

Legislative Council

Thursday, 15th July, 1954.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

BILL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading—Reasoned Amendment.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by the Chief Secretary:—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

to which Hon. H. K. Watson had moved an amendment as follows:—

"That all the words after the word 'That' be struck out and the following words inserted in lieu:—

"inasmuch as this House is of opinion that, in order to ensure fair rents and full justice and equity for both landlords and tenants, the principles, policy and provisions as embodied in the Principal Act by Act No. 45 of 1953 ought to continue in operation (with such precise additional precautionary and temporary safeguards in sections 13 and 20B of the Principal Act as may be deemed necessary or desirable to curb those landlords, if any, who may be minded arbitrarily to terminate existing tenancies for no other purpose than to thwart tenants applications to the Court for a determination of rent, or to otherwise unconscionably exploit tenants) and inasmuch as this Bill seeks to repeal or cancel most of the principles, policy and provisions embodied as aforesaid in the Principal Act by Act No. 45 of 1953; and inasmuch as this Bill also seeks wrongfully and unjustly to invalidate and nullify transactions, agreements, payments, notices, proceedings and judgments lawfully made or taken in good faith under the Principal Act; and inasmuch as this Bill, both in its form and substance, is calculated to create chaos and seriously to confuse and confound landlords and tenants and their legal advisers and the Courts, this House declines to give this Bill a Second Reading."

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West—on amendment) [4.34]: During the last three years we have had rents and tenancies legislation before us on six different occasions, and much of what I have heard during the debates has reminded me of the old saying, "Believe the best of people and you may very well be right." The natural corollary is, "Believe the worst of people and you may be right also." We have heard in this Chamber, since I have been a member, many harsh things said about landlords and tenants.

I suppose there is a large amount of truth in those remarks, but that does not make it easy for individual members, particularly those not living in the metropolitan area, to gain an appreciation of just what the real position is. We have had a reasonable outline of what is happening, but we do not know what is the middle-road policy of the landlords and the tenants. We all agree that the great majority of tenants are quite prepared to accept their obligations as tenants and to pay a reasonable rental. At the same time, we agree that the great majority of landlords are also fair and reasonable people. But no matter what either side says, there are still landlords and tenants who have to be put under some sort of control.

In most details the Bill is similar to that which was put before us in April, but which was not passed; or rather the amendments then were rejected by the Government, the main difference between the Bills being, of course, the retrospective clauses. We all agree that some measure of protection is necessary. What we cannot agree on is the measure of protection that is required. I believe that some compromise or reasonable alternative can be found by this House.

The previous Bill was allowed to lapse because the Government could not get its own way. In my opinion, where we have party politics, good government is a compromise between the ideologies of the rival parties. If the Government were to be as flexible on this subject as are non-Government members, we would be able to reach an understanding on the Bill. During the debate last night, Mrs. Hutchison, if I remember correctly, made reference to the fact that if two members, other than Government members, were to change their attitude, the Bill could be put through. That is perfectly correct; but if fewer than two members in another place had undergone a change of attitude, the Bill would not have come to us in the form in which we find it at the present time.

I believe it is due to the people of Western Australia to let them know that at the moment there are only two, or possibly three, men standing between the normal way of life in this State and complete and utter socialisation; and those people are in this Chamber. I personally am proud to be in a Chamber in which we may at

some time or another be able to oppose socialisation absolutely and completely. Political football was mentioned by Mr. Barker. Football is a game, and it takes more than one person to play it. I think we all know who is playing it, and who started the kicking. Let us forget anything about this being a political matter.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Vote against the amendment.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I am speaking now. The hon. member was kicking the ball last night.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: You are speaking about me.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I have already told the hon. member that I am speaking now, and that he was kicking the ball last night. Government speakers have placed particular emphasis on the last portion of Mr. Watson's amendment, which reads, "That this House declines to give this Bill a Second reading." I do not think any of them referred to the first portion which to my way of thinking, is definitely the most important feature of the amendment. The whole of the amendment has been read several times, but I intend to read it again. It states—

That inasmuch as this House is of the opinion that, in order to ensure fair rents and full justice and equity for both landlords and tenants, the principles, policy and provisions as embodied in the Principal Act by Act No. 45 of 1953 ought to continue in operation with such precise additional precautionary and temporary safeguards in sections 13 and 20B of the Principal Act as may be deemed necessary or desirable to curb those landlords.

Let members think over that portion. The mover and all who support the amendment have those words well in mind.

To my way of thinking the amendment means one thing, and one thing only—to give the Government a chance to bring forward amendments to this Bill; and that, I believe, is what we all want. Let the Government show a spirit of compromise; if it does so, I am certain the amendment will be defeated. But if it remains adamant and inflexible in its ideas, as it has been before, I am certain that the Bill and the Act will be completely terminated by the end of the year. There are many of us, including myself, who do not want that to happen at this juncture.

I was most interested in Mr. Heenan's remarks. He paid a compliment to Mr. Watson's knowledge of rent control, and nobody could deny that he has that knowledge. Mr. Heenan also said that Mr. Watson represents the extreme right, and that there should be some reasonable course which would appeal to members. I thoroughly agree with the latter part of Mr. Heenan's remarks and I hope that he,

and the members of his party, are of that opinion, because if so we will make a reasonable and presentable measure out of this Bill.

I am also prepared to agree that Mr. Watson's amendment is of the extreme right—so long as members on the Government side will agree that the Bill is of the extreme left. If they agree with me in that contention, we will be able to go down the centre of the road. Mr. Watson gave us four points upon which he said he was willing to work. Although he is not here now, I feel certain that he is not adamant about the fact that those are the only points on which he is willing to compromise.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: I wish he had told us that!

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Mr. Watson has only one vote. Other members are entitled to vote, irrespective of whether they belong to the same party. His first point was: "To prevent an increase of rent after the issuing of a notice to quit, except by permission of the court." There is nothing wrong with that.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: But it is the sting in the tail that worries us.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: The second point was to amend Section 20B and give the court discretion to suspend eviction notices up to a period of three months and preclude any eviction during an application. Do not let us forget that that is only a basis. It is something upon which we can work, but I am sorry that not one Government member said yes or no to the proposition. I sincerely hope that when the Minister for the North-West speaks he will be able to tell us that the Government is prepared to be flexible.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: I am sure it will be.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Time alone will tell. Do not let us forget that non-Government members are not bound by party decisions; they are not bound by Caucus, but are free to make their own decisions.

Hon. G. Bennetts: But they vote together.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: If the hon. member likes to look at division lists, he will find that on no occasion have present Government members deviated from the policy laid down in Beaufort-st.

Hon. G. Bennetts: No!

Hon. C. H. HENNING: If they did, they would be wiped out in the political sense. I would not have spoken in that strain, but the hon. member started it, and he knows that what I say is true.

Hon. G. Bennetts: When your party was the Government we voted for it on many occasions.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: When it suited your policy to do so, as the hon. member told us on the floor of the House. But I ask the hon. member whether he has ever voted against his own Government?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. C. H. HENNING: A member's first job, in my opinion, is to represent his electors—he should be interested in nothing else but the welfare of his electors and the welfare of the State as a whole. He should be answerable to one thing only—his conscience. I am prepared to vote on this Bill, answerable only to my own conscience, and I am sure that other members in this Chamber are prepared to vote in the same way. If we are prepared to do that, we will achieve something.

I must admit that I do not like State control; if possible I prefer State guidance, or the State being left out altogether. But in this case there is an absolute necessity for a certain measure of State control. Even in the amendment that I read a few moments ago—written by Mr. Watson, who is said to be on the extreme right—there is a realisation of the necessity for some reasonable measure of State control. Mr. Heenan completed his speech—which I thought an excellent one—by saying, "Let us thresh out the problem in the best possible way."

The best possible way is by remembering that we, as a House of Parliament, have a great responsibility to this State and that certain landlords and tenants should be put under control. We can do this if we cast aside party politics and are responsible to one thing only; namely, our conscience. If that were done, we could mete out justice to both sides. In the past, whenever an amendment has been made by the non-Government side of the House, it has been opposed by the Government. Now, this amendment gives the Government a chance to bring forward some amendment to the Bill. The initial responsibility is the Government's, and the final responsibility is the Government's. I will vote against the amendment if the Government will show some willingness to co-operate. That is not a great deal to ask. I merely request that it show a willingness to co-operate and compromise. If the Government ceases to adopt the inflexible attitude it has displayed in dealing with this legislation, I believe we will reach a conclusion.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East—on amendment) [4.51]: I oppose the amendment because, if it is carried, it will mean the end of the Bill. I have received a letter from the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council the subject of which was discussed at a meeting held by that council in Kalgoorlie. The letter was written on the 8th July.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Are you not a member of that council?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am not. I resigned two years ago, after having been a member for 18 years. I decided that I could not do two jobs at once, and I resigned from the council so as to give my full time to the people who elected me to this House. The letter is addressed to me, and reads as follows:—

Rents and Tenancies Bill.

At the meeting of my council held last evening, it was reported that the proposed legislation to deal with the abovementioned subject made provision for a fair rents court in Perth and that no provision whatever was made for the country areas.

Of course, that is not correct. If the Bill is passed as it was sent to this House, the country areas will have the right to set up a fair rents court if they see fit to do so. The letter continues—

My council has directed that I write to all the goldfields parliamentarians and draw their attention to this matter with the object of having this omission rectified.

This was signed by Mr. Edwards, the clerk of the Kalgoorlie council.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Is that a Labour or a Liberal council?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It is one of the biggest councils outside Perth, and it takes no part in politics. In that council we have never discussed anything to do with politics. I was a Labour member on that council and I cannot recall our ever having discussed political matters. The council is comprised of the leading businessmen of Kalgoorlie. It includes a couple of solicitors, a land and estate agent, and a number of other men of similar standing. They are all very popular and have an all-round knowledge of the requirements of the State. We find a body of that calibre writing that no provision has been made for a fair rents court for country areas. So it is apparent that in its view a fair rents court would be the best means of dealing with the position.

I heard Mr. Teahan say that during his election campaign he met a lot of people who had suffered hardship. I found that, too. While canvassing, I covered a large area, with Goldfields members, and I think we all agree that in many places we saw some bad tenants; but we also found some bad landlords. I must add, however, that we discovered a number of houses were overcrowded because some of the people in them could not get other accommodation and were living with their families. It is very bad for young people with families to live with parents. Some of them had to put their children into lodging-houses and hotels. I have no doubt that in the

last few years there have been more separations and divorces in this country than had been known before, and I feel that has been caused by people being put out of their homes, along with their families.

Most of these evictions would affect family units. People who have houses to let generally say, "We do not want children in our homes." What are we going to do with children? They are the backbone of the country, and I do not know what will happen if we continue to prevent them from being accommodated. We should wake up and give them all the consideration we can.

Only yesterday I met in Perth a man I have known for many years. He has sold a big home and has bought another. He is going on leave for 12 months. He said to me, "George, I have sold my house and bought this small one. I have lots of goods and chattels stacked on the back verandah at my daughter's place. I will get £7 to £8 a week for that house; I have two or three people clamouring for it, and it would be a good income. I will put in a bit of furniture and that will build up the rent." That is the sort of thing that is going on; and that is what the court will have to deal with.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Did you say he was a friend of yours?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: He is, but I do not think even a friend should do that sort of thing. Mr. Teahan also mentioned the war period. We all know that when men and women came back from the war there were no materials available for them to build houses. As a result, they had to stay with their parents; and when materials did become available, a lot of them had spent their money and were unable to find the necessary deposits for their homes. We are not all careful in controlling our expenditure. Three different people have told me that they agreed to pay the rent the landlord asked and could not do otherwise because they had two children, and if they did not pay the rent they would have nowhere to go and would be out in the street. One of them paid as much as £8 10s. a week. I met this person three weeks ago, and I find that he has got out of that trouble and is now in South Perth.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: What about that amendment you voted against last session? That would have prevented these cases from taking place.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Last week I had three cases of increased rent. One of my relations was in business and was paying £30 a month for the premises he occupied. On the amount of business done, he would not be able to carry on because the rent has been increased from £30 to £60. He has occupied the premises for many years, but will have to remove his stock and let the business go. I have another friend in business who has been occupying his

premises for 25 years. He started with a cheap rent, but every now and then a little has been added.

When the rents legislation went overboard, he was approached to take a lease, and the rent was increased about four-fold. In addition, he had to meet expenses of £1,000 to £1,500 immediately and he is under an obligation to have the place renovated every year. One can hardly credit that a landlord would impose such restrictions on a tenant. A house in Wembley is occupied by an old couple and the rent has been jumped up 150 per cent.

Thus there are cases of hardship, and that is why the Bill should be discussed on the second reading and taken into Committee. If that be done, we shall be able to ensure that people are fairly treated. I am of opinion that the establishment of a fair rents court is the only means of adequately controlling the position.

Many people from the outback are coming to the metropolitan area to live. Last week on the Goldfields I saw more houses available for letting than I have witnessed since the war. People who were living in Norseman and similar places on the Goldfields are coming down here because of the discovery of oil. Doubtless a lot of them will go to Kwinana in the hope of settling there.

The Housing Commission is trying to find homes for the people who are evicted, but the number of houses required is not being built. The commission has to concentrate on the metropolitan area and cater for evictees. A member, in the course of his speech last night, dealt with war service homes and said that 18 months elapsed before a man could get one of those homes.

About a month ago I was in Canberra and, of course, the needs of the Australian capital city must be met! Money that should be available for expenditure in the States is being spent there. Hundreds of houses are being built under the direction of the Minister for the Interior—war service homes and Government homes. Consequently it is little wonder that sufficient money is not available for house-building here. I believe that in the next 12 months, the Federal authorities intend to move all their departments now in New South Wales to Canberra, and that over a thousand homes will be required. That is where the money will be spent on housing instead of in the States.

Last night Sir Charles Latham spoke about the pioneers in the outback areas and said they did not receive assistance. Of course they did not! I was one of them. Nothing was given to me, not child endowment or anything else. Still, I do not want young people today to put up with what we had to face. Surely they are entitled to receive assistance from the Government, and it is our responsibility to consider rents and tenancies by allowing this proposed legislation to be enacted.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan—on amendment) [5.6]: I rather deplore the situation that has arisen in regard to this proposed legislation because I believe there is very little difference of opinion between the two sides of this House and that each is just as honest as the other. It is only a difference of viewpoint that divides one from the other.

In my opinion, the present situation has arisen from a very laudable attempt on the part of the present and the preceding Governments to house the people during a time of difficulty in a manner and in accommodation of a standard that has been attempted in few or in no other parts of the world. One has only to see the housing conditions of people in places like San Francisco, where a great increase in population has occurred, to realise that even there the authorities could not face the problem and accomplish results in the manner we have attempted to do.

I repeat that it is very laudable on the part of both Governments that we should have endeavoured to house our people in this manner. We have instilled into the minds of people a desire for better conditions than prevailed in prewar years. One can see that, in all parts of the State, both country and metropolitan, people are looking for a better type of home in which to live.

I, with other members, feel that the continuance of State control is something we must avoid at all costs unless certain aspects of it are found to be essential. State control of housing can have very difficult consequences. I have been greatly interested in reading a pamphlet by a man named Bertrand de Jouvenel which I was able to obtain from the W.A. Society for Political Education. To members who may wish to check up, the address is Box 57, Midland Junction.

The pamphlet is entitled "No Vacancies." One would think on reading it that this was our example being followed by France, or vice versa. This housing problem refers to the City of Paris, and some extraordinary points are outlined. We heard it said last night—and truly said—that there are 90,000 houses in the metropolitan area. And yet, reading this document, we find that there are only some 84,000 buildings for habitation in Paris. That, I think, emphasises what I have said—that we are endeavouring, laudably, to house our people in a condition that few other parts of the world have attempted.

The beginning of rent restrictions in Paris, and in France generally, was due to the same considerations as those which existed here. After World War I Paris found itself in difficulties in the matter of accommodation; and it was felt politically that, in order to stabilise the economy, it was wiser to peg rents. However, the Government there continued to peg rents, while everything else such as the cost of

repairs, taxation, and the cost of living rose. Reading the following paragraph of this publication must bring one's mind closer to home:—

The story starts with World War One. It then seemed both humane and reasonable to preserve the interests of the families while the boys were in the army or working for victory. So existing situations were frozen. It was also reasonable to avoid disturbances at the end of the war. The veterans' home-coming should not be spoiled by evictions and rent increases. Thus prewar situations were hardened into rights. The owner lost—"temporarily," of course—the disposition of his property, and the stipulations of law superseded agreement between the parties. This was only for a time.

But by the time the situation was reviewed in 1922, retail prices had trebled with rents still at their pre-war level.

And so it goes on, taking the story to the second World War.

This publication depicts how the rents remained unaltered for a long period, from 1914 to 1948, and we can see here exactly what would happen if we were to grant fixation of rents, while determining no fixation of any other aspect of living. In the City of Paris the cost of repairs increased 140 times and taxation 10 times, but rents remained frozen, over the period from 1914 to 1948. The result has been that nobody there can repair his home, and instead of an owner having any right to his house, the man in possession now has rights which he can sell.

It is pointed out here that if one desires to obtain occupancy of accommodation, the easiest thing to do is to look systematically for those people who are likely to pass from this mortal coil, and then get in touch with the heir to the property; because it is said that the illegal method is the surest, and that is to deal with the heir and, with his complicity, immediately carry in to the premises some pieces of one's furniture. That sounds familiar. The pamphlet states that as soon as one is in, one is king of the castle.

Buying one's way into an apartment in Paris today will cost anywhere from 500 dollars to 1,500 dollars per room. At such prices, one may also share flats which the tenants will agree to divide; but in spite of all this, if one goes back to first things, it is found that a dollar per month will pay the wage-earner's rent.

Hon. H. Hearn: They need rent inspectors there.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: The Government of France does not seem to have built houses in anything approaching the same manner as we have built them in this country, because one reads that

27 per cent. of the residences in Paris in 1948 were over 98 years old. Thirty per cent. were between 68 and 98 years old, 33 per cent. were between 34 and 68 years old, and 10 per cent. were between 12 and 34 years old. Only one per cent. of the houses were less than 12 years old in 1948. In other words, there has been no building of homes at all there between the cessation of war and the end of 1948. Repairs to houses in Paris have become completely impossible, and this document concludes with something that is very much akin to what is happening in our own State to some extent. I quote—

Hence the strange plans which are now being considered by the French Parliament. It is proposed to maintain a right of occupation, a right to retain one's lodgings, and it is proposed to come to a "fair price-fixing." That is, the true service value of every flat would be fixed according to floor space, the value of the square meter being multiplied by a coefficient according to the amenities, situation and so forth. Thus the "fair rent" would be ascertained. But it would not be wholly paid by the tenant. He would benefit by a special subsidy, an inflationary measure of course, as are all subsidies. Nor would the greater part of this fair rent be paid to the owner. It would be divided in slices. A slice to correspond with the cost of upkeep would be paid in to the owner, but to a blocked account to make sure it did go for repairs. A much bigger slice for the reconstitution of the capital would not go to the owner at all, but to a National Fund for Building. Thus the dispossession of the owners would be finally sanctioned.

This is what long-continued restrictions would result in. And it is exactly the state we would get into if we continued rent controls for the same period, under the same conditions as have existed in the past, and still exist to an even greater degree in the City of Paris.

In my opinion, we must take a long-term view of these restrictions. We are all aware that there are good and bad among both tenants and landlords, and I think every member in this Chamber would sympathise with the good on either side. I do not think there is present a single member who would not wish to protect the majority against the few who offend.

I agree to this amendment because we have tried other methods previously, and have seen a Bill almost identical with this brought into this Chamber. We examined it thoroughly and submitted to the House what we thought were the necessary amendments and those which would obviate the conditions that I have described. We thought those amendments would be fair to all concerned; but we probably erred at that time by not realising that

some of those amendments would go further than we anticipated, and that some restriction was required to prevent the landlord from evicting his tenant for simply having gone to a fair rents tribunal of some sort. We found, however, that our amendments met with very little compromise, and I feel that on this occasion there must be some spirit of compromise if we are to do justice to all concerned.

We have suggested to the Government a way out of the impasse, and I repeat that we are simply asking for a spirit of compromise. I, for one, would be prepared to say that it is the right of any individual to ask the court that his rent be determined on a fair basis. When he has gone to the court, I would say to the owner of the dwelling, "You have lost your right to obtain an eviction order unless you can satisfy the court that there exists some special reason why you are entitled to it." I am sure that every member of the House agrees with that principle. I think the right of eviction should be given where there are special grounds, and this House could draw up the conditions for itself and present them to the magistrates for their guidance. If it is considered that the number of evictions that will occur in the future is too great for the State to handle I would not be averse, when given the full facts, to granting a stay of eviction proceedings.

The blanket clause as it exists, however, would only lead to further disabilities; and I am certain that, if a spirit of compromise were shown, those two points could be determined and such a decision would form the basis for a satisfactory measure. I am certain that compromise could be reached if the Chief Secretary and some of those vitally interested could have a chat outside the Chamber, where politics could be completely dropped to allow a free discussion without personal commitments of any sort.

I believe that this is the moment when the Chief Secretary has the chance of his life to show that he can rise above party politics. We have seen what a big man he can be when he likes; and, if he so desired, he could eventually come to this Chamber with a Bill that everyone could accept. There is an air of compromise existing on our side. Let us feel that there is the same air of compromise on both sides. If that attitude were adopted, this legislation would soon be in a form which we in this House could consider to be fair to all those concerned with rents and tenancies.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland—on amendment) [5.22]: It would appear that, to all those who have spoken against the amendment, it contains only about 10 words, because most of them have referred only to the last 10 words which are—

... this House declines to give this Bill a Second Reading.

They have forgotten to read the first part of the amendment which reads—

.....inasmuch as this House is of opinion that, in order to ensure fair rents and full justice and equity for both landlords and tenants, the principles, policy and provisions as embodied in the Principal Act by Act No. 45 of 1953 ought to continue in operation.

What is wrong with that? It reads, "The Bill ought to continue in operation."

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: The Bill or the Act?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Act ought to continue in operation, subject to certain conditions. In effect, it then reads "if any of these conditions are not agreed upon," and so on. Then we come to the last 10 words of the amendment which read, "This House declines to give this Bill a Second Reading." I notice that every member who has spoken has referred to the Bill as well as the amendment, and therefore it must be relevant.

Hon. E. M. Davies: The President ruled that it was.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Chief Secretary, in his attempt to prove that it was a direct negative, also forgot to mention the first part of the amendment and referred only to the last portion. One cannot refer to one part without the other, or even disregard the middle of it. I suggest that before members say that this is an attempt to kill the Bill—which phraseology has been used in practically every speech—they should have another look at the amendment. They will then find that it is a compromise, or an offer to the Government to make adjustments to the Bill, which will be amenable to some of the members in this House and, as a result, the Bill will receive full consideration.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Is not that usually done in the Committee stage?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: We have tried in the past to make the necessary amendments in Committee; but with what result?

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Are you voting for or against the amendment?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The hon. member will find out what I will do in due course. It would appear from all the speeches made by Labour members that their only concern is for the tenant.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I am for both.

Hon. H. Hearn: A bit biased, though.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: As far as those members are concerned, the landlord has not very much say in the proceedings. Surely the owner has some entitlement to his own property!

Hon. N. E. Baxter: He has every entitlement.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Last night we had quite a few platitudes thrown across the floor of the House at us; and several members, myself included, were accused, by implication, of having no value for human rights, or human thoughts of any kind; and of having placed monetary values before humanitarian values.

Apparently the hon. member who made that remark believes that since she has entered this House she has been able to attract all the virtues, and that the rest of the members are devoid of any. May I assure the hon. member and other members, too, that I can sleep soundly at night without any shame as far as this subject is concerned, and that I have more humanitarian principles than has the hon. member. It so happens that I am a landlord, and have had a tenant in my house since 1949—

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: I bet you did not evict him.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN:—for which I have charged him £1 per week.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: I bet you did not evict him!

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Under the formula, I could probably have charged him 26s. 5d. per week, but that would have been the maximum.

Hon. H. K. Watson: For the whole house?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes. It might be said in this case, as many members have already said, "You have the right to go to the court."

The Minister for the North-West: Where is the house?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: At Geraldton. Why should I, who bought that house with my own money, for which I worked extremely hard, go to the court? It is my property, and I am running it.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Why force the wage-earner to go to the court?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Why should I have to go to the court and ask a magistrate what I am entitled to charge? Surely that is my own business and I am quite capable of looking after it! I concede that the tenant has a right, if he is dissatisfied with the rent I charge, to go to the court and obtain a stay of proceedings, so that I cannot increase the rent before his case is proceeded with.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You are one of the good landlords, though.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Do not forget that I was accused last night of not having any humanitarian principles. If any further proof of my humanitarian principles is needed—

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: The hon. member might not have meant you.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: No one was missed; everyone was included.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Everyone except the landlord who made the accusation.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I had another tenant, and I eventually sold him the house, plus an acre of land, for £500. He could not afford to pay more. The land itself is now worth £600, so I think I am quite justified in the attitude I am taking. Now let us turn to some of the untruths which have been uttered in the course of the debate on this Bill. The Chief Secretary, in his remarkable *Folies Bergere* turn on Tuesday night—

The Minister for the North-West: He has not spoken on the amendment.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am coming to that. On Tuesday night, when he was actually speaking on the amendment, but should have been speaking on the disagreement with the President's ruling—

The Chief Secretary: I worked it all in.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The statement he made was also made by Mr. Barker while giving us his very boisterous contribution.

Hon. H. Hearn: In a pleading tone.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The statement was to the effect that members of this House had never refused to pass legislation submitted by the McLarty-Watts Government, but that since the coming into power of the Labour Government we have refused to pass legislation. We are now dealing with rents and tenancies. By referring to the 1950 "Hansard" reports, it will be seen that a debate took place on the Increase of Rents (War Restrictions) Act, and the second reading of the Bill was refused by this House. Parliament was prorogued, and the Government of the day brought in another Bill which was more to the liking of the members of this House. So why did the Chief Secretary and Mr. Barker make those statements, knowing perfectly well that they were not correct?

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Just trying to mislead the public!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Surely we did not expect the Chief Secretary to make untruthful statements in the House! We have plenty of respect for him; but if he continues to make untruthful statements and carries on in that manner, he will lose that respect.

Only the other day the Minister for Housing said that the non-Labour members of this Chamber were responsible for rejecting the amending Bill introduced in April last, that would have allowed some redress for tenants up to the end of August. He said that when, in fact, the Government refused to accept the amendment in the other House. But he claimed that this House would not accept the

amendment. I shall quote what the Chief Secretary said when the Bill was introduced into this House—

I prefer Mr. Simpson's amendment to that suggested by Mr. Watson. But I am in the unhappy position of opposing Mr. Simpson's amendment and later having to oppose the other.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Why did you not carry it? You had 20 supporters on the floor of the House.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Had the Chief Secretary agreed to the amendment, the Bill would have been passed by this House. Had the Minister for Housing agreed to the amendment in another place, it would have received concurrence in this House. Why should we now get the blame?

The Chief Secretary: Because you had a voting strength of 20 to nine in your favour.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Because members opposite did not put the question to a vote, and the Chief Secretary opposed the amendment. Members opposite know this as well as I do. I have quoted the Chief Secretary's own words.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Why did you not call for a division?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Why should I? It was not even suggested.

Hon. E. M. Davies: You thought so much about it that you did not ask for a division.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It was not my amendment.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I object to blame being cast on members of this House which cannot be justified. It is about time the public knew the true position. Members opposing this amendment have put up the cry that they want more time. When we offered to give them time they did not want it.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: You are not going to be of much help this time, by the sound of it.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If the hon. member looks at the result of my voting last time, he will find that I was not helpful then, either. It has been suggested that everybody is entitled to a standard house as a birthright. While I appreciate that, I think we should work first to justify that standard. It would appear to me that we are trying to set too high a standard, one which we cannot afford to pay for, and what is more, are not prepared to pay for. The Chief Secretary objected to the evictee homes. I do not know anything about them.

The Chief Secretary: If you had seen them you would object.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am going to say this: I have seen some in the course of erection. I have also seen many of those in which women and children of this country were reared. Some of those families would be only too happy to have evictee houses in place of the ones they were reared in.

The Chief Secretary: They would not be able to rear any families in the evictee homes.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: They reared their families under much worse conditions. Had the people of this State waited until such time as they could get standard houses, this country would not have been in the position it is in today. Surely we are not going to sit down and wait for someone to give us a standard house before we decide to do anything!

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Is that an argument for the State to go on building under-standard homes?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I believe that, at the time, a number of evictees were in the course of process through the Court, and something quick and lively was needed. I understand those houses filled the bill. Somebody else will probably give the hon. member more information about that than I can. I have already said that I do not know very much about the evictee homes. I know a lot more about what the pioneers of Australia went through, and yet reared families. It appears to be the object of this Bill to bring back into the Act or under control, pretty well every house and flat in Western Australia.

Hon. H. Hearn: Except those that are Government-owned, of course!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Those, of course, are precluded!

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They are Commonwealth-controlled.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It appears to me that the Government, in bringing this Bill forward in the present form, is taking a retrograde step. Having reached a certain stage in decontrol, why is it necessary in 1954 to go back to 1950 standards?

Hon. E. M. Davies: Because of 1,000 evictees.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Surely the housing position is no worse today than it was in 1950?

Hon. E. M. Davies: You do not know very much about the subject.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Will the hon. member tell me if the housing position today is any worse than it was in 1950?

Hon. E. M. Davies: Definitely!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Last night Mr. Lavery gave us a list of names of evictees and housing conditions; yet he mentioned only one in his own province. Whether he is worried about mentioning the other

cases in his own province and about any reaction from his side of the House, I do not know.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: There were 46 places I could have mentioned.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yet the hon. member mentioned only one instance in his own province. I also heard the remark made last night that the State Housing Commission built 3,555 homes last year. That is a very good record; it is excellent. I know that members will agree, if they are fair to all sides, that those homes were built on a very sound foundation laid by the previous Government. That works out at 65 per week. Am I correct?

Hon. E. M. Davies: Were you talking about the Wise Government?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am talking about the number of homes the Government claims to have built in the last 12 months—65 per week. The Chief Secretary told us the other night that there were 1,300 eviction orders. Nobody in this House is going to say that there will therefore be 1,300 people on the streets. There must be some interchange of tenants from place to place. In endeavouring to arrive at some kind of figure, I calculate that there would be a maximum of 300 people minus a house.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: I could show you that number in one part of Fremantle alone.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: A great many tenants must go from one place to another; it cannot be otherwise. I have said that there may be 300 people wanting a home. If members like to include a few more that may be seeking accommodation in the next month, I am prepared to raise the figure to 400. If the Government is building 65 houses per week, then, in six weeks, all those people will be accommodated. We have already intimated that we would be prepared to extend the provision regarding evictions for a period of three months. If Labour members are worried about some people obtaining homes when others have been waiting for a long time, it could be provided that those evicted now should be placed in transitional camps and those in camps transferred to houses.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Would you not think that was being done?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The figures I have seen in regard to evictions were 16 for one week in Perth, and 18 in Fremantle. That is a total of 34. With 65 houses being built each week, there would still be 30 available after the 34 people to whom I have referred had been accommodated. Is that arithmetic right?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: I think it is well out of balance.

The PRESIDENT: Order! If the hon. member will continually interject, I shall have to take action. Mr. Logan may proceed.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I probably called for that myself, Mr. President. I apologise.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Of course you called for it!

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: With the necessity to house the 300 or 400 evictees to whom I have referred, other people on the Housing Commission's list—some of whom have been waiting for homes for three or four years—will be set back something like six or seven weeks. However, I do not think they will be very much put out at having to wait that little time longer, after having been unable to procure a home for three or four years. I therefore do not see any great need to get hot under the collar and worried about what the position will be.

What is more, amongst the evictees are some who have been evicted by the Housing Commission itself. Who will accept responsibility for them? The Government is wanting individuals to take a responsibility which should not be placed upon them. The same applies to old-age pensioners. It would appear from remarks made by some members that the people who have old-age pensioners as tenants should carry the whole burden. I contend it is the Government's job to look after them. If an economic rent is too much for a pensioner to pay, he could be given a subsidy such as is made available to tenants of the Austrian prefabricated homes whose rents were decreased by 10s. per week. If that were done, the responsibility would be placed on the right people.

The Bill proposes to set up a fair rents court. I think that Mr. Baxter explained the position very well last night when he proved that the set-up of the proposed court would be exactly the same as that of the local court today. I understand that the Government's idea would be that applications would be rushed through the court much more quickly than is the case today. Let me remind members, however, that tenants are sparing for time. The longer the delay in the hearing of applications in the court, the longer the time tenants have to find homes for themselves. So that breaks down one argument for the establishment of the court.

The proposal is to set up a court of three—a magistrate and two others. The two additional members would cancel each other, leaving the magistrate still to make the decision. I understand that the magistrate hearing these cases at present is handling them very satisfactorily. So why should we alter the position when there is no need to do so? Furthermore, the proposed court would deal with rents only,

and evictions would still have to be attended to in the local court. Consequently, I contend that the setting up of the court would be entirely useless and unnecessary.

Another portion of the Bill is that containing the retrospective provisions. I object to this, because they are set aside by Section 16 of the Interpretation Act, which states—

16. (1) Where any Act repeals or has repealed a former Act or any provisions or words thereof, or where any Act or enactment expires or has expired, then, unless the contrary intention appears, such repeal or expiry shall not—

- (a) revive anything not in force or existing at the time at which such repeal or expiry takes effect; or
- (b) affect the operation of the repealed or expired Act or enactment, or alter the effect of the doing, suffering, or omission of anything prior to such repeal or expiry.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: On a point of information, Mr. President, is the hon. member right in discussing the Bill in detail, when speaking to this amendment?

The PRESIDENT: I hope Mr. Logan will be able to couple his remarks to the amendment.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I have intended to do so all the way through in dealing with the amendment. I think that all other members who have spoken to the amendment have dealt with the Bill; that cannot be avoided because the amendment relates to the Bill. I am not dealing with any particular clause but covering quite a lot of the Bill as a whole, and I contend I am in order in mentioning the Interpretation Act and quoting from it.

I would suggest that the Government, in endeavouring to make this legislation retrospective, is adopting a very doubtful and dangerous procedure; especially when it means breaking contracts that have been made by mutual agreement. This Government has no right to say, "We are going to cast aside the Interpretation Act." I appeal to the Government not to carry on with that part of the Bill.

Much has been said about the good landlord and the avaricious landlord. I submit again that we offered the remedy for that in the April session; but, as members know, it was not accepted. It may be said that we put up arguments that were not acceptable to the Government, but it can also be said that the Government put up a Bill that was not acceptable to us. Amendments to it were carried in this House, disagreed to in another place, and then went to a conference. I think that when the result of a conference is negative, the onus must lie on the Government. There can be no other conclusion.

I also know, that, despite the efforts being made by the Labour Party to have restrictions placed upon the landlord, some members and friends of the Labour Party were the first, on the 1st May, to increase their rents. One would have thought that if they believed in the principles of the Labour Party they would have left their rents as they were, or would have increased them only by a fair amount; but, unfortunately, the instances given to me were rather unfair. So it seems that irrespective of party, people will grab whatever they possibly can. I hope that members of the Labour Party will realise that many of their members and supporters have raised rents.

The Minister for the North-West: Which members?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Members of the A.L.P.

The Chief Secretary: We do not protect them in this legislation, or exempt them.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The Minister can take it as he likes.

The Chief Secretary: They come under the Bill just the same as anyone else.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: We have been informed by the Chief Secretary that the rent inspectors, instead of doing their duty—it was the intention of this House that they should deal only with rooms—have been nosing into flats. In the course of a very short time, they have gone into 268 flats to check rents; and what they have found is that the increase, on the average, has been only 6½ per cent. If we go back to the 1939 basis, plus 32 per cent., we find that the 6½ per cent. is not very far out; so the tenants have not got much cause to complain.

To summarise the position, under the law as it is today the landlord has the right to evict his tenant on 28 days' notice; the landlord and the tenant have the right to agree between themselves what the rent shall be; the tenant has the right, if he is dissatisfied, to go to court, and we are quite prepared to concede that while the case is before the court the tenant must receive some protection. Also, today, the owner of a room has the right to charge what he likes subject, again, to the tenant's right to go to the rent inspector. I do not think we can growl about that feature. But why try to go back to 1950? Why try to bring in a fair rents court when it is unnecessary to do so? And why bring in this retrospective legislation, which will never have my sanction? On these three points alone the Government has not even made out a case.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: We have not spoken to the Bill yet.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: You will get an opportunity—perhaps!

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: We hope we will.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If members supporting the Government desire to speak to the second reading, all they have to do is to go to their Leader, the Chief Secretary, and say, "Let us be reasonable," and they will have the opportunity to speak on the second reading.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland—on amendment) [5.56]: I am not very pleased with the amendment as it stands. I agree, with others who have spoken, that there is a great need for changes in the Bill as presented to us. I wish to make a few observations in the hope that, as has been suggested, the Chief Secretary and his supporters may be reasonable and perhaps agree to something which would be acceptable to us.

I have opposed this type of legislation ever since I came into the House, and I feel very disposed that way at the present time. But I have heard others speak; and if things are as bad as they say—and some of the non-Labour members have said that certain requirements may be necessary—I am prepared at least to give a hearing to any reasonable suggestion that might be made.

I am not going to say now whether I shall support the amendment or not, because I am still hopeful that when the Chief Secretary replies he will intimate to the House that he can see virtue in what might perhaps be approved on this side of the House.

The Chief Secretary: I cannot reply.

Hon. A. R. JONES: There are ways of replying other than for the Chief Secretary to stand up in his place.

Hon. H. K. Watson: He has his Minister to assist him.

The Chief Secretary: The President would not allow me to.

The Minister for the North-West: Direct action is something you do not believe in.

Hon. A. R. JONES: With other members, I am not going to allow this opportunity to pass without making some reference to what was aimed at members on this side of the Chamber by Mrs. Hutchison last night, because I believe we are all human. I thought the hon. member's speech could be likened to the ranting of a lunatic. No wonder a person said to me the other day that he was jolly glad she no longer held her executive position in the Labour Party! I believe that Mr. Logan has cleared himself of the accusations she made, and I am hoping that before I finish she may think I am a little more humane.

I was born of a humble family; and, until six or seven years ago, I worked as hard as any man, and a lot harder than most. I have lived under hard conditions for the whole of my life—and not around the cities, either! I was one of the many thousands who went into the rural and out-back areas of the State to earn a living and to help provide city people with the wherewithal to live.

In company with others, I believe that I have played my part in an honourable way, and I do not think any man can say that I do not consider the other fellow. I mentioned previously that I have a tenant living in a house of mine; and, while I do not wish to take Mrs. Hutchison away for the week-end to show her this property, she is at liberty to visit Milng to see for herself. I have been fair to my tenant; in fact, I would say that no tenant in Western Australia has had a better go. So do not let us hear members say that we on this side are not reasonable, and that we have no feelings for our fellow beings! I trust that the hon. member will not throw out any more innuendoes or insinuations as she did last night.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: I was talking about the policy of your party, and I was not discussing personalities.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I believe the hon. member became personal.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: I did not. I talked about the policy of the L.C.L. and not about personalities.

Hon. L. Craig: No; you talked about members.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: I do not recall doing so.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Most members who have spoken to the amendment have made a second reading speech on the Bill—

The Chief Secretary: I am hoping that way.

Hon. A. R. JONES: But I would like to make a few observations before concluding. A lot has been said about the shortage of homes in Western Australia, and Mr. Lavery mentioned that 1,000 people were about to be evicted. The other night when Mr. Barker thought he was addressing us from the Kimberley Ranges, so loud was his voice, he said that there were 1,000 to 1,300 people who would be put out on the street.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Not literally. You know that I am not unreasonable.

Hon. A. R. JONES: In no way have people been thrown out of their homes. I believe that the people of this world are too good to want to do that to others. The other night I said that possibly 5 per cent. of tenants were bad, and about the same percentage of landlords were unscrupulous. That means that 95 out of every 100 tenants can be classed as good tenants, and 95 out of every 100 landlords are decent people.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Of course they are!

Hon. A. R. JONES: If we agree to the Bill, we will pass legislation which will affect only 5 per cent. of the community.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Lots of members on your side think control is necessary.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I believe that most of the 5 per cent. of the tenants are not worth considering; but having heard arguments both for and against, I am prepared

to agree that possibly there are 5 per cent. of bad landlords with whom we must deal, as we want some protection for the decent people. Admittedly, I have not been to some areas; but I drive round a good deal, and I have not seen any person in dire straits. I have seen removal vans shifting furniture from different houses. Only the other day I thought I would follow one van into which furniture was being loaded; I wanted to see if the people were being put out on the street. I followed this chap from the other end of Claremont to this side of Inglewood. The van backed into a house which was empty, and the furniture was unloaded. So it appears that the settling down period I mentioned some months ago is in progress. When a person moves from one house, he merely shifts somewhere else.

When we take into consideration that aspect plus what is happening on the basis of the fact supplied by Mr. Logan—that 65 new houses are made available by the Housing Commission every week—I fail to see how there can be such a shortage of houses as is claimed. I do not believe that, and I am sure the Government itself does not believe it, because it has done very little other than to build houses as fast as possible under the State housing scheme. However, if there had been an emergency, or a crisis, the Government could have built many more houses than it is erecting at present, though perhaps not of the same standard. It probably would have had to build houses which are regarded as substandard.

What is a substandard house, according to the measures used by the Government, and what is a decent house? As one travels around the State, one can see quite a number of Government employees housed in much worse places than those which the previous Government built for evicted persons. I could take the lady member of this House to Northam where, just before one enters the town, on the left-hand side, can be found possibly 50 or 60 homes—if one can call them that—occupied by Government employees. If the Government tries to tell us that it is interested in building only a good type of house, I will not believe it, because of the standard of houses I have seen occupied by those who work for the Government.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They are huts, not houses.

Hon. A. R. JONES: If the Government were so distressed about what is to happen in the future, it would not have worried about Mr. Graham's folly; namely, the huge block of flats in Subiaco. They will not be completed for quite a long time, and the Government could have gone ahead and built individual homes for the people. By the time these flats are completed, in about 12 or 18 months, many homes could have been built and occupied.

The Minister for the North-West: Would you apply that policy generally to flat-building?

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am not suggesting that flats should not be built at all. I like to see a person given the opportunity of owning a home. I think a certain number of flats are essential because, when people grow old, a flat is probably ideal for them. But I do not think that a flat is very suitable for the raising of a family. Therefore, as I have said, if the Government had been so concerned about the position, it would not have gone ahead with the flats at Subiaco, but would have built individual homes which would have been ready for occupation within two or three months.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Do you not like flats?

Hon. A. R. JONES: A great deal has been said about good and bad landlords. For the information of members, I would like to mention an experience I had only recently while I was on my trip to the North. At Darwin, I met some people who were on holiday. Mr. Barker met them, too. They had received an eviction order, and the 28 days' notice would expire before they returned to Perth. Naturally, they were extremely concerned, because they would have no opportunity to do anything about it, as they would be absent for a longer period than the 28 days. Knowing that I was returning by air from Port Hedland and would be in Perth before the expiration of the eviction order, they asked me if I would see the agent to ascertain whether anything could be done to stay the proceedings. Naturally, I told them I would do what I could.

When I approached the agent, he gave me the address of the owners, and I eventually found that they were a young couple who were paying a much higher rent than they were receiving for their own home. But they agreed to let the tenants occupy their house for a further two months, which would give them time to return to Perth and obtain other accommodation. Therefore, I consider that not much can be said by members opposite about those landlords. I have not heard any one of the members opposite tell us of any good landlord.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Oh yes! I did.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Not one of them quoted a specific case.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: I have told you many a time that I have a good landlord.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am pleased to hear the hon. member say that.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Mr. Logan is a good landlord, too.

Hon. A. R. JONES: If people are decent—and the whole question rests on that point—and their requests are reasonable,

no one wants to be a bad landlord. Mention has been made of landlords wearing a frown when people mention that they have children. In some cases, it is no wonder, because there is a wide diversity of types among people who rent homes.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Before tea, I was making an explanation concerning the various types of children landlords may expect to find in a family. It is very evident that some landlords are chary of letting premises to a family particularly if they have children. It is rather a pity that this state of affairs should exist. One cannot help feeling, however, that the landlord must take steps to protect his property. Some families, whether they own their homes, or whether they rent houses, look after them and keep them in good repair. But there are other types, which I venture to say would come within the category of the five per cent. I mentioned earlier, that would allow their children to run wilfully around the place and generally wreck it. This has been the experience of many of us. I have experienced it myself, and it was evident in a rental home I saw in Wongan Hills.

To a degree, the inhumanity that has been mentioned by some speakers can be understood when we come upon the type of people I have mentioned. It is something that cannot be avoided when renting a home. However, if steps were taken whereby a certain amount of rent was placed in a trust account to be spent on repairs, it might encourage people to look after the property which they were renting. If no repairs were found necessary, then the amount in the trust fund could be refunded to them.

If I had a property to let, I would invent something along those lines, because I feel sure it would encourage people to look after the property; if they did, the money would be refunded to them. If the landlords took that view they would, I am convinced, ensure better usage of their properties.

Some reference was made by members opposite to the fact that business premises were being erected, and that this was to some extent the cause of the shortage of homes. Admittedly, while men and materials are employed in erecting business houses, homes for occupation by families cannot be built.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: We must have our business houses.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am thankful to the hon. member for supplying that interjection. We must have our business houses. The Government cannot think so badly of them, because we find not only the Commonwealth Government, but also the State Government erecting business

premises. The Commonwealth Government is building several places, and is taking over an hotel and converting it into offices. Premises are being built out in Stirling-st.—this is to be a large workshop—and we know that our own State Government is commencing the erection of a State Insurance Office comprising seven or eight storeys.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: There are structures going up everywhere.

Hon. A. R. JONES: To me that is sufficient proof that the Government is not considerably worried about there being a crisis, or about there being a necessity to institute a wholesale stoppage of the building of all types of business premises. If the Government had been worried, it would have taken steps to prevent such premises being built, particularly the ones I have mentioned.

The question has been raised—I have raised it myself—of the necessity to look after people when they reach an age in life where they have little money and are unable to fend for themselves. I reiterate that this should be the obligation of the Government. It was admitted by Mrs. Hutchison the other night when she said that she had old people stopping with her and could no longer look after them. That is an admission from the Opposition that it is the Government's obligation to look after old people. We have claimed for many years that it should not be the obligation of the few individuals who have homes to rent to look after such people.

I would like to make one more suggestion which the Government may care to follow. It may not be possible to put it into operation quickly; but at least the Government could work on it, so that the ownership of homes, and the building of more homes, would be encouraged. In this connection, I would refer to something I mentioned three or four years ago. I might add that this is further proof of the fact that I have given the matter considerable thought and have viewed it from the human angle.

In 1952 I made a suggestion to the Government that, instead of paying the child endowment as we do at present, we should perhaps evolve a different system, whereby young people could be encouraged to own their homes, and also possibly to rear larger families. I intend to read a small extract from the speech I made in 1952 so that the Minister can put it to his Government with a view to bringing about something which I feel is most desirable. I quote from page 1108 of "Hansard" for the year 1952—

I understand that the growth of population in Australia represents about 2.8 per family. That is not high when we look back at the older families from which most of us came and realise that there were four, five,

six or even more children in each. Seeing that in 25 to 30 years the size of families has decreased to something like three children it seems that the time has come when something should be done.

There has been a shortage of houses and the cost of purchasing a home has increased greatly, and I think it would be better if the Commonwealth, instead of paying child endowment of 10s. per child per week, encouraged young couples to take a worker's home, so long as they could find the necessary deposit which might be 10 per cent. Then, when the first child arrived, a sum of £500 should be wiped off the capital cost of the house. Over a period of 16 years during which a mother receives 10s. a week child endowment, a total of £416 is paid, so that it would be necessary for the Government to find only a little extra money. When the second child arrived, another £500 could be credited against the cost of the house and so on until additions to the family had liquidated the capital cost or the parents paid off the small outstanding debt by weekly payments, I believe that such an idea has much to commend it and that it is worth investigating.

I believe that is the method by which we can encourage people, particularly young people, who find it difficult in these times to have a home built for them; and it would also encourage people to rear families. So I leave that thought with the Minister, who I understand is going to speak tonight—with a view to his seeing if he cannot do something to overcome what is claimed to be a shortage of houses. Particularly does it apply to the possibility of home ownership, something which we all feel is a necessity in this State and in the Commonwealth.

As I said previously, I shall reserve the right to do as I think fit if and when a division is called on the amendment. I hope to hear every member in this Chamber make a contribution to the debate, for I feel we have something before us which we must not treat lightly. We must give the matter the consideration we gave it in the past. I am only hopeful that the Government on this occasion will take note of what we have said, and all we are prepared to offer, and see whether we cannot come to some reasonable terms and make a really good, fair, and equitable arrangement which will suit everybody, protect the people who need protection, and visit judgment on those who, in our opinion, are not doing justice to decent citizens.

HON. R. J. BOYLEN (South-East—on amendment) [7.43]: I intend to oppose this amendment because I think that if it is carried this House will be adopting a most undemocratic attitude towards a Bill

brought in by the Government. The least we can do is to give it some consideration. I know that most members in speaking to the amendment have really made a second reading speech on the Bill. I do not begrudge them their doing that at all; because, if the Bill is defeated, they will not have the opportunity to express their views.

I think it is only fair that we should give the Bill our consideration. The Government went to great pains to draw up the measure. It has taken the matter so seriously that this is not the first occasion that Bills of a similar nature have been introduced into this House and in another place.

It was pleasing to hear Mr. Jones say that he was reserving his vote until he had heard the opinions of other speakers. I hope that applies to other members of the Opposition, and that they will not decide on how to vote until they have heard all the speakers during this debate. It is not very democratic, when a Government brings in a Bill, to throw it out without giving it every consideration. I hope that all members will speak on this debate and not make up their minds beforehand as to how they will vote.

Hon. L. Craig: Does that apply to members on your side?

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: That applies to me as well. I have had an opportunity of studying the Bill, and we are giving members opposite an opportunity to do the same. We hope that they will be as honest in their vote as we are in ours. We introduced the Bill because we believe in it.

Hon. L. Craig: Will each member on your side reserve his decision as to how he will vote?

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: They will reserve their decisions, but I must say that we have had an opportunity of studying the Bill. Members opposite have not had the opportunity, and they seem to have made up their minds without listening to what has to be said. I know that I told members what I am going to do. That is because I have had a chance of studying the Bill; but members opposite have not.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Do you suppose we have been sleeping?

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: Members have done that in the past. It will be no exception on this occasion. I hope members will not speak on the debate with the idea of throwing the Bill out. It would not have been introduced if the Government had not been denied the opportunity of passing similar Bills in April and December last.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: You had an opportunity in April.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: We had an opportunity of studying the suffering caused by the lack of conscience on the part of some members of this House. We have heard that many scurrilous remarks have been

made by the communists regarding the Legislative Council. Communists are quite entitled to make scurrilous remarks about anybody; but I would say that the scurrilous remarks about the Legislative Council and the Government were made by the Liberal Party. This Government has been elected by the people; and when it introduces legislation, some members on the opposite side of the House are not prepared to give consideration to that legislation. That is a most undemocratic attitude. I think it amounts almost to a communistic attitude. Any Liberal who subscribes to that attitude is subscribing to communism.

Hon. H. Hearn: You mean he will be a fellow-traveller.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: Yes. The proposed legislation will not be with us for all time. The position may be relieved in two years. In the words of Mr. Jones, some arrangement should be made whereby young married couples may be provided with houses. Sir Charles Latham told us he knew of girls who were living in rooms, getting their own breakfast and going to work afterwards. Those girls have not the opportunity to live in any other way. I know if I were a young man I would not like to live under such conditions. There is no reason why such a position cannot be changed. Probably many girls who live in rooms today cannot contemplate marriage on account of their inability to obtain homes.

Speaking about immigration, Mr. Teahan said it was essential in this country. But I should say that a native-born Australian is much to be preferred; and that can be encouraged by offering young people the opportunity of marrying, of owning homes, and of rearing families. By so doing we will be carrying out something dear to the hearts of all Australians—that is, having a "White Australia" as far as possible.

If the Government were trying to put this measure on the statute book of Western Australia for all time, there might be some justification for opposing it. There are many reasons why it is necessary to have the legislation as a temporary measure. Since the war, there has naturally been an increase in population. With the influx of migrants, the demand for houses has grown. By the passage of this type of legislation, we will alleviate at least for two or three years, the suffering which is prevalent. The proposed Bill may cause a little hardship to a small section of the community, but that suffering will be shortlived. If we defeat the Bill, it will entail suffering on the part of many people at the hands of those landlords who are not fair.

So I would ask members to regard this measure with open minds; to support the second reading; and to give us the opportunity of trying

out this legislation for two years so that the people of Western Australia can be housed properly and those with bigger families will not have to suffer the rigours they will have to face if the Bill is defeated.

I intend to oppose the amendment, and I hope other members will do the same and adopt a democratic attitude towards the legislation introduced by the elected Government of the people. I do not think there is very much doubt about public opinion on this matter. The public spoke quite clearly when they rejected four Liberal members of this Council and replaced them with four Labour members. The public had not previously taken such a step in the 50 years' life of this House. On this occasion the step was taken, not because the public disliked the defeated candidates, but because of their attitude on a matter which they considered vital to themselves and to their relatives.

If a referendum on the issue were held tomorrow, I have no doubt at all how the people would vote. They elected the Government, and we should bear in mind that they recently elected four additional Labour members to this House. If an election were held tomorrow for the whole of the members of this House, I am satisfied that there would be a great difference in the representation. I oppose the amendment.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West—on amendment) [7.50]: I did not intend to speak on the amendment, but I do not think it would be wise to allow this debate to end now. There is not a great deal of difference between the desires of members supporting the Government and those on this side of the House. If we examined the views of each member closely, we would find that fundamentally their ideas in regard to the protection of tenants and the control of rents were very close indeed. In fact I say there is very little difference. The question that arises is as to the method by which that end shall be attained.

I have been glad to note the attitude adopted by most of the members who have spoken. It is quite clear that abusive rhetoric and theatrical display do not have much effect in this House. Such an attitude antagonises listeners, as was apparent after a certain speech had been made last night. I should like to mention also the good impression Mr. Teahan created by the careful and moderate language he used in his speech. If every member would approach this subject by logic instead of by abuse, we would do very much better with our legislation.

In the 20 years that I have been a member of this House, I have never known soap-box oratory or abuse or unfair criticism to carry any weight. In my early years in Parliament, Mr. Drew was the Leader of the House, and in all the years I knew

him here, he never abused anyone, and I know of no Minister who has been as capable as he was in getting measures passed through this House. His arguments were always logical, and when he had stated them, he was content to stop.

I was very pleased to feel the reaction the other night after certain speeches had been made. There was a spurt of antagonism, the like of which I had not witnessed in this Chamber in all my 20 years, due to the threats uttered by our lady member, the first lady to be elected to this Chamber. I am sure that that was due to her being new to Parliamentary debate, and that she did not mean it. She has a reputation for her good social work, and I feel sure that in time she will appreciate the wisdom of the words uttered by a former Minister, Hon. H. Millington, who started his political life in this House, and finished by being indispensable to any Ministry formed by the Labour Party. On several occasions he was the Acting Premier.

Many years ago he said to me, "I started my political life in the Legislative Council. On being returned to Parliament, I was full of zeal and energy, and was actuated by a desire to reform the place. I was quite satisfied in my mind that it was the one place in Western Australia that needed reform, and my desire was to reform it; but would you believe it that within two years, I was a reformed character." This, I hope, will be the experience of all members who come to this House and I trust that they will not regard it as a place in which to antagonise other members. I know of no place where logical speeches are better received than they are here, or where the attitude adopted by members generally is so uniformly good.

Now I must revert to the amendment before the Chair. Mr. Watson has devoted a lot of study to the Bill, and his intention in moving the amendment was not to defeat the measure. We must accept that as a true statement—his objective was not to defeat the Bill.

The Minister for the North-West: Then why did he move the amendment?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Let the Minister wait a moment. We have seen both in this House and in another place the result of a Bill being introduced that needed to be amended, in our opinion, so drastically that it became a major operation, and by the time it reached a conference of managers, the spirit of compromise had disappeared completely. The representatives of the two sides went to conference, each opposed on principle to the other side. In other words, they were not prepared to give away anything, and the meaning of "compromise" is to come together and to give away something.

The object of Mr. Watson's amendment is to induce the Government to bring in a Bill that will be somewhat in line with the views it knew would be adopted by this

House, or at least to include in the measure provisions that would enable us to discuss the main principles. The main objective of the Bill is, firstly, to stop undue evictions—we cannot hope to stop them entirely—so that the Government will be in a position to cater for the people who are evicted. My opinion is that some tenants deserve to be evicted, not because they have failed to pay their rent, but because they are not fit to occupy decent houses. No member will deny that.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: There are not many of them.

Hon. L. CRAIG: There are very few. I have not entirely neglected to study the Bill, in spite of what Mr. Boylen said, but have made inquiries to assist me to arrive at a just decision. Members on this side of the House possess as much of the milk of human kindness as do members supporting the Government. We must be given credit for that. If each member would regard the other as having as much commonsense and humanity in his composition as he himself has, we would get along very much better.

Some people will be evicted from their homes, and, in many instances, the owners of those properties have been waiting for years for an opportunity to get those tenants out of their houses. Perhaps some of those tenants may be unjustly treated, but bitterness is engendered when a landlord has a bad tenant who breaks the windows and knocks the place about. In such cases, the objective of the landlord would be to get the tenant out of the house.

On the other hand, there are some unconscionable landlords, greedy people, who perhaps have led hard lives and are not imbued with the milk of human kindness for which we look. Such landlords, I am satisfied, are few in number. Every member has in view the objective of preventing unfair evictions and of curbing the unjust landlord. The question is, how shall we do it? There are not so many of these people to be dealt with.

Let me quote some figures from an authentic source supplied by an institution that collects rents. These figures deal with 900 tenants. The rent of every one has been raised, and those that were carrying a low rental were raised very considerably. Some of them, not many, were doubled. Of the 900 tenants, those who refused to pay the increases asked numbered three, and I have been informed that they have since voluntarily left the premises they were occupying. Perhaps it was to evade eviction, but I do not know. Three out of 900 refused to pay. That is not many. Those who paid under protest were two out of 900 houses.

The Minister for the North-West: Nine hundred houses?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, 900 places from which rents are collected. There might be some flats among them, but I did not ask. There were ten evictions, of which eight were brought about because the tenants were undesirable, so the rent did not come into the picture with them. They were people who would be evicted under any circumstances if the law permitted it. This is a clear indication to me that we have not a great many cases to deal with. I believe that if we go back to the old standards of this House and try to arrive at an understanding, calmly and without theatrical rhetoric or abuse, we will arrive at a sensible solution and so get somewhere. That is the objective of Mr. Watson's amendment and not the defeat of the Bill. I believe it is true that he put it to the Government that the Government should introduce amendments itself so as to bring the measure more into line with what it must know would be acceptable to this House and so ease its passage here.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: How can he do that by this amendment?

Hon. L. CRAIG: If the Government brings in its own amendments and they are acceptable, Mr. Watson will withdraw his amendment. He has already promised that.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: It does not say that.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The Chief Secretary has been told, and he knows it.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: I do not know.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The hon. member should go into conference with his party, or he will be on the outer.

The Minister for the North-West: The House has not been told that that is what is meant.

Hon. L. CRAIG: No; but Mr. Watson did mention it in his speech. There was never any doubt in my mind about the position. There is not one member on this side of the House who wants controls entirely removed. It is of no use accusing people of being harsh, hard, and bitter.

The Minister for the North-West: One member wants a pool of homeless people.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Who does?

The Minister for the North-West: One member of this House.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The Minister must have misunderstood him.

The Minister for the North-West: You did not listen to his speech last night.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Nobody wants that.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I never heard it.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I have discussed the position with individual members on the other side, and individually they are not unreasonable. There is a bit of compromise on both sides; but members on this side

are speaking to a block vote always. There is not one member on the other side that ever opposes any Bill introduced by his Government.

Hon. H. L. Roche: They are not deviationists.

Hon. L. CRAIG: There is something in unity and discipline. Members on the other side do not have to look at Bills introduced by their Government.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We are loyal.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Call it loyalty, or subservience or whatever the hon. member likes. It is a matter of opinion, and I am not growling about it. There is discipline in the hon. member's party.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Yes, but when an amendment is put up which distinctly says that the Bill shall not be read a second time, what else can we think it means?

Hon. L. CRAIG: The hon. member must read the whole story. He should never jump to conclusions too early. When he reaches early middle age, as I have done, he will find that is so.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: I fail to see how the House can consider any amendments to the Bill while this amendment of Mr. Watson's is in the way.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: The amendment has been a mistake altogether.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members must allow Mr. Craig to proceed.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not want to get into a controversy with the hon. member, much as I like talking with him. As long as tempers do not get frayed and members do not get too adamant and sure that everything they think is correct, I feel that we may get somewhere. Each of us has his views, which are subject to modification by the logic of someone else. If we can approach this matter on these lines I am quite sure that something can be made of the Bill which will provide for two things—and they are the only things to my mind that matter—and the first is: undue evictions. We should provide for them to be handled by the authorities. I personally would give power to the fair rents court or a magistrate—I would constitute a fair rents court with a magistrate or second magistrate to do the job—to extend the periods of eviction so as to cushion the flood that is expected. That would get over the trouble of evictions, and the main problem is that of evictions.

The second requirement is that when unfair rents are charged, the tenant shall have the right to approach a tribunal—probably the fair rents court, or the magistrate in charge of the fair rents court—for a fair and reasonable rent. If the magistrate decided that the landlord had been unconscionable by charging a rent vastly above the true value—80 per cent. is probably a fair figure—then I would say that the tenant should have the right to

live in the house at the lower rent for 12 months. Those are the two principles that would get over all the present difficulties, and I believe we can compromise on those lines. I support the amendment.

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North—on amendment) [8.8]: I was very interested in Mr. Craig's contribution to the debate, but I cannot convince myself that this amendment was placed on the notice paper with the simple intention of not wanting to defeat the Bill. The mover of the amendment has, ever since I have been in this Chamber, always opposed, rigidly and solidly, any controls of rents or tenancies, although he has compromised in conference. He has, to my mind, been the voice of the Liberal Party on these matters, and he has led the debate on every occasion. To say an amendment such as this would be placed on the notice paper for any purpose other than to take very swift action to defeat the measure is, in my opinion, too far-fetched altogether.

Hon. L. Craig: Would it not have been better to vote against the second reading?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Much easier, rather than take direct action—and this is direct action. The amendment says—

Inasmuch as this House is of opinion that, in order to ensure fair rents and full justice and equity for both landlords and tenants—

—it declines to give the Bill a second reading. That is what it means, and all the other phrases in the amendment are merely to mislead the people. The amendment says that the Opposition wants the present legislation to exist and be carried on. There is no suggestion there of amendment, and no opportunity is given for this House to consider the Bill in Committee, if the amendment is agreed to—absolutely none! That would be the end of the Bill; and where, may I ask, is the compromise there?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You can amend an amendment.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The amendment reads, further—

(with such precise additional precautionary and temporary safeguards in Sections 13 and 20B of the principal Act as may be deemed necessary—)

How can we fit these provisions into an Act if we vote for an amendment such as this, which says that the Bill shall not be given a second reading?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You must read the Preamble.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The Preamble is an afterthought; something for the public to look at. The question before this House is, "That this

House declines to give the Bill a second reading," and every member knows very well that a Bill cannot be amended until it has passed the second reading. Therefore, the amendment is just what it was meant to be, a swift short cut to defeat the proposition which the Government has put before this Chamber. There is not the slightest doubt about that.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You can move to delete those words now, if you wish to.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I am speaking of the amendment that is before the House, and of its intention. I know what the Standing Orders allow us to do, and I am not debating that question but am dealing with this amendment and what it means. I have told the House exactly what it means.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Surely the explanation given by the mover of the amendment must have thrown some light on his intentions!

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I heard only the opening remarks of Mr. Watson when moving the amendment, but that would make no difference. Here is the amendment, and its intention is plain. It is not what we say, but what we do, that counts; and here is the amendment on the notice paper. I repeat that this is direct action. It states, "This, or else," because we know very well that the mover has sufficient numbers behind him to say, "or else!" If the amendment were agreed to, the effect would be that the 28 days' notice would apply to all tenants. It is all very well to say they could go to the court, but they might have to wait some time to get there, and the 28 days could elapse before the case was heard. If agreed to, the amendment would mean that, since the 1st May, anyone coming to this country—even anyone not living within Australia—could purchase property and give the tenant 28 days' notice. That is what it means; and that is what, in fact, is going on. Syndicates are buying terraces of houses and are emptying the tenants out.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Whereabouts?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: There are some in Hooper-st., West Perth.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: But other tenants must be going in.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Yes; but I would draw attention to the fact that prior to the 1st May of this year a New Australian, or anyone coming from another country, had to live in Australia for at least two years, and must have owned the premises for at least six months before he could take action, and then had to give six months' notice, making 12 months in all. What the Bill proposes is to bring that provision back into operation, but to reduce the period to three months.

Under the legislation as it exists at the moment, someone living outside Australia can buy a business or living accommodation here and, in 28 days, get rid of the tenant. A person has only to ask too much rent, and by the time the tenant gets to the court, the 28 days' notice has expired. In my opinion, that was one of the most important provisions of the legislation that expired on the 1st May, and we propose now to bring it back into operation. Is there anything unfair in that?

It is proposed that there shall be some easement, also, and I repeat that there is nothing unfair in the proposition that the Government has placed before this Chamber. It provides for a fair rents court, and for the amount of rent which Opposition members in this House placed in the legislation. We do not wish to restrict it, and so there is provision for 8 per cent. net return.

Some members said that the legislation would discourage private enterprise from building, but of course that is not correct. It might apply in some cases; but, by and large, the statement is not correct, because we know that there are private builders building hundreds of houses per year, and they are quite satisfied with their returns.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Yes; but they sell them. They never let them.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: They are private builders, and the hon. member said the legislation would discourage private builders.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: For letting purposes.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Letting was not mentioned. It was a matter of private building, and the hon. member said—as have other members—that the number of residences being built by private builders is not so great now as it was perhaps two years ago.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Last year.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Or even last year. That may be so, but there is reason for it. Members know very well that one of the first decisions that the Minister for Housing made, on taking office, was to ease and lift building restrictions as far as possible. In fact, he removed practically the lot. Only some months ago it was necessary to place a restriction on the distribution of bricks owing to the rate at which industrial and commercial buildings were being erected. Naturally it was the private builders who turned to that type of work, and therefore not so many houses were being erected. That is undeniable; it is a fact. Everybody knows that building restrictions have been lifted and permits are no longer necessary. That is what Mr. Graham did almost as soon as he assumed

office. In conjunction with the Chief Secretary, the Minister for Housing has proposed these amendments to the present legislation because, as I have already indicated, it is wide open.

We do not want to be harsh or inhuman to landlords, or to anybody else. But the Government thinks it necessary that we should pass a measure such as this to ensure that there will not be a flood of homeless people thrust upon the Government whose responsibility it will be to house them. It will be the Government's responsibility irrespective of what Government is in power, and we do not want people to be evicted in such large numbers that it will be impossible for us to cope with the position. The Bill will help us to overcome that problem.

Hon. L. Craig: What about the retrospective provisions?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: They will apply only to the avaricious landlord; a landlord is allowed 8 per cent. net, plus his outgoings.

Hon. L. Craig: Yes; but any increases would not apply.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: That would affect very few people—probably those dealing in small businesses and so on. The amendment moved by Mr. Watson is not the way to deal with the problem. The parliamentary procedure is to deal with these clauses during the Committee stage; they should be amended in the proper place. That has always been the procedure in a British Parliament.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You do not think that a Bill should be rejected on the second reading?

Hon. L. Craig: It is common practice in England.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I have heard members say that they do not wish to reject the Bill; they have said that Mr. Watson does not wish to reject it.

Hon. L. Craig: That is true, too.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: It is a funny way of expressing one's intentions; and, if I remember Mr. Watson's opening remarks correctly, he said that he considered the Government was issuing a challenge to this House, and that it should be met in the appropriate manner. Those may not be his exact words, but that is the meaning he conveyed. I have already explained to members what the effect will be if this amendment is agreed to. But if the Bill is passed, new Australians will be prevented from coming into this country and immediately evicting Australians from the homes they are occupying. Some new Australians might not have the money to buy houses but syndicates buy them; and it

is only reasonable that the Government should endeavour to pass legislation which will give protection to our people.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Are not new Australians entitled to homes?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: They are all entitled to homes. No one begrudges them homes; but I do not know of any of them who are not in homes. The point is that they are buying houses, and they will buy them in such large numbers that the Housing Commission will be unable to cope with the evictees. We have proved that. The Chief Secretary told the House that in the six or seven weeks following the 1st May this year over 600 people received notices to quit and registered with the State Housing Commission. All those who have received notices have not registered with the commission. As Mr. Craig has told us, some people have found other accommodation for themselves, because they did not want to be bothered with going to the Housing Commission.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Do you suggest that we stop immigration until we catch up with the housing position?

Hon. G. Bennetts: It would be a good idea.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: That is a different question altogether. I think migrants should be permitted to enter this country in such numbers as can be accommodated. I am not opposed to migrants coming here, but I am opposed to the present legislation which allows a person, whether he is in the country or not, to buy a house or business and, after giving 28 days' notice, to obtain possession. Members should give plenty of consideration to that aspect. One member who spoke last night said that we needed a pool of homeless people. I am pretty certain that I heard correctly, and the hon. member explained to the House that we must have a certain number of homeless people or the builders would all be out of work.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Who said that?

Hon. L. C. Diver: I said that some should always want homes.

Hon. L. Craig: The Minister has misinterpreted it.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member will read it in "Hansard."

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is not a very good reply. No such statement was made.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I did not want to mention names, but Mr. Diver propounded that theory last night.

Hon. L. C. Diver: I said, "Who wanted homes." They should always be wanting homes.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member went on to tell us why he thought that that position should exist. He said that if the position were otherwise the building industry would collapse.

Hon. L. Craig: You have placed the wrong interpretation upon his remarks.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I have not read the speech, and my ears may have let me down.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: You know very well that the hon. member did not mean that there should be a pool of homeless.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: The Minister is quite correct in what he says.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I think that is what it means. A comparison was made between the rent charged by the State Housing Commission and that charged by private owners. I have already explained that the Act as it stood did, and the Bill if it is agreed to will allow 8 per cent. net on present-day values. That is fair enough. The average rental charged by the State Housing Commission is £2 17s. per week and some odd pence, and its gross return is 6½ per cent. per annum.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Which you will admit the landlord did not get for a long time until you introduced some amendments.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: The rate of returns ranged from 2 per cent. to 8 per cent., but 8 per cent. was the maximum.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: There is a range which the fair rents court could take into consideration. The hon. member's statement is quite correct. It ranged from 2 per cent. to 8 per cent. In these days when investments show a return of 8 per cent. on, say, shareholdings, I do not know of any court that could assess a return at a lower figure.

The State Housing Commission has been criticised for the rentals it has charged; but when they are compared with others, it will be found that they are fair and reasonable. As I have said, they show a gross return of 6½ per cent. per annum, and they are governed by a Commonwealth-State agreement. If the average rent for a whole house is £2 17s. odd per week, let us compare that with the figure mentioned by Sir Charles Latham, who told us of a young lady he knows who was very pleased to pay £2 per week for one room.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And breakfast.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Very well. And breakfast. However, I understood the hon. member to tell us that she had her meals uptown.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I did not say that. That is why I told you they paid that rental for a room; because they would not have to get their own breakfast.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: We will assess the breakfast at 5s. That is still 35s. a week for one room.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Five shillings a week for breakfast!

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Five shillings.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: A week!

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I do not know what type of breakfast a person would get in a room; but in my experience such a breakfast has not been very great, especially in the Eastern States, where food is more expensive than it is here. The breakfast I was given would not be worth more than 5s. a week; that is, a cup of tea and a biscuit.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Five shillings a week! There are seven days in a week and that means seven breakfasts.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: A cup of tea and a biscuit is the average working girl's breakfast. Returning to the amendment, I again impress upon the House that if it is carried it will mean the defeat of the legislation that the Government is proposing to implement. If the Bill is considered and studied carefully, I think that fair-minded members, at any rate, will agree that it is just legislation and has not been put up as a political football, as has been suggested. It has been introduced to Parliament because it is thought essential and extremely necessary.

Reference was made to the Subiaco flats project. I remember that shortly after it was first mooted we met in this Chamber, and there was great interest shown in that proposal. That, again, is supposed to be a political stunt or a political football.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Experiment.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Actually, it did become a political football and a stunt.

The Chief Secretary: Tell Sir Charles what the Subiaco Council said.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: It did become just that. Anybody who has read the Press articles on the subject knows what happened. Members know that Liberal Party supporters scurried to Canberra to do everything possible to prevent those flats being financed. That is common knowledge, and it has been published in the Press for everyone to read. The public knows very well that those people were successful in achieving their objective. Why? Not because they begrudge two-unit families these flats. Not for that reason at all! We know why. It

was because they knew that the more they could embarrass the Government on its housing problem the better it would be for them.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Is it correct that you resumed five houses for the purpose of erecting garages for those flats?

Point of Order.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Mr. President, on a point of order, I am sure that these utterances by the Minister are irrelevant to the debate, and are certainly not helping to foster the attitude which generally exists in this House.

The Minister for The North-West: The member who just resumed his seat was the one who referred to the Subiaco flats earlier this evening. In fact, they have been referred to by several members during this debate. As they are linked with housing and the Government's effort to house those people who are in need of homes, I see no reason why I should be denied the right to express my opinion.

The President: The Minister is quite in order.

Debate Resumed.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Sir Charles Latham accused the Government of overriding the Subiaco Council.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is true.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I would like to read a letter from that Council to the Minister for Housing.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What is the date of it?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The 12th August, 1953. It reads—

Dear Sir,

Re Building Project.

I have been instructed to advise you that at a special meeting held last evening my Council approved in full of the plan and the project outlined by your good self, Mr. Telfer and Mr. Krantz. I have also to thank you for the courtesy of your visit and the clear and concise statement of the proposals.

Yours faithfully,

A. Bower,
Town Clerk.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What happened subsequently?

The Chief Secretary: Yes, after the political machine got into action!

Hon. C. H. Simpson: No, after they received an assurance that in spite of their objections the Government would still go on with it.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: That is the letter, and it is clear and concise. I do not know what influences got to work subsequently.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But you do know that the Council subsequently raised objection to the proposal, and that its objection was overridden.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think the Minister is entitled to a fair hearing.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I have a newspaper cutting here which shows that a letter published by the Press is headed, "Subiaco City Council Somersaults on Flats." That is the only explanation I can give to the hon. member.

To revert to the Bill and what the amendment means to this legislation, I think members should be as fair as they claim they will be and defeat this amendment. They should give the Government's legislation an opportunity of being placed on the statute book. It will not interfere with rentals; it will curb the avaricious landlord and prevent people from being evicted wholesale under that section which, as I have explained, expired on the 1st May. That said that anybody entering this country—or for that matter not entering the country—could purchase a property and evict the tenants within 28 days. This legislation was the proposal of the previous Government in 1951, and was put into the Act for that very purpose; namely, to stop wholesale evictions which would take place unless some brake was put on the purchase and possession of houses. It was no doubt put in for the very same reason that we want it put in, because the previous Minister for Housing would have been experiencing exactly the same circumstances as the present Minister for Housing will experience unless some brake is placed upon the number of evictions which must follow. I sincerely hope the House will reject the amendment.

Personal Explanation.

Hon. L. C. Diver: I would ask your permission under Standing Order 383, Mr. President, to make a personal statement.

The President: The hon. member has my permission.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Thank you, Mr. President. The Minister for the North-West said that in my speech last evening I stated that it was desirable to have a pool of homeless people and that I added that this was necessary. I made no such statement. I did say that it was very necessary to have people who wanted homes, for the very reason that if we did not have such a state of affairs, the displacement of workmen in the building industry would be very great and there would be a far greater difficulty facing the Government than there is today.

Debate Resumed.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Ninth Day.

Debate resumed from the 13th July.

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [8.45]: On rising to speak on the Address-in-reply to His Excellency's Speech, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the distinguished position you now occupy. I trust you may derive enjoyment in the discharge of the many duties you will be called upon to perform. To those new members who have taken their seats with us for the first time, I offer my congratulations, and in time I hope to gain their lasting friendship and confidence.

Our great wheat industry is once more facing a most uncertain future, and a very serious state of affairs can quite easily develop, especially if the State and Commonwealth Ministers for Agriculture fail to agree on a marketing plan or stabilisation scheme for wheat. If such a position does arise, not only will the wheatgrower suffer, but the whole financial structure of this State will be affected. Disagreement by the gentlemen referred to would affect many workers far removed from the wheatgrowing industry. Mark my words, Mr. President, it would necessitate a realignment of many Utopian ideas that prevail today among men and women in all walks of life! For the sake of all concerned, I sincerely trust agreement will be reached.

Together with that difficulty which may arise, we must also consider our State transport systems, particularly the railways. Over the past few years there have been considerable increases in freight. We did hope the railways would have been rehabilitated in the years of prosperity and high freight rates, and that we would have been given cheaper freights in the days when the prices of rural commodities fell. At present, it would appear that that state of affairs will not be realised. We are not getting that efficiency in the transport of our goods which we might expect, in spite of all the new engines and rollingstock that the Railway Department has today. I have in mind one instance with which I was closely associated, and for which I can vouch.

A combine was consigned from the Maylands railway station to Kellerberrin; and, coinciding with the despatch of that piece of machinery, a letter-card was sent notifying its despatch and asking if we at the other end would expedite the turn-around of the railway truck. On five separate days the railway station was contacted, and on each occasion we were informed that no machine had arrived for us. Seven days after it was consigned from Maylands, it arrived at Kellerberrin. I think that sort of thing is a farce, particularly when we are sent a letter-card asking us to expedite the turn-around of a railway truck, which took seven days to arrive at Kellerberrin from Maylands.

Hon. A. R. Jones: You are lucky; it is generally seven weeks.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I cannot see any luck in it. I believe in the railways and I would support them as much as I could if we received the service we are reasonably entitled to expect. I do not bring freight of any consequence to the metropolitan area by motor truck. All my freight is consigned through the railways. I would urge my fellow farmers to do likewise. But, in turn, we do expect and insist that the Railway Department should give service.

While on the subject of railways, it would appear that the time is not distant when there might have to be a readjustment of freight rates, for it is going to become a very serious problem if we have no wheat stabilisation plan. There are men on farming properties today who can quite easily eliminate the unprofitable business of wheatgrowing and make a reasonable living by just growing wool. That may be all right to the farmers individually, but it could have a profound effect on the lives of many of the people in the State. I would ask the Government to be very careful about this matter and request the Minister for Railways to bring about a reduction of freight rate for wheat at the earliest opportunity.

Hon. G. Bennetts: What about mining equipment?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I would have thought the hon. member would attend to the requirements of mining when he made his speech.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I did.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I agree with the hon. member's statement. The question of freight rate is infinitely more important to wheat farmers. At present, for every penny of freight paid for mining equipment, there would be a hundred times as much paid in wheat freight. The lifeblood of the railway system is derived from wheat freights. Even if 50 per cent. of the farmers were to reduce wheatgrowing substantially, the effect on the railway economy of the State would be terrific.

Another problem which faces the State is salt encroachment on agricultural soil. This problem is of great importance and warrants considerable expense in order to regain the productivity of the affected land. The area of land thus lost to production from this cause would amount to scores of thousands of acres in the wheat belt, and the vast majority of that land would be termed our best growing soil; for the great bulk of the salt-affected land is adjacent to our great salt lake systems, and it necessarily follows that the land was originally timbered with salmon gum, gimlet, mallee, with a sprinkling of morrell. It is excellent soil, especially in the central wheatgrowing districts. We must realise that these thousands of acres were cleared

and fenced, but are now lost to productivity through the encroachment of salt. That in itself is a tremendous economic loss to our State. We should attempt to find a method to regain the productivity of that soil, and it is necessary for a lot of time and a huge sum of money to be expended to find out the best way to reclaim it.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Is there any work being done in that direction in your district?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: Yes. At present the Commissioner of Soil Conservation has one officer employed on carrying out experiments in this regard. In so doing, he has two different types of salt encroachment to contend with. I have mentioned one previously; that is, of land adjacent to the salt-lake systems where salt spreads over the flats. The other type occurs in undulating country with creeks running through and where there is salt seepage brought about by the underlay of the soil. With heavy winter rain and the water coming to the surface and on the sides of formation, the water seeping up is evidently laden with salt content. The department has made considerable progress in its experiments. I would suggest that anyone interested get in touch with the department to obtain some of the salt-tolerant couch grass which has been developed. This will assist in converting salt land into grass land.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Did you see the salt grass I brought down to the University?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I saw it; but I was not aware that the hon. member brought it down. While the department is carrying out some research into this problem, it is not doing it to as great an extent as the position warrants. I feel attempts should be made to drain some of our salt-lake systems. I do not mean that we should tackle the whole lot, but let us spend £30,000 to £40,000 in draining one such system and studying the effect. I think it is worth while. With scores of thousands of acres affected in the wheatbelt, the expenditure of £40,000 is a mere fleabite. If this land can be reclaimed, the cost spread over the whole will be negligible per acre. We have to try to find some means to overcome the salt encroachment.

While we have a different problem in Western Australia as compared with that in Holland, the fact which struck me was that in Holland, with a comparatively light dressing of gypsum, they were able to overcome much of the salt problem. I realise that the rainfall in Holland is considerably higher than that in Western Australia, but I also realise that in Holland there are no big deposits of gypsum adjacent to their land such as we have in Western Australia.

We have tremendous deposits of gypsum right in the lake areas to which I am referring, and if it could be proved that even heavy dressings would overcome, or partly overcome, the problem, we should be getting a long way ahead. Apart from the experimental tests, which might be expensive to a Government department, once we found out whether these gypsum deposits could be used beneficially, farmers would discover ways of doing it much more cheaply than a Government department could do it. A department would probably carry on under a 40-hour week basis, but a farmer is not restricted by any such limitation regarding hours once he gets to work with his machine. I realise that every one of these potential deposits of gypsum for dressing the soil would have to be analysed to ensure that it carried no other mineral likely to create another problem, but it is an angle that should be explored in this State.

I wish now to refer to water supplies in our inland areas, and when I speak of these areas, I have in mind those tracts of land that will be outside the scope of the proposed comprehensive water scheme. I consider that the time is past for giving mere lip service; it is time we secured big boring plants and made tests at depths of 1,000 or 1,500ft. in the north-east wheatbelt in order to find out what lies beneath. Only in recent years have we discovered that the reports of geologists on probable oil-bearing country many years ago have been upset when the practical test of boring was applied.

I hope that the Minister for Agriculture will, at the earliest opportunity—he should exert great effort to make the opportunity—obtain the necessary finance from Cabinet, with the assistance of the Chief Secretary, so that test bores at great depth may be put down. I have heard it claimed that when water is struck in the lower Murchison district, at depth, it is always flowing towards the south-west. Geologists tell us that the whole of the area of which I am speaking has a granite base, and I believe that if we penetrated the granite, we would find big stores of water. If such proved to be the case, it would be of untold benefit to our agricultural areas.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: It would be very unusual to find it below granite.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: The hon. member is now bearing out the point I am making that too much is taken for granted. It was refreshing to hear that the programme of work on main roads will be quite extensive this year. I wish to appeal to the Minister for Works, through the Chief Secretary, to provide for the completion of that section of main road on the Dowerin-Merredin route between Wyalkatchem and Trayning. A length of about 25 miles remains to be finished. I must concede that

the Main Roads Department has been doing a little work and making a little progress there, but this has been going on for many years. There are people living from Trayning northwards who, if they wish to come to Perth, must traverse very bad roads before reaching the bitumen-surfaced roads. I believe that with a little co-operation, this work could be completed in the near future.

As to the construction of public works, I agree with previous speakers who have said it is time we reverted to the contract system to get many of these works completed. The present practice was quite satisfactory in years gone by when there were a lot of men and little money, but we have reached a stage when we have a lot of money for main roads, and to get men to drive the equipment is very difficult indeed. I am satisfied that we could get far more work done much more cheaply and expeditiously if we made provision for the contract system for all major public works.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The shifting of plant causes delay.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: Admittedly, there are many difficulties confronting the engineers of the Main Roads Department. The Government is doing some building under the contract system, and I should like to see the whole of our public works—many of them are wanted—carried on by contract, especially such an undertaking as the proposed additional bridge across the Swan River. I am afraid that members of this Chamber will not live to see another bridge constructed across the river, but I believe that, if a contract were let for the work, it might become an accomplished fact in 12 months; whereas we have had the spectacle of the construction of the Causeway, which is a fine structure, dragging. I would like the position to be that I, instead of my great-grandchildren, shall have the privilege of seeing the second bridge put across the Swan River. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by Hon. J. McI. Thomson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.11 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 15th July, 1954.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Moir) took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.