time. The conditions at Jarrahdale must be seen to be believed. The dwellings there have deteriorated rapidly and very few repairs have been done since 1929. I have brought the conditions at Jarrahdale before this House on many occasions, when criticising the conditions under which mill employees live.

I ask members to deal with that portion of the contribution by the member for West Perth in the light of present conditions and not those that prevailed in 1929. The member for Beverley said that most of the women he had contacted at the mills were perfectly satisfied with the conditions. I venture to say that he must have contacted an entirely different set of females from those questioned by other members because, in 99 per cent. of the cases where we inquired whether the women were dissatisfied with conditions and willing to pay the extra rate or higher rent in order to receive better homes, they said they would willingly pay the additional rent. It was the same at Nyaming, where people who were paying an increased rent of up to 12s. 6d. per week said they would not go back to the old conditions. I do not know where the member for Beverley got the idea—

Mr. Cross: Perhaps he interviewed the managers!

Mr. HOLMAN: He also wanted to know how many people would be prepared to pay the increased rent. The chairman of the

commission has already told the House that in 100 per cent. of cases when employees were asked, they said they would be entirely satisfied to pay the increased rent provided they received better accommodation. It is significant that the Timber Workers' Union, which has recently held a conference representative of every branch and district of the industry in this State, has complimented the Government on bringing this Bill down. The Bill has been freely debated at every branch or district meeting of the union. If there was any idea of opposing the increased rent, it would have been brought before the conference and before the representatives of the union, so that point can be disregarded. The member for Beverley also brought in the usual sobstuff—at which he is past master—regarding ex-Servicemen. He told the House, in his inimitable style, of the effect it would have on ex-Servicemen in the metropolitan area. I say there are ex-Servicemen in the timber industry also, and that we should not make fish of one and flesh of another. If we are to be sorry for those in the metropolitan area, we should also be sorry for those in the timber areas. I venture to say that the domestic upset that he mentioned could happen in the metropolitan area, could and in some cases probably has happened in the timber industry, because wives who are going back from the metropolitan area to the timber areas will not be satisfied with the conditions there.

The position of bush workers has not been sufficiently stressed to members. The member for Beverley said that the sectional or prefabricated houses would be no good, because if they were shifted from time to time experience showed that they would get out of alignment. Those are the conditions prevailing today, the only difference being that, instead of the hut for which we are asking, of sufficient area and with ventilation, ceilings and linings, the huts at present have become out of alignment through usage over the past 20 or 30 years. The prefabricated dwelling we ask for is not unworkable. If the idea was workable with the decrepit and primitive huts in use today, it should be infinitely more workable if the recommendations of the commission are carried out under this Bill. The recommendations were made to provide for a better type of bush hut.

At Nyaming Bush, a private company's mill, there is a portable twin hut on rails, which is different from any other type of bush hut, with a 10 feet by 8 feet room on each end of a tabletop railway wagon, while in the centre there is a space of 8 feet where washing, cooking and other facilities are available. When the flat is opened, it forms a sort of lean-to which provides the fireplace and ventilation and affords protection from the weather. If huts of that type can be built in that district and taken to the bush, they could be provided elsewhere and, if the companies will not make them available, they should be forced to do so in order that the bush workers may enjoy decent conditions. As the member for Beverley stated, the faller is one of the most important men in the timber industry, and this being so he should receive the utmost consideration in order that he may be given decent living conditions.

In the Committee stage there will probably be quite a lot of debate, and, although there are various other points that could well be discussed on the second reading, I am prepared to leave them to be dealt with in Committee. I trust members will avail themselves of the opportunity to make a close examination of the evidence tendered to and the report of the Royal Commission and thus gain first-hand information on the conditions that prevail. If they do so, I feel sure that they, like the Government, will insist upon this legislation being placed on the statute-book.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [5.32]: I do not propose to traverse the ground that has already been covered. I know something about mill houses and realise that there is room for improvement. In the early days when the wages of employees were low, a certain proportion was allowed in the form of rent, and the result was that a poor type of house was provided. Conditions generally in the industry have improved, and today the employee is in a position to pay an increased rental. I have discussed this matter with various men and have found that they are prepared to pay a higher rental in order to get a better class of home.

I listened with interest to the member for Kalgoorlie who, I consider, displayed a very broad outlook. He stressed the fact

that the average timber worker would be much happier in a better class of house and was prepared to pay an increased rental for it. The Bill lays down that one-eighth of an employee's income should be charged as rent. Considering the timber is being produced on the mill, that provision should ensure a much better class of house for the workers in the industry. The member for Kalgoorlie spoke of these houses costing £400 to £450. It struck me that a much cheaper house will be provided in the mill areas than elsewhere. To build a home under the Workers' Homes Board costs about £900, and I hope the house to be built for £400 or £450 will be of a good class.

Mr. Holman: Those houses will be built on the job.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, and I suppose the timber will be provided at a cheaper rate than elsewhere. Still, there is a big disparity between the cost of a house erected by the Workers' Homes Board and the estimated price for a mill house. While I support the second reading of the Bill and appreciate the need for improved housing on the timber mills, I consider it necessary that the whole question of housing should be considered by the housing commission to be appointed under the State Housing Bill. If a worker on a timber mill is better housed than somebody elsewhere, it would be hardly fair that the person outside should suffer. I should like to see provision made for the housing commission to include mill housing in its activities.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Forests in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILLS (4)—RETURNED.

1, Milk.

With amendments.

2, Traffic Act Amendment (No. 2).

With an amendment.

3, Fisheries Act Amendment.

4, Land Alienation Restriction Act Continuance.

Without amendment.

BILL—CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gasecoyne): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.45 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 13th November, 1946.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.

Reports of Committee adopted.

BILL—STATE HOUSING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [2.35]: I join with other members in commending the Government for having introduced this comprehensive Bill; but as it seeks to do away with the Workers' Homes Board, I would like—not that it will alter the Bill