

Hon. H. Hearn: Sometimes he has to absorb that 25 per cent. Price-fixing enters into the question, as the hon. member knows.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I am of the opinion that the greatest mistake ever made by the people of Australia was when they allowed the Commonwealth Government to agree to the State price-fixing system. I do not think any Government, no matter what its political colour, should permit the Prices Commission to control our economy. The manufacturers' prices are being built up remarkably by increases in the basic wage together with an added 25 per cent. margin of profit. I think that practice was brought about by the introduction of the outrageous cost-plus system during the war, when people were supposed to be patriotic. The great majority of the community did show some spirit of patriotism but, on the other hand, there was a large number who cared only about filling their pockets. That system has been the cause of a lot of our troubles and is one of the reasons why the worker has lost faith in the Arbitration Court. He now thinks that the court is loaded against him.

Personally, I do not like using the terms "capitalism" and "the lower class," but I will now give an instance to indicate how capitalism has imposed on the lower class. During the war, under the cost-plus system, some large cement and brick structures were erected round the oil tanks at Fremantle for protection from war damage. To meet that cost the Commonwealth Government levied a surcharge of 2d. a gallon on petrol. That construction entailed the use of thousands of bags of cement and good pressed bricks which have since been pulled down and thrown away. Yet the surcharge of 2d. a gallon is still being imposed on the purchasers of petrol! Whilst this construction was being undertaken I saw as many as 20 bags of cement a day being stolen and carried away, together with hundreds of bricks, and the cost of these was all included under the cost-plus system.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Did you report the thieving that was going on and what you saw?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I saw it happening so high up the ladder that, being a common worker, I did not have the stomach to report the incident. Although I shall have a lot more to say in Committee, I definitely oppose the second reading.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 28th August, 1952.

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

QUESTIONS.

PETROL.

As to Threatened Action over Price Increase.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: asked the Attorney General:

(1) Will he lay upon the Table of the House the threatening communication received by him recently from the oil companies?

(2) Does he propose to introduce legislation somewhat along the same lines as the recently introduced Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment Bill to enable the Government to be in a position to deal effectively with the oil companies in relation to any threatened or actual refusal to supply petrol in any part of the State?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) I have made some inquiries, and from the information I have been able to obtain there is no possibility of the action suggested by the hon. member being taken in this State, but should a refusal to supply occur, full powers are already available under the Prices Control Act to deal with the matter.

HOUSING.

(a) As to Building Workers' Homes, Country Towns.

Mr. SEWELL asked the Minister for Housing:

When does the Commission intend building homes in country towns under the Workers' Homes Act?

The MINISTER replied:

The Workers' Homes Act was repealed by the State Housing Act of 1946. This Act makes provision for the erection of workers' dwellings, considerable numbers of which have been and are being erected in country towns.

(b) *As to Home for Natives, Hedland.*

Mr. RODOREDA asked the Minister for Housing:

What progress has been made towards erection of houses in Hedland for natives holding citizenship rights, as promised to Hedland Road Board a year ago by the Housing Commission?

The MINISTER replied:

The erection of four houses in Hedland for natives holding citizenship rights is included in the current year's programme. Plans are prepared and quotes for erection are now being obtained.

It has not been possible to proceed earlier until it was known what funds would be allocated for housing this year.

TOMATOES.

As to Cartage Charges to Kalgoorlie.

Mr. SEWELL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is he aware that Geraldton tomato growers are suffering severe financial strain because of the high cartage rates by road to Kalgoorlie?

(2) Will he take immediate steps to arrange to transport Geraldton tomatoes to Kalgoorlie by rail?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) This matter has been under close examination for some time, as the result of which it is planned to make a commencement of rail services for portion of this traffic next week, and for progressive increase as the loco. position improves.

RAILWAYS.

As to Sleeping Berths, Kalgoorlie Trains.

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) When is it proposed to re-introduce sleeping berths to the Goldfields and Westland expresses to cope with the requirements of Eastern Goldfields and Eastern States passengers?

(2) Is he aware that the present facilities provided for long-distance train travellers are most unhealthy and uncomfortable, especially for women and children?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) No date of resumption of sleeping berth services can be given at this juncture, but the matter is being closely watched and normal facilities will be provided as soon as practicable.

(2) The best service possible is being given under the present difficult circumstances.

COMICS.

As to Banning Certain Types, etc.

Mr. LAWRENCE asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Has he read the article that appeared in "The West Australian" on the 27th August, suggesting the banning of certain types of comics in this State?

(2) Does he agree in principle with the views expressed by the teachers' conference re the banning of these comics complained of?

(3) If so, what action does he intend to take to rectify the matter?

(4) Further, what action is to be taken for the provision of good books for school libraries?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes in the main.

(3) The offending matter is understood to be mainly imported. Import restrictions are not within the power of the State. Representations have been made to the Commonwealth, but I would suggest that a greater degree of parental activity and control would be far more effective than attempts at legislative action.

(4) The Government has already made substantial contributions to this end. In recent years the funds available to the circulating box library to small schools have been increased, and grants of £50 a year on a £1 for £1 basis have been made to schools for the provision of suitable library books. In addition, the setting up of a Free Library Board in Western Australia will, when it is in full operation, provide assistance for children's libraries.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Cornell, leave of absence for two months, granted to Mr. Ackland (Moore) on the ground of urgent public business.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (Melville) [2.36]: I desire to make some remarks regarding the Speech His Excellency was pleased to deliver to us, and to point out where the Government has gone out of its way to mislead the public. Before this Speech was

delivered, the effect of Loan cuts was well known in the State and was beginning to be felt. Nevertheless, the Government put certain words into the mouth of His Excellency, for no other purpose, so far as I can see, but to mislead, unless it believed, from its point of view, that this was a correct statement. I read from His Excellency's Speech—

In spite of the difficulties arising from the loan position and the metal trades strike, the State remains economically sound. The employment position is satisfactory.

How can the employment position be satisfactory when we have a large number of men out of work and the certainty that more will follow? If the position were satisfactory, as the Government claimed, then it would mean that it desired to have men out of work.

The Premier: You know that is not so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I will accept that. Will the Premier say how he came to suggest to His Excellency that he make a statement of this kind—that with men out of work already and the absolute certainty that hundreds more will follow, the employment position was satisfactory? Is it satisfactory? It can only be so regarded if one believes it is necessary to have a large number of men permanently out of work. So the truth is that His Excellency was led into making a statement which was not true, because the employment position was far from being satisfactory.

The Premier: As a matter of fact, there are very few men out of work at present—probably not more than one per cent. in this State.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: How many hundreds would that be?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: A lot more were given notice last night.

The Premier: You had more unemployed when you were on this side of the House.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, but we did not tell His Excellency to make a statement such as this.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Does the Premier remember "Work for all"?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What is the use of sending out to the people the statement that the unemployment position is satisfactory, when it is not; or does the Premier regard it as being satisfactory? I complain bitterly about this kind of thing, Mr. Speaker. If His Excellency is to be presented with a speech that he is to deliver to Parliament, it should be factual, but this Speech was not, because by no stretch of the imagination could one say that the employment position was satisfactory when the Speech was delivered, and it is even worse today. We know it will grow progressively worse because the Premier has scarcely any money to spend.

The Premier: At the time when the Speech was written negotiations were in progress with the Commonwealth Government in an effort to get more money, which I believed we would get and which I still hope we will get.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In what direction?

The Premier: A number of directions, and I am still hoping.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier has scant hope of getting more money. The reference in "The West Australian" this morning is to another £2,900,000 that the Government is to get, and that would give the impression that it is an extra £2,900,000.

The Premier: No.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is what it would lead the people to believe.

The Premier: They know a Bill has to be presented to Parliament before the money will be made available.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That was printed to make people believe there was an additional sum for housing, when the Premier has already taken it into consideration and so, in fact, it is not additional money for housing at all.

The Premier: It is £2,900,000 which was agreed to at the Loan Council meeting.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is so.

Mr. Lawrence: This is just a cover-up.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The distribution is only now being provided for.

The Premier: The same procedure is adopted in regard to the recommendations of the Grants Commission.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It might be the same procedure, but I am dealing with the impression created in the minds of the people. Firstly we have the incorrect statement that the employment position is satisfactory and, secondly, there is this statement, which would suggest that the housing position will be all right because here we have another £2,900,000. The Minister for Housing went to Northam and said that the Loan cuts would not affect the housing programme in Western Australia. When I referred that to the Premier, he backed up what the Minister had said, so neither the Premier nor the Minister for Housing believes that the Loan cuts will in any way affect the housing programme in this State. If that is so, I want to know what has caused the Government to change its policy in relation to the housing of evicted people. If it intended to build more houses this year than ever before—

The Premier: Which it is doing.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —and the reduction in Loan funds is not going to affect the position, where is the necessity to deny houses to two and three-unit

families, as the Government is now doing owing to this change of policy? Despite the promises given to this House that all evicted persons would be housed and that no persons would be out in the street, the Government, within twelve months, has announced that it now proposes to deal with evictees on their merits. When one endeavours to ascertain what are regarded as the merits of evictees one can get no answer at all.

Mr. Lawrence: It can tell you plenty about the demerits.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is just a subterfuge. I want to know what has forced the Government into this change of attitude and into repudiating the solemn undertaking it gave this House. If the Government is not to be short of Loan funds for housing and will build more houses this year than last year, what is the reason for this changed policy that cannot be defended on any score whatever? On the question of evicted persons I think the Government ought to come out in the open and say what it proposes to do as regards extending the legislation that protects tenants.

The Premier: As to whether it will be continued or not?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes.

The Premier: It will be continued.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: How does the Premier know?

The Premier: A Bill will be presented to Parliament.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is a different matter.

The Premier: I think I know what will happen.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: How does the Premier know?

The Premier: Never mind.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There are two Houses of this Parliament and such a Bill will have to be passed by both of them. One of those Houses is responsible for the date the 31st October having been placed in the present Act. How does the Premier know that this legislation will be continued? Perhaps he will go so far as to say that the Government will make an attempt to continue the Act in the terms in which it is today, or that it will be in substantially altered terms. Will he tell us that?

The Premier: Yes, I will tell you.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That would help a lot of people, because today some landlords are going pretty close to blackmail in dealing with their tenants. They are saying, "I will give you a lease if you will agree to an increase in rent beyond that authorised by Parliament. You do not know what the Government is going to do about the extension of the legislation but if you will agree to a substantial increase

in rent I will give you a lease and you will be safe, and when the matter comes to court we will announce that we have agreed and there will be no difficulty."

The Attorney General: But there is.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What is it?

The Attorney General: That the court will not necessarily accept the agreement.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It will.

The Attorney General: No.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Attorney General cannot give me a single case where it has not done so.

The Attorney General: If you will give me time I will find you a number of cases where the court has refused.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I will be glad to have them.

The Attorney General: The court investigates every case.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Twelve months ago I asked for a return showing the record of the Fremantle court with regard to the applications of landlords for increases in rent, and the Chief Secretary provided the information. In a number of cases the increase in rent was over 100 per cent. and all the applications were agreed to. There was not in those cases one instance of agreement between tenant and landlord. The tenants opposed the increases, but the court granted them in each case. I now ask the Attorney General: What chance would we have in Fremantle, if a case came before the court and the magistrate was informed that there was agreement between the tenant and the landlord?

Because of this uncertainty as to what is to be attempted, the landlords are in the box seat. They can present to the tenant—who has no clue as to what is likely to happen—a lease, on the understanding that he agrees to a substantial increase in the rent. The tenant has to say, "I might lose these business premises, plus the goodwill, and I will be out of business if I do not accept this lease. If I accept it, although there is a substantial increase in the rent which will be burdensome to me, I will at least know that I will not be put out."

Mr. Totterdell: You are making the landlord into a Loch Ness monster.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is what is happening.

Mr. Totterdell: Cut that out!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I can tell the hon. member that I know of landlords who are doing it; they are doing it now for a two years' lease.

The Chief Secretary: How many would there be?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I have not set out to count them, but one is enough.

The Chief Secretary: But you said "landlords".

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I can assure the Chief Secretary that there is more than one and I would not know all of them, would I?

The Chief Secretary: I could not say.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the Government would declare what it proposes to do and get on with the job and do something, tenants would know where they stood.

The Premier: Let us get the Address-in-reply over without any of these two-hour speeches.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Let us suspend Standing Orders and get on with it.

Mr. Graham: We will agree to it, too.

The Premier: I might do that; I might take you up on it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Bill would have to pass through the Upper House before the 31st October and we should not wait until the last day to introduce it.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Is the Hon. H. K. Watson back in Australia yet?

The Premier: He is expected shortly. I think, although I have no official notification.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: A Bill could not be introduced until he came back!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We want this legislation to be introduced as quickly as possible, firstly, to make sure that the protection does not run out and, secondly, to let the tenants know, as soon as we can, what their position is likely to be so that they will not be forced to bargain away their rights.

The Attorney General: The Bill has already been drafted.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then let us have it as quickly as possible.

The Attorney General: That is what we all want.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is no reason why the Government should not suspend Standing Orders to do it.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: We will agree to that.

The Minister for Lands: What about suspending the Address-in-reply altogether?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I know the Minister would like to gag us, but fortunately for democracy he cannot do that.

The Minister for Lands: There would be no hope of gagging you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is some consolation to know that the Premier has undertaken to inform us as to the nature of the continuance legislation which will be introduced, and secondly that it will be introduced as quickly as possible. It is most essential in the interests of the people generally that this be done, so that they should know exactly how they stand in regard to the matter.

While dealing with the question of housing my thoughts run on to the types of houses which are being provided and the materials which are being used in the construction of those homes. I have asked that the papers be made available in regard to the Austrian prefabs. When this story is made public, if it ever is, the people of this State will stand aghast at what has happened in regard to this contract.

I asked a series of questions in an endeavour to find out the real cost of these places, to see how the cost could be made up and to see what is involved in the whole contract. The Minister did not refuse straight out to make the papers available, but he replied in such a way as to indicate that he has no intention of making them available. I asked how many files there were, whether they would all be required for consideration by the Crown Law Department and whether the Minister would agree to making those which are not required available for perusal. The Minister would not face up to that at all. My questions, asked on the 20th August, were as follows:—

How many files are there covering the matters concerning the Austrian prefabricated houses?

How many such files are required by the Crown Law Department for the purpose stated by him?

Will he make available the files not required by the Crown Law Department?

When will the files which are required by the Crown Law Department be available for perusal?

The Minister joined all those questions together and gave this answer—

The Crown Law Department has been invited to investigate certain matters arising out of this contract and until this investigation has been completed it would not be in the public interest to make any of the files available at present.

I cannot follow that at all. I understand that there is a large number of files concerning this contract and for the life of me I cannot conceive any situation which would require all of the papers to be investigated by the Crown Law Department. I say that that is only an attempt on the part of the Minister to prevent us from seeing the papers; it is a Kathleen Mavourneen business "until this investigation has been completed!" When will it be completed? After the elections! That means the papers will not be made available to us and if anything wanted the light of day on it, this does. Just take the cost of these houses and the tremendous sum of money held in the suspense account! Just imagine

trying to run a private business with as much money as this in the suspense account! Here is my question—

What is the total amount debited to the suspense account in connection with the Austrian prefabricated houses and which represents unallocated expenditure in connection with this contract?

The building of a house is not a complicated job. When men tender for the building of homes they do it on a square basis, so much a square, and they know precisely where they stand. Yet the Government has this sum of money as an unallocated expenditure and only 50 houses out of 900 have been erected. The sum in the suspense account, as at the 31st July, amounted to £381,070 11s. 3d. An unallocated expenditure means that the accountant does not know where to debit it. Just imagine trying to run a business along those lines! It is absolutely colossal. There is also the cost of £880 a week to deal with the slirex wasp. That has to be added to the other costs as well.

The Premier: I think it is only fair that the Commonwealth should pay for that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I wonder if it will.

The Premier: We have asked it to.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That sum has to be debited somewhere.

The Attorney General: Of course the wasp difficulty has occurred in every State where imported houses are being used.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is the Commonwealth going to pay for it in each of the States?

The Attorney General: I hope so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not accept the figure the Minister has given me regarding the cost of these houses because the information in my possession will not permit me to do so. But assuming that the Minister's figure is correct, these houses have cost nearly £3,000 each. My information is that the cost is approximately £4,000 per house and will eventually exceed that figure. And have members ever seen them? The size of them! Less than nine squares!

The Attorney General: Nice little houses, though.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Little yes, but not nice.

The Attorney General: Nice and little.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: What does the member for West Perth think about that?

Mr. Totterdell: I agree with the hon. member on that point.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The figure is ridiculous, as is that for the houses for evictees, M2's and M3's—£1,200, £1,300 and

£1,400 for half houses. There is something radically wrong somewhere with those costs.

The Attorney General: They are open to public tender, are they not?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I wish the papers were open to public scrutiny! Why cannot we be allowed to see this file if it is all right? Why could not the Minister say to me, "Go to the Crown Law Department and have a look at the files which are not in use"? Would that be against the public interest?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Premier might say that now.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is not much chance. If we wanted those papers, we would have to move for them here, and the Government would crack the whip to move against it, but perhaps I will test that later. There will be no opportunity to force these papers through before the election.

The Premier: The hon. member is assuming something again there, of course.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the Premier will not let me see the papers, I have to assume in between these blank spaces, but I am not assuming on the figures before me.

The Attorney General: The hon. member asked that they be laid on the Table of the House, did he not?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, I did not. I asked if they could be made available for perusal. I am not assuming that there is £300,000 in the suspense account unallocated. I never heard the like of it! There is no need for me to assume anything about it, because that is a stark fact staring everybody in the face. What is the reason for these high costs?

The Minister for Lands: Cost of labour, I suppose.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh! Cost of rubbish! It is impossible to reconcile the Minister's figures. He could not do it himself. If the Minister will take the answers that he gave me in regard to the cost of material landed on the site, if he will add to that the amount which he says has been taken into consideration from the suspense account, if he will add to that figure the amount of reasonable profit which we would expect a builder to make, there is no money left to buy the tiles, to do the plumbing and the cement work. That is why I say I cannot accept the Minister's figures, because they just will not add up to his total. When I sought the figures for tiling, plumbing and painting, did I get them? Oh no! The Minister took cover behind an answer that no separate figures were submitted by tenderers for those items. So I could not get the information, but I have been told how much it would cost for tiling, how much

it would cost for plasterboard, how much it would cost for plumbing, how much for electric wiring and how much for painting, and when I added those figures to the figure that the Minister gave for materials landed on the building site, included the £1,200 allocated to suspense account and added the profit, I got £4,000 as the cost of the house.

The Attorney General: Do you believe that the Government was ill-advised to import houses in an attempt to alleviate the shortage?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That question does not enter into it.

The Attorney General: Of course it does.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The fact of whether I believe the Government should or should not have imported houses has no bearing whatever on the type of house that it has imported.

The Attorney General: Of course it has.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Because the Government decided to import houses, did it have to take anything that was offered to it at the cheapest price?

The Attorney General: It had to get the cheapest house available, which it did.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If this was the cheapest house, God help us!

The Attorney General: The hon. member knows what happened in Victoria and South Australia, does he not?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Has the Attorney General seen these files?

The Attorney General: No.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I thought they were at the Crown Law Department, being investigated?

The Attorney General: I have not seen them.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The investigation must have proceeded a long way, then. Would not the Minister have to authorise the investigation?

The Attorney General: If another Minister asks for an investigation, I naturally concur.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Without having a look at it yourself?

The Attorney General: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Do you?

The Attorney General: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is most unusual.

The Attorney General: Is it not the practice that has been in operation for the past 20 years?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is not the practice just to use a rubber stamp. If the Minister of another department wanted me to have a matter investigated, I would want a few reasons.

The Attorney General: The hon. member knows why it is being investigated.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, why?

The Attorney General: Because a claim is being made against the vendors in connection with the syrex wasp.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is that all? Is that the reason for withholding all the papers from scrutiny? Because it has something to do with the syrex wasp! One would find that on half-a-dozen papers, let alone files. So one can now see the reason for the attitude taken by the Government about these papers. The only question to be investigated—

The Attorney General: I did not say that was the only question.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is that the main question?

The Attorney General: I say that is a question to be investigated.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh yes! Is it the main question! You see, Mr. Speaker, we are left completely in the dark, and yet the Premier complains about assumptions. Why cannot we have a look at these papers? I submit that if the main question—or one of the main questions—is the possibility of a claim being made regarding the syrex wasp, is that a valid reason for refusing the Opposition an opportunity to peruse the papers? I would say, definitely not. So there must be something in the papers that the Government is afraid of. When is this suspense account to be allocated? It cannot stay in suspense for ever. I suppose it will be the job of the incoming Government to allocate it.

The Premier: When does the hon. member expect that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In February or March.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Late January.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If there is no change of Government this money will remain unallocated for another three years, because the Minister just does not know what to do with it.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Government might "take a jerry" to itself one of these days!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Although I know the size of these houses, I went out this morning to refresh my memory and to get a clear picture of what I thought would be a fair value. It is criminal to put people into such houses, and to demand the rent from them which they are called upon to pay through somebody's neglect or bad administration. The reason why these people are paying £3 2s. a week rent is not because the houses are worth that—it would take them all their time to be worth half that—but because that is the figure the Housing Commission has to demand to make up for

the losses. All these losses that are occasioned go to swell the cost of administration which is loaded on to the houses and so increases the rent; and this Government made a special request to the Commonwealth to permit an alteration in the Commonwealth-State rental agreement so that these extra charges could be loaded on to the administration costs. As the agreement stood, this could not be done.

Every error that is created at the Housing Commission, and which means a loss of money, increases the cost of administration and sends up the rents which the unfortunate tenants are obliged to pay; they have no option. I will not dwell on the question of Austrian pre-fabricated houses any longer at this stage except to say that I propose within the next day or two—and I trust the House will agree—to move that these papers be tabled. We will debate the matter properly then and see if the Government has any legitimate case in favour of withholding the papers and against tabling them.

I propose to say a word or two in connection with the quantity of asbestos sheets which some bright boy purchased on behalf of the Government. I have asked a series of questions about these and the information is very enlightening. My attention was drawn to the matter when I saw an advertisement in "The West Australian" calling for tenders for these sheets. A few weeks later I noticed that the sheets were being offered for sale at a certain price, so I concluded there were very few satisfactory tenders. That seemed to me to be rather remarkable in view of the fact that there was supposed to be a shortage of building material in the State. Accordingly I asked a series of questions of the Treasurer on the 5th August. These were—

(1) When, for what reason, and from what source, were purchased the 23,000 8ft. x 4ft. and 21,000 8ft. x 4ft. asbestos cement flat sheets for which tenders for purchase were invited by the Government Tender Board by advertisement in "The West Australian" of the 25th January last?

The answer I received was—

(1) The Italian "Silvanit" flat cement-asbestos sheets were purchased by the Tender Board under contract at the request and on behalf of the State Housing Commission.

The next question I asked was—

(2) Were these asbestos sheets bought by the Government on sample or after inspection of any kind?

The answer given to me was—

(2) The sheets were purchased to British standard specifications.

I would like to know a little more about that. I wonder whether the sample I have in my hand is to a British standard

specification; if it is, I think it is time they altered them. That is the stuff with which houses are being built; it crumbles in my fingers. If the builder can get the sheets up without cracking, then in most cases they last a day or two and crack of their own accord. These sheets are going into the houses of the evictees—the M2s and M3s; the people who have no option but to pay the deposit demanded by the Government or go onto the street. This is the stuff with which those houses are being built; British standard specifications! It looks to me as if £50,000 has gone down the drain with the "Silvanit" sheet alone. The sample I have in my hand is of the "Eternu" sheet but my question related to the "Silvanit" sheets which are much worse than the sample I am showing to the House.

The Premier: When a Government has been forced to buy, as this Government has, huge quantities of materials from overseas, it is natural to expect that there should be some loss. You have picked out one item which I admit is a bad deal.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When these sheets were bought to specifications, were they bought on a sample or on paper?

The Attorney General: They were bought by a permanent civil servant of the Government.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: By sample or merely on paper?

The Attorney General: By the method usually employed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If that is so, it is time they altered it, particularly if it lands us in a mess such as we are in. I want to emphasise that these sheets were issued to private builders who found they could not be used. The Government had to take them back and give credit. One would have thought that that would have been enough and the Government would have realised that the material was rubbish, but instead of that it is using this rubbish in the houses which are being built in my electorate for evictees.

The Premier: I understand very little of it is being used.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I picked this sample up from the site today; it was being put into a house. In order to erect the sheets, they are being cut down the centre and put up in sections with extra battens on them. And do you know, Mr. Speaker, who pays for that? The unfortunate evictee who has to go into the place pays. That is all being loaded on to him.

The Premier: Are you sure of that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Absolutely certain! Is that a fair proposition? I suggest that the Premier send somebody out to talk to the workmen who are trying to put this stuff up; the workmen say it cracks if merely looked at. As members can see, it certainly crumbles in my fingers. And

this material is to British standard specification; so we are told. It is just wicked. The Government tried to unload that material on to some unsuspecting person by offering it for sale. I asked a further question on the 5th August as follows:—

(3) What was the actual cost to the Government per sheet into store, Melville?

The Premier: Why do you say the person was unsuspecting?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I will tell the Premier in a minute when I read the answer he gave me to my question. I wanted to know what was the actual cost to the Government and the answer was—

6ft. sheets, 14s. 8d. per sheet; 8ft. sheets, 19s. 7½ per sheet.

The next question was—

What was the amount per 6ft. sheet and 8ft. sheet respectively, of the highest tender received in response to the Government's advertisement?

The answer to that question was—

8ft. x 4ft. sheets, 22s. 6d. per sheet; 6ft. x 4ft. sheets, 20s. 6d. per sheet (but this tender was for 30 sheets only).

What I would like to know is whether that unfortunate buyer was obliged to take that quantity of sheets at that price and whether he got any refund subsequently, or what happened regarding the sheets that were sold.

The Premier: Have there been any complaints from the buyer?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know; the Minister could answer that question. I should say it is almost a certainty that there were. Of those 50,000 sheets that were bought, the total sales to date are 1,465 sheets and they were bought to supply acute needs, according to the Minister. That is the reason he gave. There was such a shortage of building materials that these sheets were bought and, according to his answer to me in the House, the total sales to date are 1,465 sheets for a return of £1,027. I also asked the question—

What quantities of these asbestos sheets are still on the Government's hands and at what amount are they now valued?

The answer was—

Forty-two thousand five hundred and thirty-five sheets, valued at £36,221.

I think they are valueless! Members will see that there is a discrepancy of several thousand sheets indicated in those figures. Does the Premier know what happened to them? They broke up. No one has bought them. They are not in store. They just broke up—several thousands of them. I next asked—

What is the amount of the loss which has already been sustained as a result of the purchase of the asbestos sheets?

Against what department has the amount of loss been charged?

What is the estimated total loss which the State will have to bear in connection with this disastrous deal?

The Minister lumped those three questions together and gave this answer—

This information cannot be ascertained until the complete stock has been liquidated.

When will that be? I commend the Minister on his choice of words—"until the complete stock has been liquidated." It is certainly calculated to send anyone insolvent. The Government has no hope of selling this stuff. It might as well write it off straightaway. The sheets should certainly not be used in homes built for these poor unfortunate tenants who have got to take them. Even if the sheets develop cracks and so on, they will get no allowance for that. I say it is a crying shame to put this stuff into the houses of tenants who have no option but to buy the dwellings. The Government has taken some back from the builders and has given them a credit for the unsatisfactory material. The mere fact that the Government has seen fit to take these asbestos sheets back from the builders indicates that it is not unfair to say that they should not be used in houses built for evictees. On the 26th August I asked the Minister for Housing the following question:—

What quantity of "Silvanit" sheets was issued to Messrs. Sandwell and Wood for use in connection with contracts for the State Housing Commission and was returned as of unsatisfactory quality?

The Minister's reply was—

(3) 369 sheets were returned damaged and 1,412 as of unsatisfactory quality.

Then I asked—

What is the amount which has been credited to Messrs Sandwell and Wood because of returns of "Silvanit" sheets?

The answer to that question was that £880 9s. 4d. had been credited to Messrs. Sandwell and Wood. Thus, if it is reasonable and fair to take this stuff back from the builders and credit them with the amount debited against them for the material, is it fair to use that stuff in houses for evictees, M2s and M3s? Is it fair for the unfortunate evictees to carry the Government's loss?

The Minister for Housing: Were these asbestos sheets inferior when used in the erection of homes, compared with local asbestos sheets?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, very definitely.

The Minister for Housing: On what authority do you make that statement?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: On the authority of those who made the statement to me—the builders who were using them. They told me that if it was possible to get the asbestos sheets up in a whole piece, which was very difficult indeed, they usually cracked some days afterwards.

The Minister for Housing: How many of these evictees' houses did you see—I mean houses already erected—where there were cracked sheets?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I did not get out of the car every time, but I was told about quite a number of them.

The Minister for Housing: You were just told about them?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, by the people working on the jobs.

The Minister for Housing: With regard to the asbestos sheets supplied to Messrs. Sandwell and Wood, were there instances of breakages where the sheets had been erected?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: They were sheets that had been put into the houses, if that is what the Minister means. There were cracked sheets all right.

The Minister for Housing: You saw some on the houses and they were already cracked?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes.

The Minister for Housing: I would be very pleased if you could make more information available to me as to exactly where those houses are, respecting which you say the sheets have already been erected and are cracked.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Will the Minister do something about it if I furnish that information?

The Minister for Housing: Naturally, I will.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What will the Minister do?

The Minister for Housing: We might replace them with other sheets.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then we are getting somewhere. But I would like to know who will bear the cost of that? Messrs. Sandwell and Wood are not the only contractors building houses in that locality. Messrs. Bickerdike and Sullivan are also building homes.

The Minister for Housing: How many houses have they built?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: They did not tell me.

The Minister for Housing: It may be that these allegations are like those you made regarding the Austrian houses.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I quoted the figures that the Minister gave me.

The Minister for Housing: I suggest that you go back to school again and do some more figuring.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister referred to the number of houses completed.

The Minister for Housing: Completed?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. The Minister referred to 49 houses and I mentioned 50. What is the Minister's point?

The Minister for Housing: You are quoting 50 houses out of the 900 erected.

Hon. J. TONKIN: Completed?

The Minister for Housing: That is a different thing.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But I used the Minister's own figures.

The Minister for Housing: That is correct. There are 50 built and nearly 300 in the course of construction.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There are no allegations against them yet, because they are only in course of erection. The Minister need not worry about that. I am not doing any guessing; I have been careful to quote his own figures. His answer was, "Completed and occupied 49; under construction 292." I accepted the figure of 50 completed because I think somewhere else the Minister in his answers referred to the fact that it was not possible to arrive at a proper figure as to houses not completed. I cannot find that answer at the moment; but I have a recollection that that is what the Minister said. Here is something else I should like to know on this question. Where a house has been completed, why is it not possible to arrive at a set figure as to the cost? I take it that the contractors are paid for a certain number erected. How is it that a figure cannot be arrived at to show the cost of a finished house?

Reverting to the cement sheets, the sheet of which I have a sample is a brand called Eternu. Previously I was dealing with Silvanit. I could not find any of the Silvanit brand this morning, but on inquiry I was told that Silvanit was even worse than Eternu. The Minister would know whether that is so or not. I have not seen any advertisement for the sale of Eternu sheets. The advertisements I have seen referred only to Silvanit, so possibly there are a lot more than 50,000 sheets involved that appear to me to represent almost a total loss. The Minister, by interjection, suggested that once these sheets were erected, they improved with age and would stand up to requirements.

The Minister for Housing: I made no such suggestion at all. I asked whether you had seen any of these sheets on houses already erected that had cracked. Once they are erected, they are quite equal to the local asbestos sheets.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I cannot say that I have seen any of these sheets crack after being erected, but I have seen cracked sheets. When I was inquiring from the builders this morning, I was informed that if they succeeded in getting the sheets erected, they did crack within a few days. I have to accept their word for it. I see no reason why they should deliberately mislead me.

The Minister for Housing: It is their word against that of the Principal Architect.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Principal Architect is not erecting these sheets as the workmen are and he might not know as well as they do, but more than one workman told me this morning that they were very difficult to erect and, even if one succeeded in getting them up without breaking them, many of them cracked subsequently. When I inquired of the workmen where I picked up this sample as to their experience, they replied that the stuff was rubbish and, in order to try to get it erected, they had to cut the sheets down the centre and use extra battens.

The Minister for Housing: Would not you think that the sheets might be strengthened by using two or three battens?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, but it would increase the cost of erection considerably because, not only would there be the labour involved in cutting the sheets, but there would also be the cost of the extra studs and battens and the labour of fitting them.

The Minister for Housing: How much do you think it would cost to put on two extra battens per sheet?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does the Minister wish me to answer that question, having regard to the Austrian pre-fabs or ordinary houses? On the Austrian pre-fab figures, I should say it would be £50.

The Minister for Housing: On your mythical figures, the £4,000 mythical house!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Let us see how mythical they are. The Minister has pencil and paper and can jot down the figures. He says that the total cost is £2,593. In that cost there is £1,250 from suspense account. To that we have to add the Minister's figure of £1,216, which is the average landed cost of a complete set of components for each house. We have also to add the cost of tiles, plaster-board, plumbing, electric wiring, painting and cement paths and the builder's profit. Can the Minister keep the total down to £2,593?

The Minister for Housing: I suggest that the hon. member goes back to the person that supplied the information about the suspense account and get it corrected.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But the Minister supplied it.

The Minister for Housing: I am referring to the information that came to you on which you framed the question.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not think the Minister knows what he is talking about.

The Minister for Housing: And you do not when you talk about the suspense account.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then we shall see. Surely this was a straightforward question—

What is the total amount which was debited to the suspense account in connection with the Austrian pre-fabricated houses and which represents unallocated expenditure in connection with the contract?

The Minister for Housing: Quite right; but I am suggesting that the question was not framed by you.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister may suggest anything, but I am responsible for every word of it, strange as it may seem.

The Minister for Housing: What about the innuendo in that question?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am making no innuendo; I am making a deliberate statement. Every one of these questions was framed by me personally and I am responsible for every word of them. Secondly, I cannot be responsible for the Minister's answers, but I am entitled to use them.

The Minister for Housing: The answers given you were correct.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then what is the Minister squealing about?

The Minister for Housing: I am not squealing. I am suggesting that you go back to the person who framed the questions.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am telling the Minister that no other person framed these questions.

The Minister for Housing: That is your view. I am glad to hear it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is not my view.

The Minister for Housing: Your opinion.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: My certain knowledge.

The Minister for Housing: That is your point of view, but it is not mine.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: On the Minister's figures, this suspense account is £381,000. The Minister says he knows nothing about accountancy, so we will teach him a little. When you are costing a job and it is possible to allocate your expenditure to the product, you do it directly and you do not charge money to the suspense account and keep it in suspense. But when you do not know where to charge an item,

where it might go in one direction or another, and you have to charge it somewhere because you are paying for it, you draw a cheque to pay somebody and you have to make a debit against something, and the only place you can make your debit is in your suspense account in the certain knowledge that subsequently you will either write the lot off to profit and loss or allocate the expenditure where it properly belongs.

On the Minister's own figures, from this suspense account £1,250 has been debited against each completed house, tentatively, as being a proper proportion of that item in suspense to be debited against the house. I ask the Minister: How can he dodge that as an item of expenditure in connection with the erection of that house, on his own allocation? No wonder he is in trouble, because his figures will not add up. If he would get down to brass tacks on this question and be frank about it, we might be able to get somewhere.

I return to these asbestos sheets. I think the Government should say what quantity of the "Eternu" sheets has been purchased or whether they are included in the figures given to me for the "Silvanit" sheets, because it looks to me as though £50,000 has been absolutely wasted.

The Minister for Housing: How long ago was that asbestos bought?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know.

The Minister for Housing: Would you be surprised to know that it was from 2 to 2½ years ago when asbestos was in short supply?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The "Eternu" sheets?

The Minister for Housing: All of it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When was it purchased?

The Minister for Housing: From 2 to 2½ years ago, when asbestos sheets were in short supply.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I will tell the Minister when it was bought, because he supplied the answer to a question of mine.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 p.m. to 4.5 p.m.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Prior to the suspension, I was dealing with the question of when these sheets were purchased and I undertook to supply the answer from the Minister's own figures. I find that on the 12th of this month I asked the Minister "On what date was the contract entered into?" and the answer was "The 10th February, 1950." I next asked "What was the date of delivery of the sheets at Fremantle?" and the answer was "Deliveries at Fremantle were June, August and September, 1950." Although those sheets were purchased early in 1950 and arrived at Fre-

mantle in the middle of that year it was not until 1952, so far as my information goes, that they were offered for sale. So the Government held them for 18 months.

If there was such an acute shortage in 1950, why were not these sheets made available for the purpose for which they were bought? Either nobody would have them or, when they arrived, nobody made any attempt to issue them out. After hanging on to them for 18 months the Government called for tenders for their purchase, with very poor results. A few months subsequent to that they were advertised for outright sale at a certain price, but scarcely any business resulted from that, only 1,400 sheets out of the 50,000 being disposed of. In the answer he gave me, the Minister was anything but frank. I asked him "What caused the State Housing Commission to attempt to dispose of the sheets, firstly by tender and secondly by sale at a discount?" and his answer was "The supply of locally produced asbestos sheets had improved. Therefore it was decided to dispose of portion of the stock."

To me that shows an inexcusable lack of frankness on the part of the Minister for Housing. That was not the reason why the Government decided to dispose of those sheets. The reason was that after they had been issued to certain builders they found that the sheets were very costly to use and so they returned them and received credits for them, and the Government obviously made up its mind then to try to get rid of the sheets somehow. The Minister's explanation is that the supply of locally produced asbestos sheeting had improved and that therefore it was decided to dispose of portion of the stock. Portion of the stock! Why, the Government advertised the lot. It purchased 50,000 sheets; 25,000 8ft. sheets and 25,000 6ft.

The Premier: I presume that the Government itself had used some of them.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It could not have used many because on the 5th of this month there were in store 42,535 out of 50,000 sheets. Several hundred sheets were returned by Sandwell and Wood in pieces, and I have no doubt that other builders returned some sheets in the same condition. As 1,465 were sold, that would leave probably 2,000 or 3,000 sheets that might have been used by the Government—I refer to the Silvanit sheets. Does the Premier regard the Minister's answer as being frank? I was told that the purpose of buying these sheets was to dispose of them. The Tender Board was requested to invite tenders for supply from overseas because of the then acute shortage of Australian-made asbestos sheeting. Obviously the commission was going to supplement the supply of asbestos sheeting by bringing some from overseas.

The Premier: That is so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Having received that asbestos sheeting, why did the commission hang on to it for 18 months? Almost all of the stock was held for 18 months and then, according to the Minister, they were going to dispose of it because the supply position had improved. That shows wonderful business acumen; buy things because they are in short supply, hang on to them until the supply position has considerably improved and then attempt to sell them. The reason is that they were such rubbish that they could not be used for anything. Builders who were asked to use them returned them and received credits and so the Government was left with the lot on its hands. Whichever way we look at it, this is an absolutely disastrous deal for Western Australia. It looks as if on that contract alone £50,000 has been simply wasted. Let us remember that these sheets were bought in 1950 and they are still on hand. When I asked against what account they are to be debited—this question was asked in 1952—this is the answer I received—

This information cannot be ascertained until the complete stock has been liquidated.

The Government has sold 1,400 sheets in two years and it has 50,000 to sell. If the Minister for Housing is good at arithmetic, what year will it be when this stock has been liquidated? Is this to stay in suspense until the year 2,000? I am interested to see what the Auditor General will say about this, not that the Government takes any notice of him.

The Attorney General: I hope he does not criticise the Tender Board too much. It is doing its best.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Doing its best! Is the Attorney General proud of this job?

The Premier: Let us assume that this was a bad deal. Would you not expect, where millions of pounds worth of goods are being brought, that there would be an occasional bad deal? Does it not happen in every business?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This is too large. When this deal was being entered into I would expect that somebody, somewhere would see a sample of what was to be bought. Anybody seeing this asbestos would not buy a single sheet. I ask the Minister, if I came along to try to sell him this asbestos, would he buy any? Would he buy £50,000 worth of it?

The Attorney General: I think the permanent civil servants of the State are doing a good job and their work is of a high quality.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So do I.

The Attorney General: This speech of yours is a criticism of them and you know it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is not.

The Attorney General: Of course it is.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This is criticism of the Government and it has to take the responsibility.

The Attorney General: Of course we do.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is where the responsibility finally rests.

The Attorney General: That is so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: And I am criticising the Government.

The Attorney General: But you know what it all means.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I know all right.

The Attorney General: You would sack someone I suppose.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No.

Mr. Lawrence: Yes, the Government.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Will the Government make the papers in connection with this deal available for perusal?

The Premier: I do not see any reason why information should be withheld.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Good! I would like to have a look at the file so that I can see who is responsible.

The Minister for Lands: That would not stop it from drying out, would it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Stop what from drying out?

The Minister for Lands: The asbestos sheeting.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This is new sheeting. It has not been erected. What chance has it of drying out?

The Minister for Lands: It was purchased in Italy.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes.

The Minister for Lands: And it dried out. You know that you cannot put dry asbestos on a green frame.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When did the Government discover that? Before it purchased it or afterwards?

The Minister for Lands: It was green when it was bought.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So the Government knew that it had dried out before it reached here. Surely the Government knew that it could not use dry asbestos and if so, why was it bought? The Minister gets himself further into trouble.

The Minister for Lands: Not at all. I know what I am talking about.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What is the Minister talking about?

The Minister for Lands: About asbestos drying out too much before it arrives here.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Was not that to be assumed?

The Attorney General: I suppose the Principal Architect would be the Government's guide on this question.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Attorney General thinks the Principal Architect is responsible for this.

The Attorney General: I think the Government's experts are.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Undoubtedly someone is.

The Premier: The Government acted on advice given to it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I wonder if it did.

The Premier: Yes it did. It would not act without that advice.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier has already indicated that he can see no reason why we should not peruse the papers, so I am hopeful that we will be able to get full information when we see them. After that I might have some more to say about the matter.

I now desire to make some remarks about our financial position and the proposal of the Commonwealth to hand back to the States their own taxing rights. If this is done it will be just what the Premier, and the Deputy Premier, advocated.

The Premier: With certain safeguards.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I cannot see much of a safeguard in this.

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: To refresh the Premier's memory I will quote from the Policy Speech he delivered in 1947.

The Premier: I said it at the first Premiers' Conference I attended.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am going to quote from what the Premier told the people. The people were not present at the Premiers' Conference, but they did read his Policy Speech.

The Premier: They read in the paper what I said at the Premiers' Conference.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: And they put the Premier into power on the strength of his Policy Speech.

The Minister for Lands: They showed good judgement.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not think they did.

The Premier: That is a matter of opinion.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is a matter of their opinion and fortunately it will not be long before we will be able to test it.

The Minister for Lands: Here's hoping.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: On the 18th February, 1947, at Pinjarra, the Premier said—

It was necessary for the State Government to be something more than a puppet of the Commonwealth.

What has this State Government done since 1947 to alter, in the slightest degree, the relationship which existed between the State and the Commonwealth at the time the Premier made that statement? Not a single thing! So, if we were a puppet of the Commonwealth then, we are now. The Premier went on—

Taxation relief: Liberal policy is that the States shall, as soon as possible, resume control of their own finances.

Our policy is income tax reduction on a substantial scale.

I want the House to analyse those two statements and see how impossible it is to achieve those two aims together. It is well known that under the existing system taxpayers in New South Wales and Victoria contribute towards the development of Western Australia. If our own taxing rights are restored, and to ensure as much money as we are getting now, we will have to increase taxation.

The Premier: The Grants Commission will still continue.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh, yes, I should hope so, but it will not continue to subsidise States that do not tax sufficiently to keep it to the level of other States. How on earth can we assume control of our own taxation and at the same time reduce taxation on a substantial scale, as the Premier has said? If we get back our taxation rights in this State it will be absolutely impossible to reduce substantially taxation in Western Australia. At the very most all we could do would be to maintain it at its existing level. We would not have a hope of reducing taxation on a substantial scale if we had to raise money ourselves. No wonder the Premier was not very enthusiastic when the Commonwealth Government made its offer. I carefully read the published remarks of the Premier when the Commonwealth Government made known its intention, and they were not along the lines of the statement that he made in 1947. It was an entirely different tale. There is no doubt about this statement. It says—

Liberal policy is that the States shall as soon as possible resume control of their own finances.

The Premier: And I advocated that a convention be called to deal with it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes.

The Premier: In order to ascertain what the formula would be; what the conditions would be if we did.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: And if a convention is held an opportunity should be given to representatives of the Opposition to be present.

The Premier: Oh, yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Because whether there is a change or not at the next election, there will be one day, and the new Government will be charged with the responsibility of developing this State with the financial resources which it can raise, and it would be most unfair for any Government to enter into a binding arrangement, if it could avoid doing so, for the raising of taxation which might impose an intolerable burden upon the new Government. So I would hope that if this convention is held, and it should be and must be, this side of the House would be given adequate representation so that our point of view would be heard at that convention and we would be enabled to influence the decision.

The Premier: I did not think any Commonwealth convention could be held unless it was representative of all parties.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier is going to be in some difficulty in this matter because, although he had no doubt whatsoever as to what to do in 1947, the Chamber of Commerce, which in the main supports the Premier's brand of politics, does not think that this giving back to the State its own taxing rights is such a good idea. I will quote from the 62nd annual report of the Perth Chamber of Commerce which was made available to me at its meeting and at which the Premier was present. On taxation this appears on page 38 of the report—

The Perth Chamber has expressed its support of uniform taxation and is opposed to any suggestion that the taxing powers be handed back to the States.

There is no room for doubt about that. It is opposed to any suggestion that the taxing powers be handed back, and well it might be, because its members are hard-headed business men and they realise that to face up to the expenditure involved in developing Western Australia it will be necessary to obtain very large sums of money, and we will not get all that we need from the Grants Commission. We would have to raise a lot by direct taxation and, if we are deprived of the money now contributed by taxpayers in New South Wales, we will have to get it from our own taxpayers which will mean increased taxation of a substantial kind in this State. That is not a very attractive proposition.

The Premier: I told the Premiers' Conference that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Told them what?

The Premier: What the hon. member just said.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Well, the Premier has changed his mind since 1947.

The Premier: No, I have not changed my mind.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier was not in doubt then as to what he should do. I read in the report of the Premier's speech—

The Premier: The hon. member did not think I would just take from the Commonwealth anything it would like to hand me, did he? Or let them say, "You cannot have all these fields of taxation but you can have this, that and the other?"

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, but what the Premier did say was, "The States as soon as possible will resume control of their own finances," and the Chamber of Commerce says it is opposed to any suggestion that he do any such thing. So the Premier can see he is going to be on a spot.

The Premier: Do not worry about this question! I will get out of this all right!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I have no doubt the Premier will get out of it, but whether he will get out of it all right or not remains to be seen.

The Premier: I know where I stand on that; so do the people.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am very much afraid the Premier's advocacy has got us into a spot and it will prove to be difficult to get us out of it, because if this results in the State getting back its taxation rights there will be trouble for somebody. The Country Party is in on it, too, because the Deputy Premier, in 1947, said—

We know what we want and we are in harmony on all material matters.

So he and the Premier were in harmony on this matter—this return of the taxation rights to the States. I repeat that I hope the Premier will insist upon adequate representation from this side of the House upon any convention that is held to discuss this most important matter from the State's point of view. Now I want to deal for a while with our own Loan position. I asked the Premier—

What is the total amount of Loan money for all purposes which the Commonwealth Government has agreed to provide for Western Australia for this financial year?

and his answer was—

£18,510,000, including the sum of £2,900,000 for Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement projects.

I would point out to members that that £2,900,000 is identical with the figure mentioned in this morning's paper. Then I wanted to know—

What was the amount of unexpended Loan fund at the end of the last financial year?

and the Premier answered—

£4,000,389, but this sum cannot be used to supplement Loan funds allocated by the Loan Council for 1952-

53, as an equivalent amount is required to be on hand at the 30th June, 1953.

That being so, we can exclude that £4,000,000 from our calculations. So that leaves us to deal with £18,510,000 of Loan funds. Let us see how we are to split that up. I also asked—

At the 30th June last, what was the total amount of this State's contractual commitments in connection with contracts which could be deferred or avoided only by the consent of the contractor or by the payment of compensation?

The answer to that question was: £19,628,000. Therefore, as at the 30th June last, we had contractual commitments from which we could not escape except with the consent of the contractor or by payment of compensation, representing that figure of £19,628,000, which is more than the whole of the Loan money allocated to this State. I then asked—

What amount (if any) of the total of contractual commitments already existing, may be paid for out of loans to be raised by the S.E.C. and the Rural and Industries Bank?

The answer to that question was: £2,198,000. If we subtract the amount of £2,198,000 from the £19,628,000 representing contractual commitments, we get, in round figures, £17,400,000, which has to be taken out of the £18,510,000, and that leaves the Premier with a balance of £1,100,000. Then I asked—

What amount of the total of contractual commitments existing at the 30th June last was in respect of contracts made in connection with housing?

The answer to that was: £4,438,000. So if we assume that all the housing expenditure is covered in the contractual commitments and that no more are to be undertaken—that is to say, all the houses are to be paid for in advance—the Premier has at his disposal £1,100,000 of Loan funds to carry him on for 12 months to deal with the provision of schools, hospitals, water supplies and the like. He is indeed in an almost hopeless position. Is it any wonder that sackings have started already and will have to continue? A further disquieting feature is this: Only a few months of the current financial year have elapsed, and the Government will have to spend all the Loan money available before the next election. Should there be a change of Government, there will not be one shilling of Loan funds for the new Administration. That is true. The Premier knows it is true. See how he smiles about it!

The Premier: I will tell you now that I have not put aside any large reserves to be made available in the event of a new Government taking over.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Of course not! The Premier has not the money. He has only £1,100,000, unless he can get out of some of the State's contractual commitments. I have no doubt the Government has explored that avenue.

The Premier: Yes, and with some success.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am pleased to hear that, and I assume the Premier will advise the House in due course just how much success he has had. It is vital that we should know. We should be told just how much free Loan money will be available—money not already tied up under contracts. A lot of other Loan funds will be necessary to carry on various activities. The spectacle of the Government having only £1,100,000 available to cover the operations of the next nine months is one that should cause any person very serious concern. No wonder the Premier strongly advocated the provision of more money at the recent Loan Council meeting, but without very much success. I do not know whether the other States are as badly off as Western Australia is. If they are, they are certainly in a sorry mess. In all probability we are now in a worse position than we were in the days of the depression when the late Mr. Collier was Premier, and when it became necessary to negotiate a loan in Great Britain to meet the payment of civil servants' salaries.

The Premier: We have not got to that stage yet.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Government is not far off it.

The Premier: You know that civil servants' salaries come from revenue, not from Loan funds.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Under the regime of the present Government, all sorts of things happen. For instance, it has paid subsidies from Loan funds, a course previously unheard of. Normally, subsidies to industries are provided from revenue, but the Government has made Loan funds available for that purpose. That indicates there is no hard and fast rule that the present Government follows. There is no guiding rule, and there can be a mixture of the funds. The revenue position also is by no means healthy. It is true that the recent strike considerably worsened that position and it was bad enough before that. Certainly it will have a very serious effect on the revenue position.

The Premier: It will.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We cannot derive much comfort in that direction. With men being thrown out of employment, there are bound to be charges on State revenue in various directions.

The Premier: I think that because of the recent strike we are deserving of special consideration from the Commonwealth. I believe a grant of £8,000,000 was

made available to the States on account of the coal strike some time ago. In Western Australia we have had a strike through no fault of our own, and I certainly think we are deserving of special consideration in that regard.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What the Premier thinks the State deserves to receive and what it will get are two different things.

The Premier: At any rate, I have asked for that consideration and will continue to press for it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I certainly hope the Premier gets it, not only for his own sake but for that of any Government that may succeed his Administration. If members of the Opposition can render any assistance in that direction, the Premier can call upon us. We will render every help possible in an endeavour to secure additional funds, because we shall certainly need them. I would point out, however, that the Commonwealth is in no position to make large advances to States, whatever the cause may be. It has already resorted to inflation to finance certain works and to make further money available, all of which can only mean more inflation. If it is to provide large sums to the States, it can be done by means of more fiduciary currency, a course it will not be anxious to follow. There are many difficulties confronting the Premier. I wish I could be a little optimistic about this matter and believe we will receive a substantial grant in aid of the revenue position, but unfortunately I am afraid the odds are definitely against that.

The Premier: We will see what the Grants Commission will do.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The trouble is that the Premier is such a bad judge of the position. He assured the Minister for Works in March when we were discussing the Anglo-Iranian oil Bill that he could be quite optimistic about the amount of Loan money that was going to be made available; and when I drew the Premier's attention to the fact that the Commonwealth had already indicated that it was going to tighten up on Loan funds, he suggested that we need not be worried on that score; that he would get the money all right. It is all in "Hansard," but I do not want to weary the House by quoting it at length. If reference is made to the debate on that Bill, however, it will be found that, when the Minister was speaking, he said the Premier had assured him he could be quite optimistic about the amount of money that would be available to this State. As things turned out, the Premier was shown to be a very bad judge indeed. I hope he will prove a better judge on this occasion and will get some of the money he has asked the Commonwealth for. But we are asking for so much in so many directions. There is this scheme for the development of dairying.

Mr. Bovell: A most vital scheme!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Absolutely! And that reminds me that I intended to quote a few figures on that subject to show how this Government has fallen down on a matter it was going to push forward to the utmost. The production of butter and cheese has seriously declined in this State and is continuing to decline. I quote from the report of the Chamber of Commerce, page 6, as follows:—

Dairy produce. The State production of factory butter for the year ended the 30th June, 1952, was 130,470 cwt, compared with 139,053 cwt. for the previous year, a decline of 8,583 cwt., or about six per cent. The output of factory cheese within the State for the year was 12,820 cwt., compared with 15,411 cwt. in 1950-51, a decline of 17 per cent.

So in two vital products there has been a serious decline.

Mr. Bovell: The production of milk has increased.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, but not substantially. That brings me to another point. There should be some co-ordinating committee—

Mr. Bovell: I agree with you there.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN:—to prevent the Milk Board from taking too much of the production for wholemilk with the result that butter production suffers seriously.

The Premier: In connection with the decline in butter production, it must be remembered that there has been a swing over to beef production in a number of cases, and beef has been in short supply as well as wool and mutton.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That may be so; but the people want butter as well as meat, and the Government's job is to encourage that production, especially when it is a Government that was going to be like a new broom and sweep away the cobwebs.

The Premier: We have done a good job in that direction.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is a matter of opinion. If production starts to decline in this way, it takes a peculiar imagination to reach the conclusion that a good job has been done.

The Minister for Education: Is the decline peculiar to Western Australia?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No; but that is no answer.

The Minister for Education: I did not say it was; but it is interesting to know.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When there was a shortage of teachers in Australia, that did not make any difference to what the Minister said about this State.

The Minister for Education: I still hold the view that it was interesting if there was a shortage all over Australia.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes; but an interesting view does not matter much in the face of definite undertakings.

Mr. Bovell: The decline is purely and simply due to the fact that there has not been sufficient remuneration for butter producers and, as the Premier has said, they have gone into other avenues of production.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Can that be remedied?

Mr. Bovell: I think it could.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then the right sort of Government could do it.

The Premier: It is hard to remedy.

Mr. Bovell: The Government cannot produce. The producers will remedy the position if they are given sufficient inducement.

The Premier: It is hard to remedy when other avenues offer a much greater return.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I want to know whether the Government believes it can be remedied.

The Minister for Education: If the price is high enough, I daresay it could be.

Mr. Hoar: Would an increase in price remedy it?

Mr. Bovell: No.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It looks as though there is no definite opinion on the Government side.

The Premier: Except the definite plan to increase production of dairy products.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What is the plan?

The Premier: You have been mentioning some of it. The 1,000 farms for one thing, and the endeavour to increase the productive capacity of existing farms, and putting hundreds of soldier settlers on the land.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In six years the Government has done so well that the production has declined.

Mr. Hoar: That is a fact.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We heard it argued here last year during the butter shortage that that shortage was due to seasonal conditions. Of course, it was not due to anything of the sort. I can tell the Government now, without knowing what the season will be, there will be a shortage next year.

The Minister for Lands: Increased population may be responsible.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then why blame the seasons? The Chamber of Commerce had this to say—

Seasonal conditions, particularly in the opening months of June, July and August, were very favourable to dairying.

The Attorney General: You think the consumer should pay a higher price for butter?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is what the Minister thinks?

The Attorney General: No; you are suggesting that there should be a higher price.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Me? I made no suggestion at all.

The Attorney General: Oh! I thought you did.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is not for me to make suggestions on that subject. The Minister belongs to the Government, and what I wanted to know was whether the Government believed that this problem is capable of solution. If so, why has it not been solved?

Mr. Griffith: The member for Melville is never backward in making suggestions when he thinks they are good.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am master of the suggestions I shall make and I choose the time to make them. I will make a lot of suggestions to the electors in February or March next year.

The Minister for Lands: A waste of time.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That remains to be seen.

The Premier: You make them! Do not be put off.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: An interesting time awaits us, one that the Government cannot face with any degree of equanimity, having regard to what has happened in Australia in recent months.

The Attorney General: It can as far as increasing land settlement is concerned.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I have no doubt that I will hear the member for Warren on that question a little later.

The Minister for Lands: No doubt at all!

The Premier: Today?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know; but when I do, I think what he says will be most interesting and unpalatable to the Attorney General.

The Attorney General: No. There is one thing certain, and that is that a tremendous amount of new land will be in production.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes; but the people want butter and cheese and the production is declining.

The Attorney General: They also want them at a reasonable price.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Not only have we more mouths to feed, but less butter to put into them, under this Government.

Mr. Hoar: This Government has done nothing to alleviate the position.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I must emphasise that the Government cannot now put forward immigration as an excuse and say that that is what has landed it in the mess, because immigration should have helped remedy the trouble, instead of making it worse. The position, however, now is that there are more mouths to feed and less butter and cheese to feed them with and that is what the Government must face up to. I tell the Minister now that this year there will be an even worse shortage of butter in this State than there was last year. We will have even greater trouble in trying to supply the consumers and that is something for which the Government must shoulder the responsibility, and about which it should be doing something.

It is a good thing for the Milk Board to try to secure the necessary supplies—that is their job—but in doing that they have no regard for butter production, which is someone else's pigdin. There should be in this State a co-ordination committee. On it there should be representatives of both the butter side and the wholemilk side of the industry, so that there could be a proper division of production to ensure that too much of the product did not go into butter at the expense of wholemilk, or vice versa. Such a committee should operate until we have increased our overall production to a stage where there is an ample supply for both purposes. That should be the objective of the Government in this direction. As it is, we cannot even supply our own needs, let alone export butter and cheese.

It was hoped, years ago, that Western Australia would soon reach a stage where it would have a substantial surplus of dairy products that could be exported to earn income for Australia and supply the wants of people in other parts of the world, but the stark fact is that our production has not kept pace with our requirements and we have scarcely any surplus for export. This industry presents a tremendous field for expansion. I am surprised that the Government, which has at its head a Premier who represents a dairying district, should have fallen down so badly on this job. One would have thought that if there was one industry more than another upon which this Government would have concentrated in an effort to do something outstanding, it would have been the dairying industry.

I can recall the Premier—when a private member sitting on this side of the House—regularly making his contribution to the debate on the question of the milk and butter production of our dairy lands. As he has such an intimate knowledge of the subject and so much concern for dairy production, it is remarkable that under his Government there has been such a decline in the industry. I would have expected him to show some special initiative

in this regard. I thought he would have taken the lead throughout the Commonwealth in fostering the dairying industry because of his personal knowledge of and interest in it but, instead of that, we find that Western Australia is in the same position as the other States.

The Premier: And yet the Government has concentrated on trying to step up production.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then it must have concentrated in the wrong spot, because there is no tangible evidence of any results having been achieved.

The Minister for Lands: One cannot force dairymen to produce wholemilk if they desire to change over to cheese.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This debate, fortunately, allows me to refer to any subject. It will be recalled that for years in this House I dealt with the extreme shortage of teachers, and gave reasons for it, and made suggestions as to how it might be overcome. For a long time my suggestions were waved aside and nothing was done, but finally all the things that I suggested years ago were put into operation—every one of them. From time to time I now read claims regarding the number of teachers in training, and the wonderful success that has been achieved by the Government's recruiting plan. When I first put that suggestion up in this House it was opposed from the Government side as being unnecessary and not worthy of implementation, but in due course the Government learned that those measures were necessary and adopted the course I suggested, with great success.

The same thing might well apply in the case of dairying, where there is room for some special statesmanship. It is no use saying that the position is the same throughout the Commonwealth and that the Government is concentrating on this or that. I would like to hear of a definite plan—of what is being done and what the Government proposes to do, and what are the chances of success. Then we would know whether the industry was likely to get somewhere. It is no use bringing more and more people into this State, requiring more butter and cheese to feed them, if our production is to be allowed to decline. It may be necessary to take some entirely new step and serious consideration must be given to that question in order to see what can be done. There are many ideas that might be tried in an endeavour to overcome the lack of incentive, the lack of desire to continue in the dairying industry and to increase production. All such problems are capable of solution somehow. It might not always be easy to find the remedy and sometimes it can only be done by trial and error, but I hope that in this case we will not have too much of that.

I admit, however, that sometimes we must have a shot at something and, if it does not work out, try something else. What is certain, however, is that the in-

dustry is not in a healthy state, and we will be well up against it for supplies unless some method is found substantially to increase production. I hope that before long the Government will take the House into its confidence and give an indication of what steps it proposes to follow. There are many other matters with which I would like to deal, but perhaps I have already spoken long enough. I will not trespass further on the time of the House at this stage, but I do hope to hear, in speeches from the Government side, what members there are thinking on this question which is of such vital importance to Western Australia.

MR. McCULLOCH (Hannans) [4.58]: I wish first to make one or two observations on His Excellency's Speech. I begin with the reference to the cancellation of the Hospital Benefits Agreement, because that will cause considerable hardship to masses of our people. It now costs an individual in hospital 35s. per day and I think members will all agree that the ordinary citizen cannot afford to pay that much for hospitalisation. The result will be that many will be afraid even to consult a doctor in case they should be told it is necessary for them to go into hospital.

The Premier: For 6d. per week the citizen can assure himself of 21s. a day.

Mr. McCULLOCH: We should have a scheme under which the person going into a hospital would receive proper treatment free of all debt. There was a fund established for that purpose. I refer to what was called the Social Welfare Fund, which today is £185,000,000 in credit. The old scheme of hospitalisation could have gone on for a considerable time yet, notwithstanding the fact that the cost of hospital treatment has risen considerably. I was surprised to discover that a part of that Social Welfare Fund was being used to finance compensation cases. When a man is injured and goes to hospital, the 8s. that was previously allowed and that is still allowed from the Social Welfare Fund, is taken into consideration in financing the hospitalisation of the worker's compensation injury.

In the First Schedule of the Workers' Compensation Act there is provision for an allowance of £150 for hospital, doctor, surgical treatment and so on, with a further £50 at the discretion of the Minister. I think that money should be used solely for the treatment of a worker injured in industry and subject to the Workers' Compensation Act. The Hospital Benefits Agreement was never meant to finance compensation cases. I cannot understand why the Attorney General, who controls that department, should use that money for that purpose.

Not every hospital in the State will take a worker or anyone else for 35s. a day. Many of them charge more, and not just

2s. more, as the Minister stated in reply to a question that I asked. In some cases the charge is 10s. per day extra. At present if a worker is unfortunate enough to be injured in industry he has to find that extra 10s. per day. I feel that this is the obligation and responsibility of the Workers' Compensation Board and that that is where the money should come from, under the First Schedule of the Act.

I was pleased to see that the Commonwealth Government has at last wakened up to the fact that there were too many migrants arriving in this country in a short space of time. Such an influx of migrants meant that considerable unemployment had to take place in this country. It is not long since I read in the Press a report of where Italian and German migrants were arriving here, while Maltese were returning to their country because they could not get work in the Commonwealth. It is a bad state of affairs when our late allies—the Maltese, who were awarded the George Cross for the effort they made—have to return to Malta because they cannot get work, while our recent enemies and theirs are coming here and getting jobs.

There is no doubt that unemployment is increasing throughout the Commonwealth and I believe that the estimate of 100,000 is not far short of the mark. There is a considerable number in this State—and even in Perth today—who cannot get work, while still others are being stood down every week. The restriction of immigration was a wise step on the part of the Commonwealth Government.

I will deal next with industrial peace in this State, especially with regard to Kalgoorlie. I have recently been approached by employers in that centre on the question of certain action that took place in March last. One employer was charged with a breach of an award and I understand it was the Inspector of Shops and Factories who worked up the case against him, but unfortunately the charge was withdrawn. I have heard that particular firm referred to on many occasions, and the Minister has seen the correspondence and knows as well as I do that other employers in Kalgoorlie refer to it as a kindergarten. There is no doubt about it; it has been a kindergarten for years. I do not blame the Minister for giving permission for the charge sheet to be withdrawn because the file indicated to me that there were many wrong statements on it, and accordingly he had no other avenue open to him than the course he adopted. It is not fair to other employers if one man is to be allowed to employ all juniors on the excuse that they do not know the meaning of the word "adult"; nor is it fair that the Employers' Federation should come forward and say that the term "junior" was not what it was supposed to be.

The Minister knows as well as I do that the court sets out certain interpretations for an adult worker whether he is of 21 years of age or over or in receipt of an adult wage. It is definitely unfair to allow this to go on.

The Attorney General: I think they paid the senior wage rates, did they not?

Mr. McCULLOCH: At one stage 25 juniors were being employed.

The Attorney General: And being paid.

Mr. McCULLOCH: Nothing of the sort!

The Attorney General: I think the hon. member is wrong.

Mr. McCULLOCH: It was compelled to pay £600 as back money because junior rates were being paid. I believe that on the evidence put before me. On any future occasion, if the Minister thinks it is warranted, I hope he will use his discretion and not grant any leniency to the firm.

The Minister for Lands: The hon. member will notice that I warned them.

Mr. McCULLOCH: Yes, I know. This has gone on for years to my knowledge and I have had some considerable trouble as a consequence. I hope that in future the Minister will ensure that the conditions of any award are adhered to.

I would now like to refer to another item dealing with gold producers. This was raised in the Governor's Speech. Already some reference has been made to this question during the debate on the Address-in-reply and it is not my intention to say much more on it. We all know that at present the fixation of the price of gold by the International Monetary Fund at 35 dollars an ounce is most detrimental to the gold industry in this State, and also to the Commonwealth generally. Any other producer can pass on his rising costs to the consumer, but unfortunately the gold producer cannot. He is left all the time to meet the rising costs and yet he receives only the same price for his product as he was receiving before the exchange rate was altered.

We say that the Commonwealth Government is at fault because of this, but I think this Government should have something to say on the matter. I have quite a number of newspaper cuttings here, but would like to read only one dealing with how South Africa is meeting the position. Although that country is selling gold on the free market, and recently we followed suit, such a step will not take the State out of the trouble we are in at present. This article reads—

**South Africa Urges Gold Price Rise.
Increase "Must Come" Says Minister.**

Pretoria, July 31.—The South African Finance Minister, Mr. Havenga, declared yesterday that an increase in the official price of gold from 35 dollars an ounce "must come."

South Africa could not continue to be the bargain basement of the world, maintaining exchange stability for all 48 countries of the International Monetary Fund at great costs to herself, Mr. Havenga said in an interview with the Rand "Daily Mail."

Mr. Havenga, who is leaving next week to attend the I.M.F.'s annual meeting in Mexico City, said he would use the fund's annual report as a stepping stone to state the case for an increased gold price.

Rectification of the price was a question of honourable international understanding towards gold-producing countries which made initial sacrifice in the interests of the policy of international monetary co-operation.

If that were put into operation, as Mr. Havenga has said, it would clear the way for all countries. The price of gold at 35 dollars an ounce cannot be maintained as it was in the dark ages, and we must make some effort to have it increased. This also affects the prospectors and, unfortunately, they are in great trouble at present. There are large tracts of country tied up by companies, but the prospector can only scratch along the top of the known lines of lode and should he find any gold he receives only that low price. Some gold has been put on the free market, but that does not help the prospector in any shape or form. After all, he is the one that discovers the gold and paves the way for the big companies.

The Government could at least help the prospectors. It is known that they have to pay a 35 per cent. surcharge on rail freights, which could easily be abolished. Another step which could be taken by the Government that would not affect the economy of the country to any great extent would be to abolish demurrage rates. At the moment if a prospector rails 100 tons of ore to the battery which is capable of crushing only 20 tons a day, the result is that unless the prospector unloads the wagons himself and puts the ore on the ramps—which is double handling, as it were—he has to pay demurrage on these wagons. In particular, these are two questions to which the Government could give some consideration with a resultant minor effect on the economy of the country, but which would assist the prospectors considerably.

The latest import restrictions imposed by the Commonwealth Government have had not only a bad effect on goldmines but also on coalmines. Metal cordage was one of the items included in these restrictions so that wire ropes come into that category. Under the new import restrictions only 60 per cent. of the wire rope imported in the base year can now be brought into the State. That is proving to be rather harsh on the goldmining in-

dustry and it is impossible for some companies to carry on under these conditions. If a shaft is 1,000ft. deep and the company is able to get only 600 ft. of wire rope for its winder, then it will be impossible for the company to haul its ore from the deepest level.

These restrictions may be all right as far as bolts and nuts and other small items are concerned. Although the gold-mining industry can put up with the hardship, as can other industries, I cannot see how the companies on the Goldfields can continue if they can import only their essential requirements on the same scale as they did in the base year which was taken as the 31st December, 1951. Notwithstanding that the Commonwealth Government is responsible for imposing these restrictions, I think the Minister for Supply and Development could do something to have winding ropes removed from the list. Another item I noticed in the Governor's Speech was—

The progressive replacement of trams with trolley-buses and omnibuses is being continued.

We know that is a fact but, unfortunately, notwithstanding that these buses are being put into operation to replace the trams, the number of workers who were normally engaged on the route from West Perth to Victoria Park is being reduced. I have always been of the opinion that if any up-to-date machinery was introduced into industry the workers should obtain some benefit from it. After all, the workers manufacture the buses, they drive them and now the Government wants them to pay for the buses. That is the position, and that is how it works out. Instead of having two men on the buses, only one man is being employed with the result that the working man instead of deriving any advantage insofar as transport is concerned is going to be penalised.

I would now like to turn to the question of water supply. In the Press I have noticed on several occasions that the water supply to the Goldfields is going to be considerably reduced. I also heard privately that there is to be a 25 per cent. reduction during the summer months. We were told three years ago—as a matter of fact, four years ago—by the Premier himself at Kalgoorlie that plenty of water was going to be made available for the Eastern Goldfields. Now we see statements in the Press warning the people on the Goldfields that an unavoidable restriction will be placed on them during the forthcoming summer months. I think it is very unfair.

We were told that once the retaining wall was extended there would be ample supplies of water. There is an ample supply of water in Mundaring Weir. As a matter of fact, the Mundaring Weir today holds about 100,000,000,000 gallons of

water more than it held at the same time last year. In spite of this, we are told there is going to be a shortage of water on the Goldfields. That pipe-line was established for the purpose of serving the people on the Goldfields, and yet they are going to suffer a reduction in the supply of water notwithstanding that there is more water in Mundaring Weir today than ever before. So, if this shortage is going to continue year after year, and if the Government is going to supply a few hundred thousand gallons a day to the Anglo-Iranian Company at Kwinana, I think it is pretty crook. The people established on the Goldfields should not be deprived of water so that other interests may be served.

The other item I wish to mention is that of the supply of milk to schools. In the circular which was issued last year the Minister told us all that was going to be done in this direction. This was hailed with great delight; people were glad to think that schoolchildren would be supplied with free milk. I admit it would be a good scheme if it could be put into operation. To any right-thinking person, however, it was obvious that it would be impossible to implement; that it would be just impossible to supply each school in the State with milk every morning or during the periods suggested.

The Minister for Health: It will come.

Mr. McCULLOCH: Last year there was a dairyman at Kalgoorlie willing to distribute the milk and also willing to put the Government on the right track. He had a stainless steel tank, and if the Railway Department could have made the appropriate arrangements that tank could have been taken to Kalgoorlie with the milk which could have been distributed there. However, that has never been done. The taxpayers in the country areas are, after all, paying for the milk which is being supplied to somebody else. If it is impossible to permit the country people to come into the scheme then I think some substitute should be made available at the schools. When the matter was first mooted I suggested that if milk could not be obtained, arrangements should be made to provide an orange or an apple. I have heard there is as much vitamin in an orange or an apple as there is in a quarter of a pint of milk.

The Minister said there was a committee attending to these things and it was proposed to see what could be done. However, up to date nothing has been done in the Kalgoorlie area and I am certain the same is the case in other country districts. It is unfair that people should be taxed for a commodity which they are not receiving. The children in the metropolitan area are getting milk while those in the country districts are receiving nothing at all; not even a substitute. I believe the Minister knows the dairy-

man in Kalgoorlie to whom I refer, and I feel sure he would have been able to distribute the milk provided the railways made it possible for his tank to be taken to Kalgoorlie.

I turn now to the question of railways. Owing to the urgency caused by the metal trades dispute, certain restrictions were imposed on travelling facilities between Kalgoorlie and Perth, and vice versa. I was talking to a lady who came back from the Eastern States last week. She travelled by diesel and she informed me that there were 100 passengers and children sleeping on the floor. The diesel left Kalgoorlie at 7 o'clock at night and reached here at 10 o'clock in the morning. No facilities at all were provided for refreshment. A stop was made at Spencers Brook, and from what this lady told me it was just a shambles trying to look after children and endeavouring to get something to eat.

The Minister for Lands: What caused that?

Mr McCULLOCH: I have already said that these restrictions on the railways were brought about as a result of the metal trades dispute. I am hoping however, that the Government will pay more attention to these long-distance trains and re-establish those before the ones in the metropolitan area. The proposed railway between Fremantle and Perth is an abortion of a thing; I do not think it will pay, and if ever I travelled in it I feel sure I would be the only passenger. So, before these metropolitan and short-distance trains are put back into service I think the Government should make every effort to get the long-distance trains operating in order that people may travel in comfort.

I will not detain the House any longer. Unfortunately the Minister for Water Supply is sick, but I hope that some other Minister will convey to him the anxiety felt by the people on the Goldfields about the proposed reduction in their water supply during the hottest month of the season. It will mean a tremendous loss to the market gardeners and I trust the Minister will see that there is no reduction in the water supply during the coming summer months.

MR. TOTTERDELL (West Perth) [5.30]: I was more pleased than at any other time during my 2½ years in the House when the Leader of the Opposition rose to speak to this motion and received applause from the Premier. That, to my mind, was a wonderful gesture. It was like offering the olive branch and extending the hand of friendship on the part of the two Leaders in this House.

I have listened with great interest to the several speeches that have been delivered. I heard the member for North Perth expressing his loyalty to the Throne and to Her Majesty the Queen, and I am

sure we can all say "Amen" to that. I heard the member for Albany lashing out with tongues of fire about the Albany and Bunbury harbours, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition castigating the Minister for Housing about those asbestos sheets, and I take it that during the Address-in-reply debate a member usually takes the opportunity to clean up some of the things in his own electorate.

In this, the third session of the Parliament, I consider that we who are supporting the McLarty-Watts Government may feel very proud of the results that have been achieved by it during the last 2½ years. It is not my intention to speak on the housing shortage on this occasion, because the Minister for Housing has done, or tried to the best of his ability to do, as much as possible to relieve the shortage, which is still in evidence but is not so acute as it had been. Therefore we can say to the Minister, "Carry on with the good work and do whatever is possible to house each and every person in decent accommodation."

I should like briefly to touch upon the problem of traffic as it is presented to the City of Perth and the Perth City Council, of which I am a member. Last year, I advocated an alteration to the legislation to permit local governing bodies to control traffic in their districts, and provide parking areas and stations for the motorist who has to come to the city to carry out his legitimate business. He is the lifeblood of the city and is therefore entitled to reasonable accommodation when he enters it to do his business.

I ask Cabinet to consider the suggestion to pass over traffic control to the Perth City Council, whose members are more in touch with the worries and difficulties of traffic than even the Government or the police are. I believe that we would be capable of providing accommodation for the parking of motorcars at a very modest cost and under conditions where the owner would feel that his car was safe, and without danger of being interfered with in any way.

The burning question of town planning is still in the doldrums. We are living in great expectation, hoping that, on the return of Mr. Dumas, some constructive and concrete scheme will be put forward that will lead to the improving and the final designing of the metropolitan area and the outlying districts for all time. When the Government is dealing with town planning, I hope it will consider the idea of moving the Governor's establishment from the present locality. As one who is greatly interested in the future planning of the city, I believe the time is not far distant when we shall have to consider transferring the Observatory into the hills at Greenmount. That is where this institution should be, and the present Observatory site would be an excel-

lent one for the Governor's residence. The locality of Government House, beautifully situated though it may be, has become so cluttered up with buses and other traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian, that there is not now the former nice approach to the Governor's residence. If Government House were located on the Observatory site, it would have views overlooking King's Park and Swan River, and this would be in every way a delightful site.

Recently I noticed an announcement in the Press that the land, which had been resumed on Heirisson Island and vested in the National Fitness Council, is not now acceptable to that body for the purpose for which it was originally intended, namely, a sports ground. The council feels that it would be very undesirable to take over 90 acres of land on the island for that purpose. I hope that Cabinet will agree to the suggestion of the Perth City Council to utilise the island for botanical gardens and a sanctuary for birds. At the same time, consideration might be given to the idea of abolishing the Zoo. We could give away the wild animals and sell the land now occupied by the Zoo. I do not think that a Zoo is necessary nowadays, and if we created gardens, playgrounds for children and a bird sanctuary on Heirisson Island, the children could fare as well as they do now by going to the Zoo and indulging in ice-cream and cakes.

In my speech last year I mentioned the question of widening Hay-st., which, of course, is tied up with the appointment of a town planner or a town planning authority. Therefore, it would be wise at this stage not to enter into details regarding these improvements.

Some members may have noticed in the Press a few weeks ago that I was reported as having stated that I thought a dictator was necessary in this country. That statement was not correct. What I said was that I was personally of opinion that the 40-hour week was the greatest tragedy Australia had known, and that those who had mainly benefited by it were the S.P. bookies and the publicans, to whom it had been a goldmine. I thought that some kind of mild dictatorship in the direction of labour would have to be introduced to control the production so badly needed in this country and to allow us to compete with other countries, more particularly in the matter of food supplies.

At that time I had in mind a remark by the late Ben Chifley, reported in the "Sydney Morning Herald" of the 18th October, 1948, as follows:—

No guarantee can be given to anybody that they can stay put in a particular industry. It is realised that there will have to be transfers of workers, and in many cases transfers of whole communities to other forms

of work. I am quite certain that everybody will not be able to stay at home, because there will have to be transfers of labour if there is going to be expansion. I am not going to fool anyone in that regard. It may even involve a plan of movable towns.

According to the Sydney "Sunday Sun" of the 16th January, 1949, the Federal president of the A.L.P., Mr. A. S. McAlpine, said—

We can't have full employment unless we have a balanced economy. It is necessary to have manpower control in the interests of working people especially. Employers will not release men they don't need for the time being, fearing they will not be able to get them later. If workers were directed elsewhere to continuous and greater output, national prosperity would be increased.

Those statements influenced my remarks. I heartily support them as I believe this would be the best method of improving production that is so badly needed. I consider that the Press is sometimes unfair in rushing into print with headlines that are not really correct.

Mr. J. Hegney: How many hours a week should men work?

Mr. TOTTERDELL: I should say that 44 hours would constitute a reasonable week's work. When I was a lad, I worked 54 hours a week, and had to work hard, too. I hope that this session of Parliament will be fruitful, and when we meet the electors in March next I feel confident that the people of this glorious State will use their judgment wisely and once again return to power the McLarty-Watts Government.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [5.40]: The Address-in-reply debate appears to afford one opportunity when a member may bang his own home drum, for that has been done by practically every speaker, and now I wish to say a few words about the Leederville electorate. This is one of the smallest electorates in area, but it has a population of about 20,000 and homes to the number of 3,500. Though a large number of those persons are too young to vote, I like to remember that we have a responsibility, not only to electors, but also to the rising generation, and in Leederville there is a good deal of the rising generation.

I regret that the member for West Perth is not in his place because some comments I have to make concern him in his civic sphere and also concern the Government. I wish to refer to the matter of playing fields. In this respect, Leederville is well served. It is an old area and has most of the facilities that people in other districts have been claiming. Included in the facilities are playing fields

that have been provided partly by the Government and partly by the City Council. I do not think it would be possible to increase very greatly the area already made available, but I would urge the need for the provision of better facilities for changing and dressing.

There is a group of reasonably convenient grounds near Lake Monger and, though somewhat rough, they are used each Saturday and, to a less extent, each Sunday for three or more classes of sport at a time. They are so used all the year round, and yet there is no accommodation where participants may change. To do so, they have to use lavatories in park areas some distance away. Complaints on this score are not confined to Leederville; they apply to various areas utilised for the lower grades of sport. The top grade sports have pretty good facilities, but the lower grades, from which the top grades draw in the long run, have not the best facilities, but I think they could be provided without a great deal of extra expense because in practically every case the water supply is available. All that is required is an extension of the limited lavatory accommodation to provide proper changing rooms and showers at the playing fields.

Another item I would like to bring before the Government's notice, because I think it is a Government matter, is the provision of an olympic swimming pool somewhere in the vicinity of Perth. Such a facility will have to be provided some time if Western Australia is to hold the same relative position in the sport of swimming as it holds in most other sports. Kalgoorlie has a very nice swimming pool, which, in 1938, cost £34,000. Today it would cost a great deal more, but we could provide one more readily in Perth than at Kalgoorlie because we have certain of the necessary features here such, for instance, as water.

I have in mind the water supply depot in Loftus-st., where there is a bore which provides water that comes out of the ground at a very pleasant temperature all the year round. Opposite the depot is a vacant block of land—I do not know who owns it—which is large enough for an olympic pool. The area of the Kalgoorlie pool is 11,000 square yards inside the fence, and the vacant block to which I am referring is very nearly that size. This piece of land is not in the centre of the city, but it is an area which is well supplied with transport. Being to the north of the city it has three trolley-bus routes, and a private bus route passing it, and a block away another bus route; and the trams run just to the north of it. So it would be readily accessible to the people of the town.

I put this proposition to the Government for its consideration so that it might, if it thinks it a good suggestion, reserve the land for the purpose and, perhaps,

examine the proposition as a whole. The firm which constructed the Kalgoorlie pool was Filtration and Water Saving Pty. Ltd. of Collins-st., Melbourne, and its advice should be very acceptable. I would certainly like to see a pool constructed in Perth. The site I have mentioned is outside my electorate by the width of the road, but I am not quibbling about that. We should have such a pool for the youngsters. I am too old for Olympic pools; I prefer the surf beaches. Leederville is well supplied with most facilities that are required. We are well served with transport because there are numerous bus services of one kind and another going through Leederville to other suburbs. Yet, we have complaints about transport, the major one being in regard to fares.

Mr. Needham: That is not confined to Leederville.

Mr. JOHNSON: The fares have risen to a large extent. From where I join the trolley-bus the fare was 3d. when I first went there, and it is now 8d.; and the same trolley-buses are still in use. Others have been added to the service, but some of the old buses are still on that route. The fare, which used to be 4d., from the next corner, is now 10d. I bring to the notice of the Minister for Transport the economic law known as the law of diminishing returns. Fares have gone up to such an extent that there has been a falling off in the number of passengers carried. That is particularly noticeable when we recall that in the suburbs beyond Leederville there has been a big increase in population. I do not know whether it would not be a good idea to reduce the fares on the Government buses, and run more buses, and so get a bigger return.

Mr. Griffith: What were the wages of a bus driver when you paid 3d., and what are they now?

Mr. JOHNSON: If the hon. member compared the basic wages of the two periods, he would know.

Mr. Griffith: That is not a civil answer to a reasonable question. You can be clever here if you like. If you are asked a courteous question you can give a courteous answer.

Mr. JOHNSON: I could look up the information. I have not the basic wage tables in front of me at the moment. I thought the hon. member, having been here so long, would realise that this matter was connected with the basic wage.

Mr. Griffith: I know all right, but I wanted to see if you knew anything about it. It is obvious you do not.

Mr. JOHNSON: I could give the figures approximately without references, but they might be some shillings out. I do not think the basic wage has risen proportionately to the fares.

Mr. Needham: Not by a long way.

Mr. JOHNSON: Another transport complaint I have is in connection with the one-door trolley-buses. These buses have one advantage over two-door buses in that they are a little faster on the road, but they have a big disadvantage in that having only one door they are very slow to load and unload. The advantage of faster road movement is lost by the time wasted in loading and unloading. Furthermore, the people who use the Wembley and Mt. Hawthorn routes, which pass through Leederville, are in the habit of queueing for two-door buses, so that there are two queues to each bus. When a one-door bus comes along, the queueing system breaks down so that there is confusion, and considerable bad feeling at times.

The one-door buses could be put on the Nedlands route where the extra speed would be an advantage on the long non-stop run around the river. If that were done, it would help the queueing system and, in addition, the extra speed along the river stretch would tend to make up for the slower loading and unloading. One reason for the slowness is that after the first few seats are taken, each passenger getting into the bus through the centre door looks both ways before deciding where to sit, or a little later, to stand.

When a bus is loading about 100 passengers, a considerable amount of time is involved. At peak periods the buses are equally slow in unloading, because by some strange coincidence it appears that the short-run passengers are always at the extreme front or rear of the bus. A further complication is the fact that many children go to school on these buses at the same time as their parents go to work—the nine-o'clock rush. I do not know of any easy solution to this problem, because no matter what time the schools start there are always children who like to arrive early, and they would travel at the bad times. In addition, parents of small children often wish to travel with their youngsters, if possible.

This brings me to the problem of schools, with which Leederville is very familiar. Schools in my electorate, as in other areas, are overcrowded. The West Leederville school is overcrowded to the extent that the hat-rooms and a hall opposite the school, are used. Yet, at the Leederville school, where the classes are beyond the size recommended at the moment, arrangements have been made for certain facilities to be provided for special classes; and we hear rumours of the possibility of even further rooms there being required for special purposes of the Education Department. I cannot help wondering whether it would be possible to relieve the overcrowding at West Leederville by moving some of the children to Leederville, because the two schools are only about 1½ miles apart and there is plenty of transport.

Leederville has an increasing school population which will continue to grow, and I fear that some of the population in the suburbs just further out, both west and north, may find it necessary to travel by the existing transport to the schools in Leederville. I may be wrong, but I feel there is a great probability that there will not be a decline in school population in my district. These are minor points of the Leederville problems. This is a working class district and, apart from pensioners or retired persons, I can say quite definitely that everybody in the district is a worker of some sort. Apart from their actual wages, working people have other positive requirements, in particular stability—stability as to housing and employment. There is a very severe housing problem throughout Leederville. It is an old area with old houses, and fortunately a number of them were built in times when people built three-bedroom and four-bedroom houses. But, unfortunately, in many of those houses there is a family in each bedroom. Also, there are a number of small houses, three-roomed places that have long since outlived their proper life.

These wooden places have a theoretical life of about 20 years, and unfortunately most of them are about 50 years old and are still being used. If we are to be a civilised community, these houses must be re-built, and there are hundreds of them in my district. If the people did not have a good deal of self-respect these areas would become slums and although the exteriors of many of these places are a complete disgrace, the interiors of the vast majority are a credit to their occupants. But these houses are not good enough for modern times, and though the district is closely settled there is a large number of vacant blocks which have been vacant ever since Leederville was surveyed. Running past each of these blocks there is a tarred road, a water supply, an electricity supply, and with the exception of a limited area, sewerage facilities.

It should be a matter of Government policy to provide houses on vacant blocks where those facilities are readily available. It would be a great saving to the Government in all its branches, particularly those providing the supply of electricity and water, and to the people responsible for the provision of roads and sewerage, if homes were provided on vacant lots where these facilities are available. I would strongly press for the provision of three-bedroomed houses and, as nearly every member in this Chamber is a parent, they must realise that it is not possible to raise a family efficiently and decently if only two bedrooms are available and there are children of both sexes to be accommodated.

It is possible to overlook those facilities when times are bad; boys have to be brought up in sleep-outs and such like; but we are theoretically a civilised community and I think we have been making

a consistent mistake in providing only two-bedroomed houses in our housing scheme. Some two-bedroomed homes are required, but generally speaking the people who urgently need houses are those who require three-bedroomed places because such people have the largest families.

From conversations I have had with my friends I know that there are many houses in which there are small families, but those families would become larger if more rooms were available. Similarly, there are many homes in which there would be a greater number of young children if the families were not required to provide accommodation for one or more grandparents. There is a solution to that problem; we could provide small houses on some of these vacant lots. We could provide at a cheap rental one-roomed or two-roomed houses which would be suitable for accommodating old people when they reach their days of retirement, and where they could stay in their own home area.

I know that the facilities at Mt. Henry are particularly attractive to those who are able to go there. We could use a great many more institutions of a similar type, but there are many old folk to whom the idea of moving their homes from the district in which they have lived for many years is abhorrent. Consequently, if little houses, or groups of little houses, could be provided in home areas it would help solve the problem. It would also go a long way towards solving the housing problems confronting many of our younger people.

In many old homes there are old people who have lived there for 25 years or more. These people have reared families and the children have married and left home. Frequently there is only one old person, or two persons occupying a large house that would be ideal for a young and growing family. Those old people would not consider leaving their large homes to go to another district, but if smaller modern homes could be provided in the same district, they could possibly be persuaded to move out and let young families occupy the large, but old-fashioned houses. Many of these old folk have a sentimental attraction to their own district and their own circle of friends, and it would not be fair to force them to leave the district in which they live.

The provision of a limited number of small modern homes throughout the area would do a great deal to overcome the housing problem. I think it would lead to an increase in child population because I have noticed, during my wanderings, that whenever a young couple has moved into a new home there has nearly always been an increase in the family within 12 or 18 months. A new house gives the occupants a sense of security and that is most necessary if we are to increase our population. I hope that when the rents

and tenancies legislation is before us, it will contain a provision for the stability of home ownership and home occupation.

There are many people living in homes— if they could be called homes—that are very small—it may consist of one room, or one room and a verandah and in some instances a verandah only—for which they are paying the same rent as they would for complete homes. I trust that the legislation will include some provision to ensure that rents charged for accommodation are in proportion to its value and not subject to the requirement that the occupant must complain before any action is taken. Many of these occupants feel so insecure that they dare not complain about anything. I know— although I cannot prove it because the people will not complain in public—of homes where single rooms containing some alleged furniture are let for sums as high as four guineas a week or more. That is most unfair because the people concerned will not complain for fear of losing their accommodation.

On the question of stability of employment, I bring forward an idea from Norway which the Government may consider it desirable to copy. From 1946 onwards a yearly manpower budget has been presented by the Labour Directorate to the Norwegian Storting or Parliament. This now forms part of the annual national budget, and the manpower budget is prepared on the basis of investigations of the future requirements of labour and the tendencies of economic developments. Statistics of employment and unemployment are naturally very important factors in the preparation of a manpower budget. I know that statistics in regard to our own State are available and perhaps it might be possible for the Premier, when presenting the Budget, to give us an outline of a manpower budget, so that people who are in employment may know whether or not there is some prospect of their remaining in employment. It should not be impossible to supply an outline of that description and I think it is something to which serious consideration could be given. I ask leave to continue my speech at the next sitting.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.