

give the remedy, and it is this: Let those clerks who sit so comfortably in Barrack-st. carry out the task of enrolling these people. If they do it, neither I nor any other candidate will have to do it. Not only will they do the job faithfully and well when the temperature is 110 degrees, but when they get back they will not have the task of sending out nasty letters to themselves. Let the electoral office clerks do the enrolling and not us, because we do not know how. I do not want to do this job again. I get pretty hot about this, and I can say a lot about it, because I have just done the job.

I have another complaint, too. When I undertook this task of enrolment, there had not been a contest for four years, so the job had not been done for four years. The roll I was using was two years old. On the Goldfields, as elsewhere, people change their dwelling places. So we just made a blind stab and put them on, hoping that, as in previous years, a roll would come out. From my researches, it appeared that a roll used to come out about the 31st January in every second year—about two or three months before the elections—and I was building on that. I thought, "When the roll comes out, I will study it. I will find plenty of people who are not on it, and I will interview them and put them on if necessary, and will do what I can to help." But no roll came out, so I was just working in the dark. I was probably calling on houses to help to enrol people who were already enrolled.

There is a multiplicity of rolls. We have the Legislative Council roll, and the municipal council roll, and so on, and people just do not know whether they are on a roll or not. We say to a person, "Are you on the council roll?" He says, "Yes, I voted last week," and he is reminded that he voted then at the municipal council elections and that the municipal council and the Legislative Council are two different bodies.

The roll came out not long before the election took place. I had nothing to check on. It came out just before the closing of the roll, and not two or three months previously, with a supplementary roll issued later. It would have been a great help to us to have had that roll. After giving us that task, I say, "Do not treat us as though we are blackfellows or dishonest, but as though we are ordinary, honest Western Australian citizens, as the majority of us are." I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. A. R. Jones, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 6th July, at 4.30 p.m.
Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.24 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 30th June, 1954.

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

QUESTIONS.

HOMES FOR AGED WOMEN.

As to Available Beds and Applications.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Health:

With regard to the homes for aged women under his control, will he state—

- (1) The total number of beds available?
- (2) The number not occupied, if any?
- (3) The number of applications accepted, but still outstanding?
- (4) Has there been any increase in the number of applications since the recent alteration in the rents and tenancies Act?
- (5) What is the current waiting period between acceptance of applications and admissions?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 269 beds.

(2) Nil.

(3) Approximately 500 applications in the department's hands.

(4) Yes.

(5) Each case is dealt with on its merits, the most urgent and distressing cases being admitted when a vacancy occurs.

BUS SHELTERS.

As to Conference and Legislation.

Mr. ANDREW asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Did he see the articles on "Bus Shelters" in several issues of the "Daily News" during last week?

(2) Did he note the assertion that the Perth City Council is not interested in shelters for the people?

(3) As many thousands of people are, during the winter, getting wet and suffering much discomfort while waiting for public transport, will he—

(a) call a conference of the local authorities concerned, and representatives of the Government to go into the matter and resolve responsibility;

(b) prepare and introduce any legislation necessary to overcome the present impasse?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) This matter is at present the subject of discussion between the Premier, the Minister for Local Government and myself.

RAILWAYS.

As to Changing Colour of Diesels.

Mr. ANDREW asked the Minister for Railways:

As there have been a number of collisions between diesel locomotives and road transport at level crossings recently, and in some quarters the striped colouring with which the diesels are painted is held to be partly responsible as it camouflages their approach, will he have inquiries made, and if this assertion is correct, issue instructions for the diesels to be painted a more conspicuous colour?

The MINISTER replied:

Striped colouring on the front of diesel-electric rail cars is extensively used by Australian rail systems and is in accordance with British railway standards.

The black and yellow stripes on the W.A.G.R. units are considered to be the most conspicuous and the arrangement has the support of the National Safety Council.

ENTERTAINMENTS TAX.

As to Exemption of Infant Health Centre Dances.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH asked the Deputy Premier:

(1) Has he been approached as to exemption from entertainments tax for square dances held weekly in the Parish Hall, Claremont, by the Claremont-Swanbourne Infant Health Centre?

(2) Has his attention been drawn to the reasons why this exemption is sought?

(3) Will he give favourable consideration to the request?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) Exemption will be granted provided requirements of the law are complied with.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

As to Metropolitan Boundaries.

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government:

(1) When is it anticipated that the findings of Commissioner White on metropolitan local government boundaries will be made known?

(2) Is every action possible to expedite this matter being taken by Cabinet?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied:

(1) It is not known at present when the report will be made public.

(2) Yes.

BLIND PERSONS.

As to Assistance in Travelling Interstate.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is there any provision, either through State or Federal departments, by which blind persons may receive financial assistance in travelling to other States to receive specialist attention?

(2) If so, does this include air travel, and what steps must a blind person take to secure such assistance?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) No.

JEWELL-ST. PLANT DEPOT.

As to Delay on Machine Overhauls and Repairs.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Works:

(1) How many machines such as graders, tractors and rollers are awaiting repairs or overhauls at the Public Works Department workshops at Jewell-st.

(2) What is the period of delay, if any, from the time a machine is received until it is taken into the workshop?

(3) If there is any delay, what is the reason?

(4) Are sufficient spare parts carried at the works in order to avoid any delay in repairs to machines and vehicles?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Forty-six.

(2) No actual figures can be provided. Substantial work would be necessary in making an analysis of the individual card records of approximately 2,600 units of plant.

(3) On occasions there is delay due to a concentration of work and shortage of staff in particular sections of the establishment.

(4) Yes—within reason.

METROPOLITAN SEWERAGE.

As to Deficits and Reduced Rating.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What was the total accumulated deficit on the metropolitan sewerage operations for the year ended the 30th June, 1953?

(2) What was the deficit for the year 1952-1953?

(3) Was the reduction of 1d. in the £ rating made possible by the increase in rating of 1s. 5d. to 1s. 11d. or through the revaluation?

(4) A deficit is not anticipated for the Sewerage Department for the year ended the 30th June, 1954?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £408,569.

(2) £45,158.

(3) Both these factors contributed towards making the reduction possible.

(4) A deficit is not anticipated for the year ended the 30th June, 1954.

COOGEE BEACH.

(a) As to Pollution.

Mr. LAWRENCE asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government:

(1) Is he aware of the ever-increasing pollution of Coogee Beach by the discharge of effluent from the noxious trades established in the area?

(2) If so, will he take immediate steps to have the matter rectified or at least controlled?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied:

(1) I am not aware that pollution is occurring.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(b) As to Investigating Extent.

Mr. LAWRENCE (without notice) asked the Minister for Health:

In view of his reply that he is not aware of the ever-increasing pollution at Coogee Beach, will he have inquiries made immediately in regard to the extent of pollution at Coogee Beach?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes.

BRICKS.

As to Advice by C.S.I.R.O. Experts.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Referring to a question on the 23rd June, relating to the production of bricks and the Government's intention to invite C.S.I.R.O. experts to this State, has he read paragraphs 80 to 82 inclusive on page 13 of the 5th Report of the Joint Committee on Public Accounts of the Commonwealth Parliament?

(2) In view of the facts stated therein, does he consider any good purpose is likely to be served by the visit of the experts referred to?

(3) Are there not persons in Western Australia well qualified to advise the Government therein?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) Limited assistance and advice is available locally, but those in a position to advise are not able to devote the time necessary for adequate investigation and research.

The C.S.I.R.O. is the scientific organisation established for advising on building material research and the invitation to this organisation, principally for investigation into suitable clays and materials for brick-making and improving the quality of bricks generally, was sponsored by the Housing Advisory Panel.

COLLIE COALMINERS.

As to Preference for McLarty-Watts Government.

Mr. OLDFIELD (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Is it a fact that during his recent visit to Collie, the coalminers suggested to him that because of the many broken promises by the Labour Government, they preferred the administration of the McLarty-Watts Government?

The MINISTER replied:

There have been some misstatements of facts connected with my recent visit to Collie. If the hon. member puts the question on the notice paper, I shall answer it.

LOAN FUNDS.

(a) As to Unspent Amount.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier:

(1) Did he see a report in today's issue of "The West Australian" setting out that the Prime Minister in his speech at the Loan Council meeting had told the Premiers that he had not the slightest doubt that all the States had "salted away" many millions of pounds for use in future years?

(2) Is Western Australia among the States that have done so?

(3) If so, what amount has been set aside?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

(1) I did see the report and I was highly amused.

(2) and (3) Western Australia is not amongst those States.

(b) As to Expenditure, 1953-54.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier:

Have all the loan funds been expended for this financial year?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

I must guess the answer. I would say that they have not. I hope they have not because there are still some accounts to be paid for work carried out up to the end of the financial year. I undertake to ascertain what the true position is at balancing tonight and inform the Leader of the Opposition as early as possible.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Retaining Unshipped Piping.

Mr. YATES (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier:

Further to a question answered yesterday relating to galvanised piping, which is in short supply in this State, being on the wharves at Newcastle and unable to be shipped because of shortage of space, is he aware that, unless this piping is lifted within the next few days, it will be sold in the Eastern States? If that is so, will he contact the Premier, who is already in the Eastern States, to see if some arrangements can be made to hold this piping?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

In elaboration of the reply given to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, I wish to inform the House that, in accordance with the undertaking I gave, I discussed this matter with the Minister for Supply and Shipping who has now advised me as follows:—

The department is constantly requesting additional shipping to carry urgently needed steel products from Newcastle to W.A.

Because shipping is short, there is an accumulation of all types of steel awaiting transportation.

Available space is allocated among shippers by the B.H. Pty. Ltd., on a basis designed to maintain a steady flow of all materials. The department is informed that up to date provision has been made for 1,575 tons of piping to arrive at Fremantle during the first three weeks of this month.

One vessel, the "Lowana" is due tomorrow, carrying 375 tons, the "Mundulla" due at the middle of the month has been given space for 500 tons, and the "River Derwent" is expected to arrive during the third week with an allotment of 700 tons.

A special request has now been made for additional water piping to be shipped as early as possible.

In view of this advice, I am satisfied that nothing more can be done at this end to expedite delivery of the piping.

MARGINS FOR SKILL.

As to Fear of Commonwealth Government Intervention.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier:

(1) Has he seen the statement in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" to the effect that the Labour Premiers feared the Commonwealth Government's decision to assist the Arbitration Court in the margins case on wages for skill to workmen?

(2) Does he agree with the feelings expressed by these Labour Premiers in respect of the Commonwealth Government's decision?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

(1) I did see the report in the paper.

(2) Because of long experience I never accept as gospel what I read in any newspaper. I have yet to be advised that the report is a correct report of the attitude of the Premiers. Until I know what their attitude is, I am not prepared to comment on it.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

As to A.L.P. Nominations.

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Deputy Premier:

(1) Did he see a Press statement in the "Daily News" of the 28th June to the effect that the A.L.P. Metropolitan Council is calling for nominations for the next municipal elections for the City of Perth and the City of Subiaco?

(2) Does he consider that such direct introduction of party politics is in the best interests of local government?

The DEPUTY PREMIER replied:

I once read a story entitled "Rip Van Winkle." The practice of inviting applications for nominations for positions in local authorities is no different now from what it has been for many years. It has been

the practice of the A.L.P. to invite nominations from persons interested and members of the party who are desirous of contesting seats on local authorities. The advertisement to which the hon. member refers is quite in line with the policy which has been followed. So far as I am concerned, I see nothing wrong with it.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Bovell leave of absence granted for three months to Mr. Mann (Avon Valley) on the ground of urgent private business.

On motion by Mr. May, leave of absence for three months granted to Mr. J. Hegney (Middle Swan) on the ground of urgent private business.

BILL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate adjourned from the previous day.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [4.39]: The more I consider the background of the legislation introduced in November-December, 1953, and the subsequent legislation introduced in the 1954 special session, together with the legislation at present before the House, the more I come to the conclusion that the Minister for Housing, on behalf of his Government, is endeavouring to produce a political rabbit from the hat yet another time. His Government apparently feels that it was not a bad one the last time and it may be well worth while doing it again, but I suggest that just as the magician who tries to pull a rabbit from a hat once too often makes a mistake, it is quite on the cards that this political rabbit is being pulled from a hat once too often. As time goes on, and landlords and tenants understand better the effect of the amendments offered to the Government at the special session, I believe they will become convinced that the refusal of the Government to accept those amendments was nothing more than a political manoeuvre.

Mr. Andrew: You are not serious in saying that!

Mr. COURT: I am, because anyone who studies the effect of those proposals must realise that legislation of this kind would be unnecessary. Definite protection was offered for tenants and the Government of the day saw fit to reject it completely. Consequently, we find ourselves again considering rents and tenancies emergency legislation.

Personally, I very much doubt the sincerity of the Government in introducing this particular legislation in a form which is on all fours with the previously rejected measures, except that it seeks to impose even more severe restrictions through the retrospective provisions of the Bill. I

cannot understand why, after all the debate that took place in November-December and the special session, the Government did not see fit to bring down a more reasonable measure that would have a chance of being generally acceptable both in this House and in another place.

The Minister for Housing: It is the same Government and the same problem.

Mr. COURT: Members on this side of the House represent approximately 50 per cent. of the people and the Government received all possible co-operation during the debate on the measure last session. The Opposition put forward practical suggestions to aid the Government in solving the problem.

The Minister for Housing: The vital point is that the Government has the responsibility of dealing with the situation.

Mr. COURT: Nevertheless, the Government has the responsibility of taking notice of proposals that are made to better the legislation.

The Minister for Housing: Which it did.

Mr. COURT: It did not; the Government rejected our proposals. We are now told that the plight of the tenants is worse, and yet the Government disregarded our proposal to provide protection for them during the interim period.

The Deputy Premier: What real protection was offered to the tenants?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Protection up to the 30th September.

The Minister for Housing: That was rejected by the Legislative Council.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The Minister for Housing: It was moved by Hon. C. H. Simpson.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It was moved in this House and refused.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mt. Lawley must keep order.

Mr. COURT: For inconsistency in representation to the public, this measure reaches an all-time high. On the one hand, the Minister is going to considerable lengths to claim a virile and successful housing programme on the part of the Government. When speaking at Collie on the 15th June, the Minister made reference to the time in which he expected the housing lag to be overtaken, but now he goes on to tell us, when dealing with rents and tenancy legislation, that a very bad state of affairs exists in respect to housing.

If the Government is really sincere in its often-expressed desire to end controls, surely this is the time when it could have brought in a measure which showed some genuine movement towards the easing of control! Why did not the Government hold to the progress made by the previous Government in respect of tenancies let for the first time after the 1st January,

1951, and then relax control a little further in order to move steadily along the road towards ending control?

Mr. Yates: Ministers want complete control.

Mr. COURT: I believe that such a measure introduced in November-December of last year would have succeeded. But no; the Government brought down a harsh measure, and the Minister cannot deny that in introducing and handling the Bill in this House, he did so in a very uncompromising manner. We at this stage are entitled to assume—and we really believe—that it was a political manoeuvre and not a sincere approach to the problem of rents and tenancies. In any event, I cannot understand why the Government wanted to put the clock back when successful progress had been made in the decontrol of rents and tenancies, particularly as one of the most memorable moves towards decontrol was supported and, if I remember correctly, instigated by the present Minister for Housing.

It has not been demonstrated to the House that any great hardship has occurred up to December last or even to this moment in respect of the easing of restrictions on tenancies since the 1st January, 1951.

Mr. May: Have not you seen what is happening in the metropolitan area?

Mr. COURT: If the Government wants permanent control of tenancies, as it has declared in respect of a fair rents court, let it be politically honest and declare so right now that it is seeking a permanent system of rents and tenancies control.

The Deputy Premier: Do you share the opinion of the member for Dale that it is not difficult to obtain accommodation for evicted families?

Mr. COURT: I find it difficult to see how the Government can desire to have permanent fair rents courts in accordance with the party's policy and separate that from actual tenancy control, because it is most difficult to separate those two factors, as has been pointed out from this side of the House on many occasions.

The Deputy Premier: Are you afraid to declare yourself on the point I mentioned?

Mr. COURT: What was that?

The Deputy Premier: The member for Dale, speaking on behalf of the Opposition, said it is not difficult to obtain accommodation for families who have been evicted. Do you share that view?

Mr. COURT: I know that it is not impossible to find accommodation, and I do not think it is difficult to find accommodation at this stage.

The Deputy Premier: Then you share the view of the member for Dale.

Mr. COURT: If a man tries hard enough and adapts himself to existing conditions, there is accommodation to be obtained. I have been assured by several reputable land agents that they have more houses offering for letting since there was some freedom from restrictions than they have had for years.

The Minister for Health: At very high rentals.

Mr. COURT: The Deputy Premier did not ask about rentals; he asked whether alternative accommodation was available, and I say that it is. From time to time the Government has given what I believe is merely lip service to a desire to enter into a period of decontrol, and more than once during this debate and other debates on the subject, members have used words to the effect that the majority of landlords are decent people. I feel that they are merely playing with words, and the attitude of the Government as expressed in this measure leads me to believe that they are not serious in the statements they have made.

I submit that if the control, in the form proposed in this measure by the Government, is imposed in respect of rents and tenancies, the dead hand of control will fall heavier than ever on this problem. There has been a superficial truth stated, both in this House and another place, to the effect that human welfare is more important than property rights. None of us will deny that that is true, superficially, but I am afraid it is a platitude that is trotted out by speakers of all shades of opinion from time to time when they think it sounds well.

One has to go beyond the superficial implications to realise that a short-sighted soft policy can often achieve disastrous results for human welfare. If we examine the position in France today we see the effect of a long term policy of endeavouring to place human welfare before property rights, and the Minister for Housing well knows that there exists today in that country the biggest housing mess to be found in the civilised world. In France the position has been reached, after years of repressive controls, when it is a definite liability to be the owner of property and there are many cases where it is difficult even to give property away.

Mr. Brady: The problem of France is deeper seated than that.

Mr. COURT: As a result of these economic restrictions, France has the lowest building rate of any part of the civilised world and we can see there the result of years and years of continued severe control. We find that it was the rigid rent controls that blocked the construction of new houses in France and that the only dwellings being built there now are of a co-operative type, which are free

from control, but for which such prohibitive rents are demanded that people who really need them cannot occupy them. I suggest that that is the pay-off of a long period of very severe controls.

In answer to the Minister's statement in respect of human welfare, I submit that the practical way to place human welfare before property rights is to encourage the building of an adequate supply of accommodation. Has not the freeing of control for the short period that has already existed stirred many young people into a realisation of the value of home ownership? Putting the clock back by means of this measure will only undo the good that has been achieved.

The Minister for Housing: It has had a totally different effect on some other families.

Mr. COURT: I well recall that in recent months the Minister for Housing did say he would like to see a return to the pioneering spirit and I suggest that the measure he has introduced—if it has his support—is a contradiction of the statement he then made. Now is the time for us to get down to some clear thinking on the problem of rents and tenancies. Let us get away from the drama of extreme cases which Government members would like to bring forward without giving both sides of the story. In this regard the Minister's own figures are worth analysing. He said that after eliminating duplications there would be approximately 1,000 notices to quit registered with the Housing Commission. I would point out, firstly, that that could be taken as being the peak number of registrations that he can expect.

Naturally there has been an upsurge in the figures following an overdue adjustment of the rents and tenancies position. Secondly, many of those notices to quit that have been registered with the commission have already been satisfied, some from private sources and others because of priorities of long standing already established by the applicants at the State Housing Commission. Thirdly, I might mention that many of the notices to quit registered at the Housing Commission will not be proceeded with by the landlords because they were given at the specific request of the tenants—

The Minister for Housing: What makes you say that?

Mr. COURT: Because when they go to the commission the impression they are given—rightly or wrongly—is that until some move is made by the landlord they cannot receive consideration from the commission.

The Minister for Housing: You are definitely wrong there.

Mr. COURT: With all respect to the Minister, I am not. People go there and—I do not say it is the intention of the Minister that they should be advised in

this way—they are given this information and they come straight back to their local member or their landlord and say, "I cannot get accommodation from the Housing Commission until I am evicted. I am told at the commission that I have to get a notice to quit and get it registered before I can receive help." Many landlords have given those notices to quit, but will not proceed with evictions.

Mr. Lawrence: How many?

Mr. COURT: There are at least two out of the six tenancy problems that I have in my electorate, where the landlords have told me that they will not be parties to going to the court for evictions, but the notices are registered at the office of the commission and are among the number that the Minister quoted to the House.

The Deputy Premier: They will not get houses from the commission.

Mr. COURT: I hazard a guess that of the number registered with the commission approximately one-third have been cleaned up already.

The Minister for Housing: What do you mean by "cleaned up"?

Mr. COURT: Either given houses by the commission because they were entitled to them—

The Minister for Housing: The Housing Commission does not give houses to evictees.

Mr. COURT: They may have been given houses because of their priority. If they were people who applied in 1948 they would get houses automatically because of their priority.

The Minister for Housing: Whether they received eviction notices or not.

Mr. COURT: It was found that many of the people who registered notices to quit at the Housing Commission had an entitlement already because of their priority, but they are still registered there as notices to quit although they have been fixed up. Others have found private accommodation and have helped themselves and are no longer a problem to the commission.

The Minister for Housing: Many of them are living on back verandahs and in all sorts of places.

Mr. COURT: In addition, during the last few months the State Housing Commission has been assisted materially by the increased availability of funds under the Commonwealth war service scheme and that must have helped to solve this problem during the last few weeks.

The Minister for Housing: Not in the building of houses. In the purchase of existing houses, yes.

Mr. COURT: As I see the problem with which this measure deals, I feel that we are at the cross-roads of the relationship

between landlord and tenant. Any weak action or undue pandering at this stage could sow the seeds of a soft and flabby citizenship. There is more in this problem than just solving the immediate housing difficulty. We could be parties to sowing the seeds of a soft and flabby citizenship in place of the self-reliant and resourceful people we profess to be. It is true that some landlords have been tough, but for each such landlord there is usually one or more difficult tenants. I would not like to think that because there are a few so-called tough landlords we are going to let them dictate the economic policy of this country. We will defeat the tough landlord for good not by laws and regulations but by creating an adequate supply of accommodation.

The Minister for Housing: Why not give us the chance to do it?

Mr. COURT: That is how to accomplish it. That kind of landlord will prosper while there is control because he is the type who will get around the law. The decent landlord will not bother to play around with the law. We have been told, with varying degrees of pathos, that there are many people about to be thrown out on the street, but I fail to see that that is so. Were there any thrown out on the 31st December, 1953, and why should there be any change now?

I have tried to analyse the situation as it has developed over the last six months. I endeavoured to find the official figures for the movement in population for the six months to the 30th June, 1954, but unfortunately the information is not available at the moment although the figure is somewhere between 5,000 as a low and 9,500 as a high. Working on the accommodation basis of one house to four people that means that, taking the low figure, we would need 1,250 houses to accommodate the increase during the six months period or, on the high figures, 2,375 homes.

The Government is at present building houses—including flats—at the rate of approximately 7,800 per annum or 3,900 homes for six months. If we take the low figure, 1,250 homes, to take care of the increased population, we find we have a surplus of 2,650 for the six months to help take up the back-lag, and that is a considerable improvement, in anybody's language. These are the homes built in Western Australia, regardless of who built them. I do not wish to enter into an argument as to whether the Housing Commission should or should not have built them, but am dealing with the number of homes completed in this State and am quoting from the official figures for the year ended the 31st December, 1953.

If we take the highest increase that we could expect in the population for the same six months, we find that we have a demand for 2,375 homes to accommodate the increase, as against 3,900 completed homes,

which means that, in the worst case, there has been an advance of 1,525. If we want to be even more conservative and approach it in another way, we can ask how many marriages there were in the six months ended the 30th June, 1954. I have selected this period because it is the one during which all the controversy has been carried on arising from the decision made in the session ended December, 1953. During that period there have been approximately 2,750 marriages celebrated in this State, an average of 475 per month. With a building rate of 3,900 homes, and assuming that each married couple—naturally they would not yet have offspring—got a home—

Mr. Lawrence: It could be a second marriage.

Mr. COURT: If it were, and they had 10 children, that would not affect what I am going to say. The position I have outlined would mean that if every married couple were given a home immediately, there would still be a surplus of 1,150 homes for that period, because there were only 2,750 marriages in that time and the building rate for the same six months was 3,900, giving a surplus of 1,150. Again, on the most conservative estimate, an appreciable improvement has taken place in the position that existed at the end of December last, and so I find it hard to see that there exists any great crisis such as was portrayed by the Minister when introducing this measure and such as is suggested by members on the Government side of the House.

Someone might challenge my reason for saying that one house should cover four people. According to my analysis of the Commonwealth statistics, we in Western Australia are in the position that we have a better proportion of homes to the number of people here than the Commonwealth average. The Commonwealth average, according to my analysis of the figures, is something over four; the Western Australian position is something under four, and the Minister for Housing would probably be pleased to quote the fact that an improvement has taken place over the last 12 months. In other words, the spread of houses in Western Australia is better today than it was 12 months ago because the completed homes—forget the argument about whether they were started or completed—are that much in excess of the demand from the increased population.

I would further point out to the Minister that if control in the form proposed in the Bill is introduced, it will have the effect of drying up a potential source of houses for letting, because unless people can be sure, before they let their houses for the first time, that they can command control of those houses, they will not run the risk. I refer in particular to the considerable relief that would be granted to the housing problem if people going abroad for six, nine or 12 months could let their houses

with complete confidence that they would get them back on their return. Under the measure, as I understand it, those people would still have to go through some procedure to get their houses back. Maybe the Minister can show me that I am wrong, but as I see it, under this measure they will have to go through that procedure and there will be a degree of risk—

The Minister for Housing: None whatever.

Mr. COURT: —that the hardship factor will assert itself as between the owners on their return to Australia and the tenants who are in the houses.

The Minister for Housing: No. Common law will apply and it will be a question of giving them 28 days' notice.

Mr. COURT: What person would risk his house if there was any shadow of doubt? That is the problem.

The Minister for Housing: There is no doubt about it.

Mr. COURT: On the question of shared accommodation, much has been said about excessive charges for rooms. I suggest that there was complete agreement on both sides of the House in December last that this type of accommodation should be subject to complete control. As I see it, under the Act there is complete protection for those tenants, if the rent inspector is doing his job.

Hon. A. F. Watts: But nothing has happened.

Mr. Lapham: He cannot catch up.

Mr. COURT: We should not hear any more complaints about excessive charges for shared accommodation if this chap is doing his job. But because of the amount of time that has been spent by the rent inspector on chasing up or surveying the rents being charged for flats and residences, the particular job which both sides are anxious should be followed through with some vigour has been neglected. I say this because I have yet to see a prosecution in respect of shared accommodation. It is not a question of the tenant going to the rent inspector and lodging an objection. The Act provides that the rent inspector, of his own motion, can enter premises and fix the rent or charge to be made.

In the measure we have provision for a fair rents court. Personally I feel it is unnecessary to create a special court of this type; there is already a fair rents court and to create another instrumentality, as it were, is completely unnecessary. If control is continued in a form which allows reasonable latitude between landlord and tenant, I think there will be so few applications to the court that the present court machinery will be able adequately and effectively to cope with the problem. One of my main objections to it, of course, is that the court proposed in

the measure just reeks of permanence. I feel it would be wrong, at this late stage—nine years after the cessation of hostilities—to create yet another body to deal with this type of problem.

In speaking to the measure, the member for Dale submitted several propositions. I trust that the Government will see fit to adopt the principles put forward by that particular member because, firstly, in respect of the select committee proposal, it is the only way I can see that genuine doubt can be removed from the minds of members on both sides, particularly those on this side of the House. There is a need, and an urgent need, if we are properly to determine what should be done in respect of rents and tenancies, objectively to examine all these applications. I think members on the other side of the House would be interested and perhaps surprised if they saw all the circumstances surrounding many of the applications before the Housing Commission.

It is insufficient for us just to consider the mere numbers that are placed before the House. I, for one, would like to know that the circumstances surrounding the applications have been thoroughly examined by representatives of both sides of the Chamber. It would be interesting, also, to examine the fate of applications that have been made following notices to quit, because from that we could see the pattern that was taking shape. We would be able to find out the reasons for eviction and whether the claims of the Minister and the Government were, in fact, based on something that is really likely to happen or something that they fear might happen. Apart from the select committee proposal, which I heartily support, I feel that the suggestions enumerated by the member for Dale and the amendments he foreshadowed ought to be given earnest consideration. His idea of separating the dates of evictions and rent determinations is a principle at which we should aim.

In my opinion, that can be achieved without the need for all this machinery that the Minister or his Government proposes to set up. There is adequate protection in the proposals advanced by the member for Dale to punish the tough landlord in a manner far more effective than anything proposed in this Bill. I suggest that the proposal for placing a 12-months' embargo on evictions if the court finds that the landlord has been charging a rent so high that the court determination is less than 75 per cent. of the rent charged, is a most effective method of lining these people up and making them be reasonable.

The Deputy Premier: If he wants to charge £4 a week and the court says it is to be only £3, that is reasonable?

Mr. COURT: That is fair enough.

The Deputy Premier: Is it?

Mr. COURT: That is 75 per cent.

The Deputy Premier: It is a pretty substantial increase.

Mr. COURT: I do not think that is quite the point. A figure of 75 per cent. has been mentioned, but I think the principle—

The Deputy Premier: Why has it been mentioned? Do you think it is a fair proposition?

Mr. COURT: I think it is.

The Deputy Premier: I do not.

Mr. COURT: It gives some tolerance for genuine error and it still protects the tenant against the landlord who has been really tough and the type of landlord for whom we, on this side of the House, have no regard whatever.

Mr. Andrew: You are doing your best to give him protection.

Mr. COURT: If we accept the amendment proposed by the member for Dale, I think the situation will be taken care of and the punishment such a landlord would receive under the proposal would be most effective; more effective than anything proposed in the measure at present.

Mr. Lawrence: Where does the punishment part come in?

Mr. COURT: He will not be able to give a notice to quit to the tenant for 12 months—not from the date of the application but from the date of the court's determination.

Mr. Lawrence: But he still gets a fair rental for that 12 months.

Mr. COURT: What is wrong with that?

Hon. D. Brand: It is a rent fixed by the court.

Mr. Lawrence: Where does the punishment part come in?

Mr. Hutchinson: What is wrong with it?

Hon. D. Brand: Does the Minister aim to punish him at any stage in the Government Bill?

Mr. COURT: Such a landlord is kept to a fair rent and what will affect him more than any other form of punishment is the fact that the tenant is immune from notice of eviction for 12 months from the date of the court's determination.

Mr. Lawrence: Tell me, what punishment is it for the lessor?

Mr. COURT: Such a landlord would most likely want to put tenants in and out of his property to suit his own convenience. He would be prevented from doing that.

The Deputy Premier: A great explanation!

Mr. COURT: He would be prevented from having control over his own property for 12 months. That would be the greatest single deterrent that could be put into the Act.

Mr. Heal: He will still charge the same rent during that period.

Mr. COURT: He can still charge only a fair rent as fixed by the court and surely the hon. member would not object to him getting a fair rent.

The Minister for Housing: Therefore he is not losing anything.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But the Minister must admit that the tenant gets extra protection.

Mr. Lawrence: How does that affect the landlord? It does not punish him.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mt. Lawley is not making the speech.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: But the member for South Fremantle is making it.

Mr. COURT: I support the proposals put forward by the member for Dale because I feel that they will grant adequate protection to the tenant and will keep the control on the light rein that we should aim at, particularly at this stage, after 15 years of control. We should give some encouragement to people to get on with building.

The Minister for Housing: How does it encourage people to build?

Mr. COURT: If people are free from irksome controls in respect of houses built now or of tenancies offered at this stage for the first time, they will be more willing to provide those tenancies.

The Minister for Housing: What irksome controls are provided for them?

Mr. COURT: They still have to run the risk of not getting their properties back if they have undesirable tenants. The Minister might explain to me how they can, by giving 28 days' notice, not run any risk.

I would like to touch on the problem of the aged. I feel that this is the greatest single problem we have to face and while I admit that the alternative accommodation for ordinary types of families is available, though difficult, we come up against a slightly different problem where there are one or two aged people, usually without great means, and who are not normally entitled to assistance from the commission. In such cases I feel that it is not for us to say that the landlords who happen to have these particular people as tenants, should carry the burden. We will have to look further afield, and it is apparent that something along the lines of the McNess housing type of accommodation will be necessary to overcome the problem.

The Minister for Housing: What is their fate in the meantime?

Mr. COURT: I concede that there is some problem there. Under the amendments proposed by the member for Dale, I feel there will be sufficient relief to overcome the problem in the meantime.

The Minister for Housing: For a period of three months!

Mr. COURT: There has been a rather muddled approach to the question of business premises. As I see it, most of the cases that are coming up for consideration are already covered by the law as it existed at November, 1953. In other words, tenants could be got out of premises then on six months' notice. There did not seem to be any particular objection to that provision. But all of a sudden, since the change that took place in November-December, there has been an upsurge of these cases. I suggest to members that if they examine the many cases of this nature they will find that, although tenants claim long periods of tenancy, 15 years of that tenancy has been spent during a period of severe control.

Accordingly they cannot claim the normal attribute of being tenants of long standing as they could, say, with 20 years of no control. Twenty years of tenancy with a period of no control would indicate a mutual understanding between landlord and tenant. But when 15 years of that period has been subject to control, it is open to doubt whether that period of 20 years represents a testimony of good landlord and tenant relationship. When considering these cases, we must further realise that during these 15 years many of the traders have had the benefit of very low rents because of the control during a period of unprecedented prosperity.

If they have not recouped any ingoing they might have given during that period, and taken out a very satisfactory income during it, they never will, because during the period under review—the 15 years in particular—we have had a very satisfactory trading period. Firstly, we have those that were handling commodities in short supply, with consequent easy sales, and since the war there has been a tremendous upsurge of prosperity which has greatly assisted business people generally.

There is a genuine misunderstanding on the part of some people regarding the question of goodwill. There are two types of goodwill: The one that belongs to the site, and the goodwill that belongs to the man himself. A professional man carries his goodwill with him from place to place, whereas a trader is largely dependent on the site. Unless we deny the rights of property ownership, we must admit that the goodwill belongs to the particular site, and when entering into a tenancy arrangement the tenant is satisfied to recoup himself over the period of his tenancy.

The Deputy Premier: Ever heard of a man working his business up?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Ever heard of a man working his business down, or of a man losing his business?

The Deputy Premier: He would not, if this argument is sound.

Mr. COURT: When a man goes into a tenancy, he accepts the usual business hazards. If he has paid a large ingoing

over the last 12 months, the Deputy Premier will agree with me that he is either very foolish or has been badly advised.

The Deputy Premier: I agree.

Mr. COURT: And some people have done precisely that. While we feel sorry for that man, we cannot have a set of laws to specifically protect such a small group who may have taken the risk in the hope that controls would continue indefinitely. The sooner we return to freedom from control in respect to these tenancies, the sooner will landlords get back to the desirable position we had before the war, when the first thing a businessman did was to secure his tenancy; he secured his right of tenure and then built his business up within the limits of that tenure.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member's time has expired.

MR. McCULLOCH (Hannans) [5.35]: It is a pity to see this measure being dealt with politically. We have heard quite a lot from members of the Opposition who, when they sit down, say they support the Bill, but while they are on their feet are against it. We on the Goldfields do not depend entirely on measures such as this; we do something to help ourselves. We are not like the people in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Perkins: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCULLOCH: The people on the Goldfields, including the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council, the Boulder Council, the Kalgoorlie Road Board, and the soldiers that came home from the last war and who fought with the 2/28th Battalion, have all built houses for themselves, as well as for other people. According to every member who has spoken, it would seem that this legislation is only to be effective in relation to the metropolitan area. There has been some talk about a select committee which will, it is hoped, report in a fortnight. It all seems to indicate that no consideration whatever will be given to those people in the outback areas. This will only apply round about Nedlands, Maylands and other suburbs in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Hearman: West Perth.

Mr. McCULLOCH: The Opposition knows that, now it is on the other side of the House, not on this side. This Bill is being put forward by the Government of the day. Two or three months ago, maybe less, the whole matter was taken out of the hands of the Government by a person in another place, and it seems to me that the same thing is likely to happen again, if the Opposition can get away with it. It appears that the Opposition wants to put forward all its propositions, and that all that is submitted by the Labour Government must go out as being of no consequence. The Opposition should realise that it was on this side of

the House for six years; the rents and tenancies legislation was still on the statute book and there was no talk at that time of throwing it out or of placing the matter before a select committee.

While I was on that side of the House, I never heard any suggestion of a select committee. Now, however, we do because the previous Government is now the Opposition and is on that side of the House. Surely, some arrangement can be arrived at whereby these people can be provided with houses! I realise that the metropolitan area lacks housing. But who is to blame? I say that all parties are to blame and all Governments are to blame. We see nothing but centralisation in the metropolitan area, and Governments do not seem to worry about the people who go to the back country.

Their only interest seems to be in people building factories, starting businesses, and so on, in the metropolitan area. The result is that there are no houses to accommodate people who need them. Accordingly, I say that not only the Opposition but the Government is to blame for this position. If we are only to consider the people in the metropolitan area, then the housing position will always be acute.

Mr. Hearman; Hear, hear!

Mr. McCULLOCH: Strangely enough, when the Opposition was on this side of the House, it committed this State to supply 1,000 houses in three years at Kwinana for people who were not even in the country. What is worse is that quite a large number of these houses are today standing vacant. They are not required, and probably will not be required for another one or two years.

Hon. D. Brand: Why are they not filled?

Mr. McCULLOCH: The previous Government committed this State to that; without the authority of Parliament, the agreement was signed, sealed and delivered.

Hon. D. Brand: It is up to the Minister for Housing to see that they are filled.

The Minister for Housing: The Government's hands are tied by virtue of the agreement made by the previous Government.

Mr. McCULLOCH: We find, however, that the people who have been in this country for years, and have been applying to the Housing Commission for at least the last six years, are still without houses.

Hon. D. Brand: It is the responsibility of the Minister for Housing.

The Minister for Housing: This Government is compelled to pass the authority to the company under the arrangement arrived at by the previous Government.

Mr. McCULLOCH: That is the arrangement.

Hon. D. Brand: Let the Minister for Housing go to the company and see that the houses are filled.

The Minister for Housing: We have no control over them.

Mr. McCULLOCH: The member for Dale said something which I do not think is very fair. When referring to the fair rents court, he said that the Minister would stack the court. I do not think that is a fair thing to say about anybody. The present Minister will not always be the Minister for Housing. Besides, we have the Arbitration Court, which is composed of three members, as is the Workers' Compensation Court and the Licensing Court; other courts are also composed of three people. I have not heard anything against these persons, though I will say they are not much good. Only one man has any say in these courts.

I have never heard any objection expressed to the courts as at present established. Some people say that the fair rents court is the policy of the Labour Government, but it must have been somebody else's policy to establish all these other courts. So what is the harm if the Bill sets out that the chairman will be a magistrate and that there shall be an assessor from each side? For anybody to say that the Minister is going to be dishonest and rig the position is not very fair. The member for Dale also referred to the money spent on the Subiaco flats, though I do not know what that has to do with the Bill. He mentioned an amount of somewhere round £450,000 which should have been used to assist self-help builders rather than for the Subiaco flat project. That would mean £500 each for 1,000 self-help builders.

For my part, I do not know what good £500 would be to a builder in the metropolitan area today, particularly when we find from advertisements in the papers that most ordinary blocks are priced at £300 and some at considerably more. It is certainly good to assist self-help builders. I remember long before the last war when there was no such thing as help at all. One had to bog in on one's own and build one's own home. But with people coming into the country, the position has changed, and that is one reason for the housing shortage. If there had been no migration, there would have been plenty of houses. On the other hand, we must have migration to help defend the country.

Hon. D. Brand: Migrants help to build houses.

Mr. McCULLOCH: That is not in the Bill, either. There has been some inference that the Labour Party has used the housing question for political ends, particularly with regard to the Legislative Council elections. I do not know how that can be made out. I have already said that we of the Goldfields are not greatly concerned with the position. We did have two Legislative Council seats, and in the North-West we had another Legislative Council seat. So how did what the hon. member said have

anything to do with that? Members opposite say that it was only a political move, and that the introduction of this Bill is the same.

Hon. D. Brand: If you had heard some speakers in the metropolitan area you would have sworn it was. Even Dr. Evatt gave it a word or two.

Mr. McCULLOCH: The Suburban Province should have gone to Labour long ago. It should not have been otherwise.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Is there anything about that in the Bill?

Mr. McCULLOCH: Nothing at all! A lot has also been said about resumption of property. Even the Commonwealth Government, whose members are friends of the parties opposite, is resuming some buildings in Wellington-st. and has had no hesitation in telling the tenants to get out. The same thing has happened in an arcade in St. George's Terrace, and a few months ago the people were told to get out.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Did not the State Government tell the tenant to get out of a building to make way for the State Government Insurance Office?

Mr. McCULLOCH: Yes. They all do it.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I think she lost a few thousand pounds.

Mr. McCULLOCH: These people are all suffering hardships, and we are not learning any lesson from what has taken place. Members opposite want the same thing to occur again. They want this Bill to be thrown to the winds. Their proposition is not quite as bad as that which was on the notice paper during the special session; but if what the Opposition wants were agreed to, the Bill might as well be tossed out. The sooner this question is removed from politics the better.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Hear, hear!

Hon. D. Brand: That is talking.

The Minister for Housing: You should have listened to the member for Dale on that one.

Mr. Ackland: Are you speaking for or against the Bill?

Mr. McCULLOCH: The sooner the matter is removed from the sphere of politics the better it will be. The local authorities could make a far better job of this matter than any centralised government. Local authorities, with full control of the housing of the people in their locality, would be aware of the needs of the people and would build accordingly. I know hundreds of houses in the metropolitan area—big houses with seven, eight or nine rooms, and each house occupied by only two people. Such homes are being built today—big elaborate places using three times the number of bricks and three times the quantity of material required to erect homes for the people concerned. Such

houses are occupied by only two persons, both of whom are at work, the buildings being closed all day and used only during the night and at week-ends.

It is a great pity that this question should be dealt with on a political basis. Local governing bodies here have not enough authority. Their power is restricted, but they know more about this situation than we do. If they had control, all this humbug about political moves being made to win Legislative Council seats would be cut out; we would hear nothing more about such things. Some change should be effected. It is no good the members of the Opposition thinking that we will submit to all the propositions they have put forward.

Something has been said about the Legislative Council appointing a select committee. Of course, members there have already been told to do so, and we know what they will do. I have a pretty good idea of what will happen. They will have a select committee, and certain propositions will be put forward. Then we will have the whole business over again. There will be a disagreement between the Houses, followed by a conference. One individual will stand out, the whole Bill will be thrown overboard again, and the people will be in the same position as they were 12 months ago. And we say that that is democracy!

Hon. D. Brand: Who stood out the last time? The Minister for Housing!

Mr. McCULLOCH: The hon. member is not supposed to know who threw it out.

Hon. D. Brand: We do know.

Mr. McCULLOCH: That is supposed to be secret. I do not know why.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not think the hon. member should get into an involved discussion on that matter under this Bill.

Mr. McCULLOCH: As I see it, this Bill does not deal harshly with landlords, and it does give occupiers of houses a fair spin. I realise that every landlord is not bad. In every hive of bees there is always a drone. Similarly there are bad landlords and bad tenants; but we have to legislate the best way we can under existing circumstances in an endeavour to make housing available and keep a roof over the heads of people who need accommodation, until such time as the present migration policy ceases and the building of houses is advanced.

I have pleasure in supporting the Bill. I have no intention of favouring the proposal for the appointment of a select committee, and I am pleased that the Deputy Premier told the House that he was not going to do so either. The member for Dale gave it away when he began last night by saying that under no circumstances would he agree to the establishment of a fair rents court. In that case,

what would be the good of the appointment of a select committee? I would add that I do not consider myself under any obligation to support any of the amendments appearing on the notice paper.

MR. O'BRIEN (Murchison) [5.51]: I support the Bill and congratulate the Minister for introducing such a fair measure. I sincerely hope that he will not agree to delete the clause relating to the setting up of a fair rents court. That clause is most important to both landlords and tenants. I do not favour the appointment of a select committee. In my opinion, we have had too many select committees and boards. We, as members of Parliament, would be dodging our responsibility by appointing a select committee in this case.

Hon. D. Brand: Evidently you were not on this side of the House for very long.

Mr. O'BRIEN: Surely the members of this Chamber are capable of deciding such matters! After all, we represent the people of this State.

Hon. D. Brand: Hear, hear! That is the stuff.

Mr. O'BRIEN: I feel that the Federal Treasurer will restrict the loan funds to be made available to this State. That will have a tendency to increase costs and rents. It is therefore the Government's duty to sponsor a Bill such as this and to see that both landlords and tenants have access to a fair rents court.

MR. YATES (South Perth) [5.53]: In answering the latter portion of the speech of the member for Hannans, wherein he mentioned the giving away by the member for Dale of the ideas and intentions of members on this side in connection with the establishment of a fair rents court, I would say that such a court is not needed, because of the successful functioning of the courts as constituted today to deal with the rents and tenancies position. The courts have been dealing with that matter for many years since the end of the war, and I have never heard any criticism in this Chamber, or seen any in the Press, to the effect that they have not been fair, and impartial or sympathetic to tenants. In practically all cases the magistrate—and especially the magistrate of the Perth Local Court, Mr. McMillan—has erred on the side of the tenant.

The Deputy Premier: Were you absent when I read in this House a list of the judgments given in the Fremantle court?

Mr. YATES: I was absent, but I heard of them.

The Deputy Premier: I made a complaint about them.

Mr. YATES: The Deputy Premier did not say they were bad judgments, did he?

The Deputy Premier: Yes.

Mr. YATES: Did the Deputy Premier say that the magistrate was wrong in law?

The Deputy Premier: I said that, in my opinion, they were bad judgments, and I read a list which showed that increases of 100 per cent. had been made in some instances.

Mr. YATES: Of course, we get bad judgments in law at any time on any subject.

Hon. D. Brand: Would not a fair rents court give some bad judgments?

The Deputy Premier: There would be fewer.

Mr. YATES: The Deputy Premier may be right in regard to some of the judgments given. But there has been no criticism regarding the Perth Local Court over a period of years. That court has been functioning very successfully so far as the legislation has allowed it to. The law at the moment gives the tenant of a house or of business premises certain rights, and he has a reasonable time in which to make other arrangements and secure a home or premises for himself.

Much has been said about the large number of cases listed in the courts; but, from the point of view of accuracy, I do not think the statement bears analysis. I would say that the greater number are struck off the list before the time comes for the court to be entered. Only two days ago I was acquainted with a case that had been listed for the local court in Perth. The tenant of a home in a street in South Perth was to appear in court on the 29th of this month in connection with an eviction notice. On the previous day, however, accommodation was found for the tenant, and the rightful owner was allowed to go into her premises. The owner of those premises was living in a house in Havelock-st. which I am told contains nine rooms, the rental for each of which is £3 10s. per week. So the total rental is over £30. I am informed that the landlord is very severe on the tenants, insisting on lights being extinguished early and no fires being lit in the rooms, together with other restrictions.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He must be an exception, surely!

Mr. YATES: I would say that that property is worth between £5,000 and £7,000; but at the rate at which the landlord is receiving remuneration from the tenants—and they are not wealthy tenants but are, in some instances, in desperate circumstances—he would pay for the capital value inside of five or six years.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That could have been adjusted by the rent inspector.

Mr. YATES: It could have been. I do not know what action has been taken by the tenants. The person who regained possession of her home in South Perth lived originally at this house in Havelock-st. and paid £3 10s. per week for one room.

She received £1 16s. per week for her own property in South Perth. She was paying £3 per week off the purchase price of that home and £3 10s. by way of rent for a single room in Havelock-st., but received for her own house only £1 16s. That is one of the unfair aspects of legislation such as this, where the owner of a property is genuine but is not protected and has to suffer hardships.

The Minister for Housing: There is plenty of provision in the Act for that owner to obtain an increase in rent.

Mr. YATES: She was advised by her attorney six weeks ago not to accept an increase of rent because of the eviction notice against the tenant, and decided to accept his advice, bearing in mind that the tenant of the house was a widow with one son and was in bad circumstances.

Mr. Lawrence: Rents are recoverable.

Mr. YATES: How can rents be recovered when a tenant has no money and is in receipt of a widow's pension? There are not isolated cases but quite a number of that kind that must be taken into consideration. Action can be launched, under a different section of the Act altogether, in respect of the house in Havelock-st. to which I have referred, and similar action can be taken with respect to many other houses like that one. But the inspectors are not doing their job. Either someone is not seeing that they do it; or, after they leave the department, they have a free hand to go to whichever suburb they like and submit whatever reports they choose. This House has been told of quite a number of instances of that kind over the past 12 months but not much has been done to alleviate the position with regard to people renting rooms in apartment houses.

Mr. Hutchinson: Why has not that action been taken?

Mr. YATES: I do not know. Perhaps the tenants have not been game enough to go to the rent inspector to arrange for a fair rent, because they have no protection. We have to be fair both ways. Why has the tenant in an apartment house no protection, whereas the one in a home has?

Mr. Lawrence: Can the rent inspector, under the Act, proceed at law against the landlord?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Yes.

Mr. Lawrence: I do not think he can.

Mr. YATES: He can launch a prosecution.

Mr. Lawrence: The rent inspector?

Mr. YATES: Yes.

Mr. Lawrence: I think you are wrong.

Mr. YATES: If he has that power, I have seen nothing in the Press to indicate that he has used it. Getting away from that point, I want to comment on

what the Deputy Premier said. He agreed that some measure of control was necessary. But why does he agree to the extension of a control instead of gradually reducing it? Further, what action did his Government take, knowing full well the type of legislation it was going to introduce and knowing it had very little chance of succeeding either in this House or another place? Why did the Government not make provision for the tenants who were to be evicted because of the large numbers that it suggests are going to be put out of their homes?

The Minister for Housing: Do you not think the Government has done that?

Mr. YATES: It has done nothing to alleviate the position of evicted tenants with this exception, that the tenants, after receiving their eviction order, can go down to the Housing Commission and interview Mr. Prince.

The Deputy Premier: If that is true, your Government must have done less than nothing because we built more houses than you did.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You have taken the material away from the private builder; that is what you have done.

Mr. YATES: The previous Minister for Housing in the McLarty-Watts Government made provision for several hundreds of people likely to be evicted under the law when it was changed in 1950.

The Deputy Premier: Where?

Mr. YATES: It built flats in Guildford, for a start.

The Deputy Premier: Do you call them flats?

Mr. YATES: They were described as flats to me by an officer of the Housing Commission. The Government at that time made accommodation available at all the other camps under the control of the State Housing Commission. The Minister found accommodation for all these people irrespective of whether they were two-unit families or larger.

The Minister for Housing: That is not true.

Mr. YATES: It is; that obtained until towards the end of our period in office when he imposed restrictions because of the increasing number of cases that were being dealt with. I would say that was the peak period of evictions in the history of this State as a result of people approaching the courts to regain possession of their premises. The Act was altered in 1950 to maintain protection for those who had been in possession of their premises prior to the 31st December, 1950. Thereafter when a person rented a home or business premises, he did not receive the protection of the Act.

The only protection he received was the 28 days' notice that had to be given to the lessee; then an approach could be made to the court which would have to give an automatic eviction notice. That has worked very well here. Mention was made in the House of what has happened in the other States. It is of interest to note what is happening in Victoria which is one of the States that was mentioned by way of interjection. I shall read from the "Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth" to show the House what is the exact position there. I shall quote from page 273 of the issue of April, 1954.

The Minister for Housing: I wish you would tell us what the rents and tenancies legislation is in Victoria and base your remarks on it.

Mr. YATES: Wait until I read this and then make comments. This is headed "Landlord and Tenant Act" and states—

The main object of this Act, which was assented to on 22nd December, 1953, is to provide for a substantial relaxation of the statutory controls over rents of and evictions from dwelling houses and business premises. The principal provisions of the Act are as follows:—

- (a) All premises erected after the commencement of the Act, whether dwelling houses or business premises, are free of all rent and eviction controls.
- (b) All premises erected before the commencement of the Act and which have not been let since 1940 are released from controls.
- (c) Business premises, where a lease in writing for a term of not less than three years is entered into after the commencement of the Act, are free of controls.
- (d) A right to recover possession is given to the lessor of a dwelling house for occupation by himself, if he owns no other dwelling house in Victoria, and if he comes within one of certain specified classifications, such as a married man and his wife entitled to the age pension; or a married man and his wife receiving superannuation if their joint income does not exceed £500 a year; or a widow, widower or single person if over 65 years of age and if income does not exceed £200 a year; or an invalid pensioner to whom a means test applies; or a permanently incapacitated returned soldier pensioner.

- (e) In certain circumstances, an unqualified right to recover possession of shared accommodation is given where the lease was made after the commencement of the Act.
- (f) It is made a ground for eviction from a dwelling house that the lessee (a) is by subletting, receiving more than 100 per cent. above the rent payable to the lessor, or (b) has without consent ceased to reside therein for three months or more.
- (g) Lessors are given a statutory right (with due safeguards for the lessee) to enter leased premises for inspection or repairs; also a right for prospective purchasers to enter and inspect.
- (h) A single dwelling house may not be sold unless (a) by auction or (b) the tenant is given the opportunity to purchase it.
- (i) A licence to occupy premises for residence (except as a lodger or boarder) shall be deemed to be a lease and to be subject to the tenancy laws.

The Bill was initiated in the Legislative Council and was passed by that House with amendments.

That legislation was passed by a Labour Government in Victoria, and in the main those provisions apply under the present Act in that State. The Government there is doing its best to get away gradually from controls, as members must have realised after listening to these comments on the Landlord and Tenant Act, which was introduced last year. If a Labour Government in Victoria can gradually get away from controls, it is quite possible it can be done in this or any other State of the Commonwealth.

Since 1950 we have done away with a number of rents and tenancy controls because if a person has purchased, rented, or leased premises since 1950, either for his own occupation or to place other people in them, the existing tenants have had no protection. I venture to say that most of the eviction cases that are now being dealt with in the court affect people who were tenants prior to December, 1950, and not those who have since been in occupation. Why, therefore, introduce a Bill to bring back the same protection that we dispensed with in December, 1950?

The Minister for Housing: As who dispensed with?

Mr. YATES: Parliament accepted the Bill in the later stages of 1950.

The Minister for Housing: To be more precise, the Legislative Council imposed its will on us and we had no alternative but to accept.

Mr. YATES: That is not so. The Minister has often used the phrase "Parliament thinks this or that." I am not concerned with individuals nor am I concerned with another place. My concern is with Parliament—both Houses—and Parliament agreed that there should be certain alterations made to the Act as we knew it in those days. The present Government now intends to reimpose the same conditions. I would say they are just as harsh as those we went through prior to December, 1950.

Mr. McCulloch: It is consistent.

Mr. YATES: Of course, the hon. member is consistent. He wants controls to remain forever. There is surely no reason why a Labour Government in this State should want rents and tenancy control and a fair rents court to remain for all time.

Mr. McCulloch: Why?

Hon. D. Brand: The Minister said so.

Mr. YATES: It is part of the Government's policy to do that.

The Minister for Housing: The Minister did not say so.

Mr. YATES: The member for Victoria Park commented upon legislation covering such individuals as murderers and others. Those people comprise a very small minority of the population. On examination, it seems logical to bring down such legislation because a minority want to force their will on the majority; and in a very bad way, too, by doing things with violence or any other means. That does not happen with this type of legislation. The Bill provides for every landlord to be brought to court before he can charge any increased rent, so the percentage would be much greater in this case. There are very few murderers here in comparison with the rest of the population.

Mr. Andrew: The principle is the same.

Mr. YATES: It is not the same because they are two distinct acts. Even if only one man commits murder, we should legislate for him.

Mr. Andrew: Your argument is that because there are good landlords, we should not legislate for landlords at all.

Mr. YATES: No. The hon. member used the comparison; I did not use it. He said that if we legislate for a murderer we must legislate for landlord and tenants.

Mr. Heal: Do you feel there should be legislation for a bad landlord?

Mr. YATES: That is the landlord that we have to legislate for. For a good many years the previous Government introduced an amending Bill each year, but during the last year we were in office it was hinted

on numerous occasions in the House that we felt the end of rent restriction and control was in sight.

Hon. D. Brand: A tapering off.

Mr. YATES: We were introducing legislation to taper off these controls gradually; and I say that the actions of the then Government, although they were roundly criticised at the time, have proved to be quite sensible because we did not have, except at that period after the Act came into operation, large numbers of people being brought before the court to be evicted. The member for Dale made mention in his speech of the lack of work that has been performed in the past few months by members of the legal profession who usually are paid to go into the court and appear on behalf of tenants.

Mr. Lawrence: The information the member for Dale gave to the House last night was definitely wrong.

Mr. YATES: I am quite sure it was not wrong.

Mr. Lawrence: I had it from the person's mouth and I intend to bring it up in the House.

Mr. YATES: It depends on the solicitor.

Mr. Lawrence: I am speaking of the one he referred to.

Mr. YATES: I am not quoting any names but am speaking of the solicitors he contacted and he contacted a number of them.

Mr. Lawrence: I know the one he nominated in Fremantle.

Mr. YATES: It does not matter about that. The facts came from the court itself.

Mr. Lawrence: They did not.

Mr. YATES: Of course they did.

Mr. Lawrence: They are not facts.

Mr. YATES: The facts come from the court and they deal with evictions. The figures relating to the eviction cases heard before the magistrates in the local court can be had at any time.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. YATES: During his speech the member for West Perth made mention of the high rents being charged by landlords in his electorate. I think he has overlooked a very important factor in our everyday life and that is the gradual and outward expansion of our city. Either he does not understand the position in his own electorate or he is unaware of this expansion as it affects property values.

Mr. Brady: He is pretty intelligent, the same man.

Mr. YATES: He might be in some spheres. I am talking about the value of property in comparison with the argument that he placed before this Chamber and the relative property values in the city area. The property values in the near

metropolitan area are increasing greatly and nothing can stop that trend. It is occurring not only in our own State, but also in other capital cities throughout Australia and, in fact, the world as well, because of increasing population and industrial expansion.

For instance, in Perth 10 years ago, Adelaide Terrace from Victoria Avenue to the Causeway was lined with nothing else than dwelling-houses, flats and apartments, but since the end of the war we have found that those properties are fast disappearing. They are ever being pulled down and replaced with modern offices or the older properties are being reconditioned and converted into office accommodation. As a result, many of these old two-storeyed places are being partly demolished or altered to meet the ever-increasing expansion of industry.

In many instances, it has not been possible for a complete building to be constructed because of the great shortage of both materials and manpower and also because of the extremely rapid expansion that has taken place in this State since the end of the war. So, from dire necessity, business people are purchasing many of these old properties and altering them because it is the easy way out for them to fulfil their requirements. Therefore, these old properties hold a certain value far above that which they commanded prewar. For example, a property situated in Adelaide Terrace, which would be worth about £3,000 in, say, 1938, could quite easily fetch between £25,000 and £30,000 today.

In fact, only recently a property in that terrace changed hands at £25,000 and I know of another dwelling-house, situated on between one and 1½ acres of ground that for which has been offered at a price of between £25,000 and £30,000. The purchasers are not so anxious to obtain the building, but it is the land or the site that they urgently require because it is important that they should be as close to the centre of the city as possible. So with this ever-increasing expansion of industry we find that, at times, it is affecting the living of many people because a great many of these homes are being demolished and the tenants are left homeless.

One instance that can be quoted is the property in Adelaide Terrace acquired by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. That was a very old home that had been converted into flats and a number of people had accommodation there. Because the A.B.C. had outgrown its premises opposite the old Treasury building, it was compelled to find alternative accommodation and it is now building on the property where it commenced construction work several years ago, but operations were suspended because of public outcry.

Similar expansion is taking place in the electorates of West Perth, East Perth and Perth proper and, to quite a degree, some

of the near metropolitan suburbs, such as Subiaco and North Perth, will in time feel the impact of this expansion. When this occurs some of the very old homes will have to go. In some cases business enterprises have offered such attractive prices to the owners of property that they feel obliged to sell. If an owner is living in such premises it does not matter very much to him because he can build a modern home further out from the city and still have a large amount of ready money either to invest or deposit in the bank.

However, if a person is a tenant of such premises he is in a more unfortunate position. I know that one of the difficulties the State Housing Commission faces today is this rapid city expansion which causes homes to be demolished for industrial purposes. So we must take such facts into consideration when dealing with legislation such as the rents and tenancies Bill.

Very often members are approached to find accommodation for those of their constituents who have been given notice to quit. In many instances alternative accommodation has been secured for these unfortunate people. Not in all cases is the misfortune that has befallen them their own fault, but nevertheless in many cases it is so. With several people, who have grown families, the heads of the households have had the opportunity of purchasing a home or placing a small deposit on one, but they have not done so. They were quite happy to merely rent a house, and that was their only interest in it. As a result the housing shortage has caught up with quite a number of them.

One hon. member mentioned that the goodwill of a business is lost to a tenant who is evicted, but there is no comparison between the loss of the goodwill of a business by an occupier of a shop and the person who rents a home. In many cases tenants have not worried about securing a long-term lease in order to safeguard the money they have invested in the business. However, we must not overlook the fact that the owner must always retain the right to do what he wishes with his property.

Mr. Johnson: Owning a gun does not give that owner the right to shoot where he wishes.

Mr. YATES: Do not compare the ownership of a gun with that of a property!

Mr. Jamieson: You were not too happy recently about the premises in Murray-st.

Mr. YATES: I am not too happy over the eviction of people from premises because I made the comparison a moment ago of the person who leases business premises and the one who does not, but runs the risk of the owner acquiring the establishment for his own use. It must be agreed that the person who owns an article must have a greater claim to it

than the person who merely has a loan of it. We are faced with the fact that whereas years ago there were many people who owned houses, but did not require possession of them, times have changed because the sons and daughters of those people are growing up and in many instances the owners require the premises to accommodate them.

The Minister for Housing: There is ample provision for them to gain possession of their premises in such circumstances.

Mr. YATES: Even if there is, they do not always want it. Of course, the position in regard to those people was eased by the previous Government when it introduced legislation to enable the owner of a property to gain repossession if he desired the premises to accommodate members of his own family, and that position has continued up to the present time. That was one of the beneficial provisions placed in the Act, namely, to give the right of possession to family groups.

Mention was made by the member for Dale of the appointment of a select committee and the member for Murchison said, that, in his opinion, we have had too many select committees in this Chamber. The hon. member has not been here long enough to study the results achieved by select committees that have been appointed. The hon. member might have been referring to select committees that have been appointed over the years, but he did not say that.

Over the years, when the Labour Party was in opposition, it was most insistent on the appointment of select committees. In fact, the Minister for Lands, when he was a member of the Opposition, was most enthusiastic in his desire to have a select committee appointed to investigate war service land settlement and the Government at that time agreed to its appointment because of the case he put forward.

Mr. Andrew: That was a different case altogether.

Mr. YATES: All cases are different, but it goes to show that our Government agreed to the appointment of that select committee although many of us thought it was not warranted.

Mr. Moir: That was what you said about the select committee on the mining industry; you said it was not warranted.

Mr. YATES: In the past, the Government, of which I was a supporter, agreed to the appointment of select committees and, of course, Labour Governments have done so also. In this instance we claim, as members of the Opposition, that a select committee will place before the public a much clearer picture of the existing state of affairs with regard to housing than can be outlined by any private member. It is quite impossible for us, as individual

members, to obtain information from all sources or even some knowledge through questions and answers from the Minister.

Mr. McCulloch: How long do you think it would take?

Mr. YATES: I think a select committee would complete its inquiry within a fortnight.

Mr. McCulloch: And obtain all the facts?

Mr. YATES: Within a fortnight a select committee could have sat and presented its report to the House.

Mr. May: What could it tell you that you do not know now?

Mr. YATES: It could tell us whether this legislation is warranted. At present the Government members are the only ones who are satisfied. They say, "This is the legislation we have been pressing for and we want it." But they have not listened to us in the past. We claimed then that the position was not as bad as the members on the Government side of the House made out, and today we still claim that.

Mr. Ackland: Do you think the members of the select committee would come to a unanimous decision?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not think the hon. member should pursue that subject any further. Should it be raised at a later stage of the session, he could discuss it then.

Mr. YATES: Very well, Mr. Speaker. Nevertheless, I do think that greater consideration should be given to that matter. I do not believe it would cause any great hardship to the Government if it agreed with the wishes of the Opposition in this regard. When the Government held a special session some months ago, many people were of the opinion that it was nothing but a political move. Whether that was so or not, only the Government itself knows. Nevertheless, many people have discussed the matter with me—

The Minister for Education: How many?

Mr. YATES: They were Liberal supporters but quite a few Labour supporters in my electorate have also discussed it with me. Many of them seemed to agree that it was a political move. We on this side of the House have been in politics long enough to know that although the position might have warranted some sort of legislation, it certainly did not justify the calling of a special session of Parliament to deal with a measure that had been thrown out by another place at the end of the previous session, because the Government must have known full well that it would meet the same fate.

That is exactly what they wanted, because at no time in this Chamber or in another place did the Government give any consideration to the requests of the Opposition. Some of the requests were

reasonable. The Government stood to its guns and wanted the Bill passed intact by both this Chamber and another place, except for one slight amendment. The conference managers were not unanimous in their decisions and accordingly reported back to both Houses, with the result that the Bill lapsed.

Today we have no election in view. The Federal campaign is over, and we are back to normal. Let us treat this in a truly democratic way and forget party differences. Let us get together as a Chamber in order to get the best views from both sides. After all, not one side but both sides represent the people of Western Australia. Even if the Government does not accept the Opposition move for a select committee, full consideration should be given to the proposed amendments which we consider would make the Bill a workable one.

If the Government is sincere in its efforts to look after the interests of the tenants in the metropolitan and country areas, and to give a measure of protection to landlords also, then it is reasonable for it to give full consideration to the amendments which we have gone into in great detail and after full examination. We trust that a workable Bill will emerge from this Chamber which will be acceptable to all sections of the community.

The Minister for Housing: What about the other Chamber?

Mr. YATES: In reply to that interjection from the Minister for Housing, I can only say that unfortunately we have no jurisdiction over the other Chamber.

The Minister for Housing: I thought you had a meeting and you all agreed about it. Do not the members in another place form part of your party?

Mr. YATES: Unfortunately I am not allowed to discuss what took place at our meetings, in exactly the same way as the Minister cannot do so. When Government members hold a meeting, it is attended by their colleagues from another place, exactly the same happens as with us.

Mr. Moir: During your meetings, who tells who what to do?

Mr. YATES: I cannot say.

Hon. D. Brand: All we know is that members on the other side of the House must do what they are told.

Mr. YATES: The members who represent us in the Upper House do what they like, as has been proved on many occasions in the past.

Mr. May: So long as you agree to what they do.

Mr. YATES: There were many occasions where we voted in favour of one thing and they in support of another. Our members in another place have minds of their own and they are not bound by political ties.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member's time is up.

Mr. YATES: If this Bill is carried in another place, I hope it will not see the light of day in any future Parliament. On the Minister's own information to this House, within 12 to 18 months the position should be so eased that we should not require a continuance of this measure.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [7.49]: I do not intend to take up very much time. I have not heard all the speeches that have been made. I have heard enough to know that speaking at any length on this measure would be quite futile. It has been said from both sides of the House that the matter should be approached in a fair and reasonable manner. I do not think either side will do that.

An almost identical measure was introduced early in the year which I opposed during the second reading, as I intend doing in the present instance. At that time I said that the Minister had not the slightest intention of giving way one inch from the stand he had taken. Of course, it is common knowledge what eventuated. I believe that the Minister was more interested in getting his political party members into the Council than he was in relieving any distress that might have been brought about through evictions.

I believe the same situation exists today. Members on this side of the House would have been much more honest, in accordance with the platform they support, if they had opposed the second reading of this Bill, knowing full well that the other side, as has been expressed by two or three speakers, including the Deputy Premier, has not the slightest intention of accepting the select committee, and that the Government will not for one minute give a moment's consideration to any alteration of their attitude towards the fair rents court.

Personally, I am not dragged at the heel of any party that is not prepared to stand up for the planks of the political platform, in support of which its members have been elected to this House. When we adopt the attitude of trying to pass the buck—the buck will not be allowed to be passed as a select committee is not acceptable to the Government—we are doing ourselves no credit in the eyes of the electors. I shall oppose the second reading. I do not suppose my opposition will do much good, but it will certainly be following the planks of the platform upon which I was elected to this House and which I believe in most sincerely.

MR. MAY (Collie) [7.52]: The speeches which have been made during the debate on this measure have been in most cases, very wide of the mark. The member for

Dale obviously was given the job of speaking for the Opposition. The majority of his remarks were a castigation of the Minister for Housing.

Mr. Norton: Political jealousy!

Mr. MAY: I do not think this Bill was brought forward for this purpose. While the member for Dale was speaking, I felt he could have shown himself to much better advantage had he actually stuck to the reasons for the necessity of the Bill. We are all agreed that there are two sides to this question—that of the landlords on the one hand and of the tenants on the other. Perhaps it could be said that this is a case of £. s. d. against humanity.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is not a fair comment.

Mr. MAY: I expected some objection from the Leader of the Opposition. If he had been paying attention to the member for South Perth—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I was.

Mr. MAY: —most of his remarks were around the £25,000 mark. I realise from the surprise of the Leader of the Opposition that he was not listening to the member for South Perth because he did not hear that remark. Every other side issue that has been brought into this debate could easily and properly be disregarded because, as I have said before, there are two sides, those of the landlord and the tenant, and it is a question of treating both fairly.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAY: I am glad that the hon. member has agreed with me at last. When I have finished I hope he will still agree with me.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I make no promises at all.

Mr. MAY: I express the opinion that any landlord, be he large or small, is entitled to a fair deal. I do not think anyone would disagree with that. I regard this as a matter of democracy. The tenants who are subject to the landlords are entitled to adopt the same line of thinking, and to view it in the light of democracy for the tenants. I believe that justice can be done by giving sufficient discretionary powers to either a fair rents court or to a magistrate of the ordinary court, providing the authorities in question are given sufficient power to use their discretion during the hearing of a case.

Mr. Wild: Then you should support our amendments. That is just what we want to do.

Mr. MAY: I am not going to support the hon. member in anything. Nobody can get away from the fact that if there is a dispute between a landlord and a tenant, it has to be settled by some authority; that authority should have the necessary power to make a decision, both for the sake of the landlord and tenant. I was disappointed in the remarks of the member for

South Perth. He is a member of the State Executive of the R.S.L. As such I feel that he should at least have the interests of ex-servicemen at heart. I think he has to a large degree, but in this particular instance he has failed in his duty as a member of that executive to say something in regard to the injustice that is being done to ex-servicemen in this State.

Mr. Manning: Or to the ex-servicemen who are landlords.

Mr. MAY: I refer to the ex-servicemen who are denied the right of coming within the ambit of the War Service Homes Act, an Act of Parliament which was brought forward for the specific purpose of rehabilitating those men in civil life after their discharge.

Mr. Hearman: Will this Bill do that?

Mr. MAY: This Bill will not, but I am going to give the House one of the reasons why there is dissatisfaction and one reason why the building of homes is being held up by the Federal Government in its policy on war service homes. It is well known by members who have occasion to deal with applications of ex-servicemen that an application cannot begin to function until 12 months after the date it was made.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is not correct.

Mr. McCulloch: Yes, it is, but it is even longer, after 14 months.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I know better than that.

Mr. MAY: I can bring the necessary documents showing that the member for Mt. Lawley is not aware of the facts.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I do not think it is 12 months. It did not apply in the cases I put forward.

Mr. MAY: You may have your own opinion.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I know because I am only the president of one of these branches.

Mr. MAY: That does not mean anything.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That means I am pretty well informed.

Mr. MAY: I am quite satisfied the member for Mt. Lawley is not well informed. It is only two weeks ago that I applied to the State Housing Commission on behalf of an ex-serviceman. The commission is the agent for the war service homes authorities. The Housing Commission accepted the eligibility of the applicant. He applied for the commission's standard plans for his proposed home; he paid the 5s. cost for six copies of the specifications. I took these back to Collie and told the applicant that he could go ahead to find a contractor so that his name could be submitted to the Housing Commission for approval or otherwise.

Last Friday I received a letter from the Housing Commission advising that by 1955 action would be commenced in connection with that application. I defy anybody to say that I am wrong in this. Is there any earthly reason why the War Service Homes Division, on behalf of the Federal Government, should allow that man to be held up for 12 months before he can start building? In 12 months' time, the contractor would say to him, "Certainly I gave you a price a year ago, but that is not the price today. It is going to be more." Thus the ex-serviceman is being victimised, not only by having to wait for the house, but also by having to pay increased costs. That is my reason for bringing this matter before the House, my object being to prove that the Federal Government, through the War Service Homes Division, is penalising the ex-servicemen in making them wait unnecessarily for a year before being able to start building their homes.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you prepared to hand me that correspondence?

Mr. MAY: I shall be delighted to do so, but I shall expect the hon. member subsequently to admit in this House that he was wrong.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: If I am wrong, I shall do so.

Mr. SPEAKER: That does not exactly tie up with the Bill.

Mr. MAY: Admittedly I have got away from the provisions of the Bill, but I have mentioned that instance to show that certain people wishing to build homes have been held up. This has created hardship which, in turn, is associated with the hardship being suffered by people who are being unnecessarily evicted from their homes. I know that there are bad tenants, just as there are bad landlords, and they should be dealt with by the magistrates or the fair rents courts, and whatever may be their due, they should receive it. Since the 30th April of this year, I have seen more furniture in the streets and being shifted in the metropolitan area than ever before.

Hon. D. Brand: Is that because more houses are being built?

Mr. MAY: Nobody can tell me that the position regarding evictions has not become worse since the 30th April, and all this sparring on the part of the Opposition will not convince me otherwise. I have seen women at the office of the Housing Commission burst into tears because they were being evicted from their homes. I do not know whether they were being justly evicted or not; there should be a proper authority to determine that.

Mr. Wild: Let us have a select committee and we shall find out.

Mr. MAY: A select committee is not needed to find that out; one has only to use one's eyes. Of course, if the hon.

member moves only in St. George's Terrace, he cannot expect to learn what is going on and accordingly is not qualified to speak, but if he moved along the outskirts of the metropolitan area, he would see what was happening. Every day furniture may be seen stacked on the footpath.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Then you disagree with your own Minister because he said there had been only two instances of actual eviction since February.

Mr. MAY: I disagree with the hon. member. Finally, I wish to ensure that the hon. member will admit that he was wrong when he disputed my statement. I support the second reading.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) (8.4): I am one of those more fortunate members who have not been approached by landlords or tenants with requests for action to be taken in connection with this matter. I was told of a man who is having difficulty with a tenant in receipt of £20 a week and paying 17s. 6d. a week rent, and he refused to pay 25s., but I would not rely upon one instance of that nature.

What has prompted me more than anything else to participate in this debate was the speech of the Deputy Premier. I felt that it was an unfortunate speech. It seems to me that there is a good deal of similarity between the viewpoints of members generally. If we approach the question fairly, I think we must realise that both sides are agreed that, while a housing shortage exists—and no one will contend that such a shortage does not exist—there is an opportunity for bad landlords—whom the Minister admits form only a small proportion—to exploit the position. Members on both sides of the House are anxious to ensure that such a state of affairs shall not continue, and, although we may differ as to the degree or method of control that should be exercised, we are in accord that there is need for some control over the bad landlord.

It would have been much better had the Deputy Premier, if he wants to see the measure put on the statute book, instead of placing the narrowest possible interpretation upon the remarks of the member for Dale, endeavoured to demonstrate where both sides thought alike and confined himself to putting forward suggestions for reconciling the differences. The whole aim of our parliamentary institution is to endeavour to effect a compromise where differences exist, but there was nothing in the speech of the Deputy Premier to indicate a desire to compromise. It seems to me to be a matter of "Take the Bill as you find it," and I do not think that is a state of affairs that will give any great satisfaction to a person threatened with eviction.

Those tenants who are in danger of being evicted would expect Parliament to come to a decision that will afford them

some relief. There may be a variance of opinion as to how that relief should be afforded, but they would appreciate some relief rather than none.

Mr. Lawrence: Would relief put a roof over their heads?

Mr. HEARMAN: I am not discussing the amount of relief, but those people have a right to expect us to make some amendment to the law, particularly as members on both sides are in agreement on certain points. The people threatened with eviction will not be greatly concerned whether a fair rents court is set up, as proposed by the Bill, to determine a fair rent, or whether the matter should continue to be determined, as at present, by a magistrate in the local court. Those are points on which some concessions could be made by the Government, and if they were made, I do not think it could be demonstrated that the evictees would be likely to suffer. The member for South Fremantle has suggested that what these people need is a roof over their heads. I agree, but to stick out on a point such as the constitution of the court to determine the fair rent will not help them to get a roof over their heads.

We in this Chamber and also members in another place have a responsibility to make the parliamentary institution work, and if it so happens that members of another place in their wisdom and in a perfectly sound and constitutional way differ from us on amendments, and the Government prefers to lose the Bill rather than accept the amendments, we shall not be acting in the best interests of the people who are facing eviction. I am speaking of the experience of last session when the Government would not accept the proposals submitted by this side of the House, but preferred to lose the Bill. As a result, a great deal of hardship has been inflicted on tenants that I consider was quite unnecessary.

During the Committee stage last session, the Deputy Premier conceded one point, namely, that our proposals would reduce the number of evictions. I am aware that he disliked the amendment and voiced his objection to it, but he did concede that our proposals would reduce the number of evictions. Consequently, I suggest that the number of evictions could have been reduced had the Government been prepared to accept those proposals.

I do not know whether the Deputy Premier has finally made up his mind that there shall be no compromise on this Bill, but that appears to be his attitude. Without taking into consideration the humanitarian aspect, it is our job to strive to produce a measure that will benefit the people, and to do this will entail compromise. I know that members on the Government side of the House do not like the institution which we in this House

refer to as another place, but that House has been constituted according to the law of the land.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It may not be for long.

Mr. HEARMAN: That is the system, and whether we like it or not, we have a moral obligation to get the best possible results from the system, and it will be necessary for the Government to accept some form of compromise. The question of eviction is one on which there is room for a difference of viewpoint. My opinion is that if we do not have unduly hampering restrictions, far more housing will become available, because there are hundreds of homes in Perth, quite large ones, housing only a married couple or other small number of occupants.

People would be prepared to accept tenants if they knew—in the event of their not liking them—that they could get rid of them without going through a too complicated court procedure. Anyone who says we wish only to give the landlord the right to evict the tenant and that we have no consideration for those who are seeking homes, is not giving a fair interpretation of our viewpoint. I repeat that there are many houses that would be better utilised were there greater freedom of eviction.

Mr. Lawrence: That is pure assumption.

Mr. HEARMAN: It is an assumption that I think I am entitled to make.

Mr. Lawrence: Can you not give us something more than assumption?

Mr. HEARMAN: It is something about which we can only make an assumption. If the hon. member can produce figures—

Mr. Lawrence: I cannot produce figures but if the member for Blackwood so desires I can show him the position in black and white, though not in figures.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not know how the hon. member could do that. I feel that a select committee would be able to produce a lot of information on this question. The Government seems to have considerable objection to the magistrate continuing to determine rents and apparently it would prefer to set up a court for that purpose. The Deputy Premier suggests that that is Government policy. That may be so, but it has not been demonstrated conclusively by anybody that the existing practice is unsatisfactory. The member for Hannans went so far as to say that even if the court suggested by the Government were set up, the result would probably be the same. I am inclined to agree with him.

In the course of his speech, the Deputy Premier mentioned the Arbitration Court. Of course, that is a tribunal constituted in a manner similar to that proposed in the Bill for this court, but I think members opposite will agree that the Arbitration Court does not always give decisions they like and that it comes in for a considerable amount of criticism from them

from time to time. I believe it is their intention to endeavour to amend the law relating to the Arbitration Court so that it may be directed how it is to act under certain conditions, and incidentally an effort was made to do that last session. I do not feel that the Government has clearly established any real objection to the system under which the magistrate at present operates.

I am wondering how far the Government's idea of having tribunals for everything—particularly bodies from which there is no appeal—is to be carried. Is it suggested that a court normally constituted could not deal with a cattle thief but that he should be tried by a tribunal consisting of a nominee of the pastoralists, on the one hand, and a representative of the cattle thieves' association appointed by the Minister for Agriculture on the other hand, together with a judge? I think you, Mr. Speaker, might be able to help with a suggestion in that connection, if it became necessary, but I think the idea is fantastic.

Mr. Lawrence: Do you suggest that the magistrate only should fix the rents?

Mr. HEARMAN: Yes. I agree with the member for Hannans, and, in any case, I believe the magistrate or judge would have the last word.

Mr. Lawrence: Would you give him the same power in relation to evictions also?

Mr. HEARMAN: I understand that question is not to be determined by the fair rents court.

Mr. Lawrence: I am talking about the magistrate's court now.

Mr. HEARMAN: I am dealing with the fair rents court. I do not think that such tribunals as the Government suggests should be appointed to determine everything and I repeat that I agree with the member for Hannans—

Mr. McCulloch: How about a housing magistrate's court?

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not think it would be necessary any more than that we should have a special court set up to deal with cattle thieves. There would be no end to that policy if it were adopted and justice would become extremely complicated. I am convinced, further, that such tribunals take longer to give their decisions than does the single judge or magistrate. I believe that as far as possible there should be some appeal from the decision of the court. I do not think this difference of opinion on the constitution of the court is a vital matter, particularly from the point of view of those who have been evicted or are facing eviction.

The Minister indicated that there is a considerable number of people facing eviction and I would like him, when replying to the debate, to give details of how he arrived at the figure

he mentioned. It is all very well to say that so many cases are to be dealt with or that so many people have been evicted but totals of that sort are not in themselves sufficient, as a tenant may be evicted because the owner wants the house for his own use or some other reason and the Government agrees that, in such circumstances, he should be able to get it. Perhaps the tenant is to be evicted because he has not paid his rent, and so the figures that would be useful would be those giving the number of people evicted for reasons which the Government regards as being reasons other than proper reasons.

On the day Parliament opened the Minister was asked whether the statement he recently made in Collie about the housing problem being solved in 18 months—as reported in "The West Australian"—was correct, and members will recall his answer, which was really no answer at all. He merely said he had been misreported. Whether that was so or not does not concern me. It is a matter between the Minister and the Press, but I am concerned about the impression created in the minds of the people. If the Minister was misreported he was given ample opportunity—by the member for Dale on that occasion—to clarify any doubts that existed, but instead of doing so he merely vilified "The West Australian"—

The Minister for Housing: The correct statement was given on the next sitting day of Parliament.

Mr. HEARMAN: I see no reason why the Minister could not have corrected the statement on the spot.

Hon. L. Thorn: He should have known what he had said.

Mr. HEARMAN: I think he did know what he said and what was reported in the Press—

The Minister for Housing: So far, two independent persons have written to the Press saying emphatically that the Press report was incorrect.

Mr. HEARMAN: I am not concerned with the argument between the Minister and "The West Australian" but only about the statement attributed to the Minister. It was circulated throughout the country by the Press and the fact that, when questioned about it and given opportunity to correct it, he did not take that opportunity. I submit that such a procedure does not inspire confidence in the case put forward by the Government. After all, if there is a simple explanation, both the House and the people are entitled to be given it at the first opportunity.

The other matter on which I feel the Minister was unconvincing and of which the Government is culpable, is the question of shared accommodation. We know

that prior to the April session rent inspectors had taken no action as regards this form of abuse, and the explanation given by the Minister was most unconvincing. Even tonight he suggested that the Government had not taken court action in a single instance. If there is that form of abuse—it is not denied by members on the other side of the House—why has the Government failed to deal with it? The law was amended in December last to enable action to be taken, but the Government did nothing whatever.

Mr. Lawrence: That is not right.

Mr. HEARMAN: It is, because everybody knows that this abuse is going on and that it is one of the worst features of the position.

Mr. Lawrence: Do you know the name of the rent inspector?

Mr. HEARMAN: No, and I am not concerned about it, but I do ask why the Government did not take action to check this abuse, and no satisfactory answer is given. The Minister did say that they did not take any action because it was anticipated that there would be an amendment to the legislation, but now we find that the present Bill does not cover that aspect of the position at all. I do not think that is the kind of action to inspire confidence and if the Government continues to do things of that nature I do not think anyone can be blamed for suggesting that perhaps it has some reason, which it is not prepared to state, for precipitating a crisis in the issue between tenants and landlords.

If there is a simple and forthright explanation, it has not been forthcoming. Last night we heard it said that this was not a political issue and that party politics were not being played; that each question should be dealt with on its merits and so on. But I think that if the member who made that remark read the speech of the mover of the Address-in-reply in another place, he could hardly conclude that this question had not become a party political issue. I do not know whether the Minister for Housing will accuse me of having a filthy mind. He seems ready to make accusations of that sort across the Chamber—

The Minister for Housing: Are you going to be like the member for Dale and discuss me instead of the Bill?

Mr. HEARMAN: If neither the Minister nor the Government will give an explanation of why they have taken no action to control the biggest single racket in housing at present or of why they attempted to precipitate a crisis prior to an election, I do not think they can complain when somebody levels against them the charge that they are playing politics in the matter, particularly as we know perfectly well that the Deputy Premier admitted that there was some merit in the

views put forward and in the amendments suggested by members on this side of the House.

I do not think there should be any disclosure of what takes place at a conference of managers. But, unfortunately, the precedent was established by the Minister for Lands last session; he disclosed how people had voted and the matter was raised here. The Premier said he felt it was a matter of opinion and that, as there was nothing laid down, a person could do as he wished. By interjection the member for Dale suggested that the Deputy Premier, at the conference, would have accepted some compromise so that the responsibility for the rejection and complete loss of the Bill, and the precipitation of the crisis which is supposed to exist in connection with evictions, rests upon the Minister for Housing.

The Minister for Housing: You have now forced me to tell what did take place at that conference.

Hon. L. Thorn: That is what we want to know.

Mr. HEARMAN: What was said by the member for Dale has not been challenged either by the Deputy Premier or the Minister for Housing.

The Minister for Housing: Give me a chance to reply.

Mr. HEARMAN: That seems to indicate that the Minister for Housing is the man who must accept responsibility for the loss of the Bill last session. I mentioned earlier that I did not think it desirable to disclose how people had voted at conferences. But if the Deputy Premier at the conference adopted an attitude similar to that which he did in this Chamber, I am of the opinion that something would have been saved out of the Bill and tenants would have benefited. I think I am entitled to express that opinion. Whether the Minister wants to take all the blame, or share it with the Deputy Premier, does not concern me greatly; but it may be of interest to the tenants who are much more concerned in the matter than I am.

The Minister for Housing: It may be of interest to you, too.

Mr. HEARMAN: Yes, it may be. Obviously the people who rejected the amendments of another place must accept some of the responsibility.

The Minister for Housing: You do not know anything about it because you were not there.

Mr. HEARMAN: I was not, but I do not know whether the Minister wants to challenge the statement I made—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I cannot allow this discussion about the conference to continue any longer. Let us get back to the Bill which is before us.

Mr. HEARMAN: I think there is a responsibility on the part of those who have not used their best endeavours to reach a sound compromise on the measure. I am at a slight disadvantage here because the member for Collie dragged in a lot of irrelevant matter concerning war service homes. I wish to point out that, in my opinion, if we could streamline the procedure in regard to war service homes it would be a great help. The last applicant with whom I had any dealings had lodged his plans with the Housing Commission but it was not until five months later that they were rejected.

Earlier I said I would speak only in general terms, and I suggest that, although members of the Government may be preoccupied with the idea of abolishing another place, at present, with our system of Government, the other place has certain constitutional rights which must be recognised. So I hope that members of the Government are not so preoccupied with their obsession about the abolition of another place that they will allow it completely to overshadow their better political judgment.

A famous man once said something about fooling all the people all the time, and if the Government is playing politics against another place at the expense of the tenants, there will be an awakening, and the tenants will not appreciate being made a political catpaw. I appeal to the Government to reach a sound compromise on this question and give the tenant, for whom they profess such great concern, the best measure of relief possible under our parliamentary system.

Mr. BRADY (Guildford-Midland) [8.35]: I desire to speak in support of this measure, although I would have preferred to remain silent in order to expedite its passage. However, I am afraid that if I did so my electors would view my silence with disapproval, not understanding my reasons for not speaking. I suppose 98 per cent. of my electors are wage and salary earners and, of course, many of them are supporters of the Opposition parties. In fact, some close friends of Opposition members—I am not too sure whether some of them are not executive officers in organisations connected with the Opposition parties—have approached me with some of their problems connected with evictions and rent increases.

My main reason for supporting the second reading of the Bill is because I think a measure of social justice is required for the wage and salary earners of this country. A fair rents court, as proposed in the Bill, will go a long way in that regard. I would point out that the average rent today is from about £2 10s. to £2 15s. a week, and, some rents are as high as £3 10s. But in the basic wage, only £1 7s. is allowed for rent, and so the average worker today is

losing about another £1 7s. a week on that item alone. In addition, wage and salary earners are losing in other directions, and today the basic wage is pegged at £12 6s. 6d. a week; because the basic wage is pegged, the working man, so far, is losing 6s. 3d. a week. Margins also are pegged, despite the fact that both food and groceries are increasing in price every day. So wage and salary earners are paying dearly in an effort to stabilise this country's economy.

I now want to refer to some of the problems that have arisen in my electorate. The member for West Perth mentioned certain problems with which he has been confronted, and in the main I think he dealt with the gravamen of the complaints. I have noted speaker after speaker from the other side of the House try to make a case on behalf of the Opposition. They have all said that they have received no complaints. To some extent I can understand their difficulty; they cannot appreciate the problems that confront the working man because one has only to compare their individual incomes with those received by people on the basic wage.

Last week I dealt with the case of a family who were paying 25s. a week rent. This family has been notified that the rent is to be increased to £4 4s. a week. The husband is a sick man and the wife is struggling to rear a young family. They went to the owner and offered £3 a week but he said, "No. I want £4 4s. or you will be evicted." In the second case, the people were paying 30s. a week but their rent has been increased to £4 a week, despite the fact that the house is 40 years old and is in need of major repairs.

For another house in West Midland, not far from where I live, the rent has been 35s. a week, but the tenants have been notified that they are to pay £5 a week; not £3 3s. or £4 4s., but £5 a week! The only way these families can retain their homes is for both the husbands and the wives to go out to work. Yet our friends on the Opposition side are trying to bolster up a case and oppose our legislation!

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Our amendments would cover that situation, would they not?

Mr. BRADY: Those amendments might cover some of them but not all.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: They would cover all the cases you have mentioned.

Mr. BRADY: In addition, there is a business man in my electorate whose rent has been increased by 100 per cent. Yet a few years ago the owner begged this business man to occupy the premises because they were empty. I know of another case which concerns a young returned soldier who, since his discharge, has worked up a business over the last five or six years and now that it is thriving, he has been issued with an order to get out of his premises within 28 days. So in my electorate at the moment I have at least from six to a

dozen cases, which I can cite from first-hand knowledge, of people who are either being evicted or who have had their rents increased. I also know of at least 30 others who have called at the State Housing Commission to try to get some protection.

The members of the Opposition have tried to build up a case along the lines that the Government has encouraged these people to go to the State Housing Commission for assistance. That is a deliberate misrepresentation of the position because only a fortnight ago I had occasion to go to Mr. Butler, an officer of the State Housing Commission, and complain to him that one of his officers was doing exactly the opposite by telling the people who had interviewed him that they had no chance of getting protection from the Housing Commission. He called the officer concerned into his office and told him what I had said in my presence.

In addition, I know of families—not one, but several—who have been evicted in my electorate and as yet they have been unable to obtain houses. That is exactly the opposite of what we have been told by those on the other side of the House during this debate. Some of these people have been evicted from their homes for a period of two or three years and, if need be, I can quote their names. So I think we have a very legitimate argument and if all the factors are considered, the case weighs heavily in our favour.

I have outlined the position in regard to the basic wage and the marginal workers and one of the members on the other side of the House has spoken on the importance of human rights. However, we have many people in this State who place property rights before human rights. An example of that can be given in regard to the treatment that natives in this State receive from property owners. Many natives are living in mia-mias out in the bush and also in tents, whereas the owners could well afford to provide them with houses.

Furthermore, the natural instincts of young couples must be considered. This culminates in their getting married and in consequence they must have shelter, which is a basic requirement. They must have accommodation in their human relationship as man and wife. So, from our point of view we have every right to argue on behalf of these people. One factor which our friends on the other side of the Chamber have overlooked is that today the owner must weigh all the facts when he argues that we are treating him unfairly. Firstly, during the days of the depression many owners could not let their properties because tenants could not afford to pay the rent, and, in other cases, those tenants who were battling to pay the rent for the houses they were occupying were not given any relief in the way of a reduction in rent by the owners.

The reward those tenants are now receiving is that they are having their accommodation sold over their heads simply because the owners are making a tremendous profit from the transaction. In 1941-42 the position was quite different. At that period people were vacating their homes and some owners even gave their houses to people to live in rent free while others sold their properties at a price much lower than their true values. Many of the people who bought houses in those days at a very low figure are now selling them at values four or five times greater than the amounts they paid for them in 1941 or 1942.

Therefore, if the owners of premises and the members of the Opposition desire to be fair when considering this position, they should weigh all the facts and realise that the owners cannot have their own way all the time. These people are obtaining an increase in their capital values and they should not, in addition, receive a further increase in rental values.

Here is one case that I wish to cite in order to let the Opposition see that we are quite justified in putting forward the Bill in its present form. It is that of a young man who was working in the Midland Junction abattoirs, who cannot get a home to live in. At present he is residing in an apartment house in Perth. He is paying £5 a week for accommodation for himself, his wife, and one child and that accommodation consists of one room only—and no meals.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Have you reported that case to the Housing Commission?

Mr. BRADY: Yes.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: And has it taken any action?

Mr. BRADY: It is doing its best. That man has also two children in one of the orphanages. He is paying £4 4s. for their keep in that institution. That means he is paying out a total of £9 4s. a week, from a basic wage of £12 6s. 6d. What chance has he of doing justice to his family?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It is outside the law!

Mr. BRADY: It is outside the law, but that is a classic example of a man who cannot obtain a house.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is quite outside the law and I would not stand it for a moment.

Mr. BRADY: Time and time again members of the Opposition have stated that if rent control were lifted, it would encourage people to invest in the building of houses. Today, however, with the limited money available, very few people are prepared to invest money in properties for rental purposes. The letting of a house is a business proposition and there is no sentiment attached to it, despite the fact that some of the members on the

other side of the House try to convey that impression. The facts are that today there are four or five financial institutions which offer an interest rate of 5 per cent. 5½ per cent. and 5½ per cent. for money invested.

For example, the Industrial Acceptance Corporation is offering 5½ per cent. interest for any money invested with it. Another firm is offering 5½ per cent. and so one can go on ad infinitum. Therefore, I cannot believe the story that private investors would prefer to invest their money in real estate. As a matter of fact, I think there is a letter in this morning's paper from a person who signs himself "Pro Bono Publico," which I think sums up the position. He points out that he has taken his money out of real estate and has put it into oil shares, and he now feels he is a real owner. There is only one thing, and that is, I hope that gentleman does not slip on his investment, and does not get into any wild cat scheme. I hope he has no illusions as to the value he will get for his money. I think he could have got true value in real estate, and he would have been helping those human beings who are trying to make things go in this State.

Among the other points to which I should like to refer is the one dealt with by the member for Moore. He referred to the matter of a select committee. I am anxious that this Bill should go through in order that we might have some legislation on the statute book to protect those people who are being exploited as a result of high rentals; those people who are likely to be evicted from private homes, and those business people who may also be evicted. I do not think that a select committee, as indicated by the member for Moore, is likely to help.

The Opposition has given us credit for something that took place some months ago that was not in the minds of members on this side of the House. I do not recall any member discussing the fact that by putting up a similar Bill in the form we did two months ago, we would gain any political advantage. It so happened that the Opposition took an attitude which played right into our hands and gave us considerable advantage. They unwittingly made the mistake of doing something that gave us political advantage. They are, however, unconsciously giving us credit for something which we did not set out to achieve.

I think members of the Opposition are far removed from the truth in their assertions when they say we are trying to get political advantage from the Bill in its present form. Members on this side of the House are just as considerate of land and property owners as are members on the other side. In our own ranks, both inside and outside the House, we have property-owners and those interested in real estate, and we are just as keen to give

them a fair measure of social justice as is the Opposition. I feel that when this Bill passes through both Houses, we will have a measure of social justice, taking into consideration circumstances now and what has taken place in years gone by. I support the second reading of the Bill and hope it will pass through both Houses at the earliest possible moment.

MR. LAWRENCE (South Fremantle) [8.54]: It appears to me that one of the main factors we have to overcome in this problem of housing shortage is that of human nature. I do not think that any one speaker on the Opposition benches has taken that fact into consideration. It is interesting to refer to the words of the member for Blackwood during his miserable contribution to the debate when he said it was our duty to the people. He also said it is their right to expect us, as their elected representatives, to do something about the position.

It has been shown in the past during various elections, and at various times, that the people do not expect it, but demand it. I suggest, therefore, that it is the right of the people to demand that the Government, or any member of Parliament whomsoever he may be or whatever his political feelings, should provide them with shelter over their heads. This is a basic principle, and it is their just and democratic right. There can be no denying that.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I think we should all share in that responsibility. Do not you?

Mr. LAWRENCE: That is quite true, and that is the reason why I am impressing the fact on the hon. member. The member for Blackwood also suggested that there should be no fair rents court consisting of a magistrate, a representative of the Real Estate Institute, and a representative nominated by the Government, to look after the interests of the lessee or tenant. He does not agree with that; he firmly avers that that should not be the case; that it should be left in the hands of the fair rents court as constituted today, which means a single magistrate.

When I asked him a question, and suggested that he apply it in reverse, as to whether he would be willing to accept evictions on the same basis—that is, by a single magistrate—he wormed his way out of it and declined to answer. Members might consider that point when they support the Bill in its entirety, or in part, as I am inclined to think they will, judging from the hypocritical remarks of the various speakers on the Opposition benches.

Another point raised by the member for Blackwood was the rent inspector's action in relation to overcharging for rents, especially as it concerned shared accommodation. When I interjected, the member for Blackwood did not even know

the name of the rent inspector, and I doubt very much whether he would know where to contact him. Accordingly, I think it would be logical to assume that he did not know anything about it.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is not strange; he is not a metropolitan member. Why should he know his name?

Mr. LAWRENCE: Would the Leader of the Opposition know his name?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No.

Mr. LAWRENCE: If a member does not know the rent inspector's name or where his office is, it is logical to assume that he has had nothing to do with it and does not know anything about it.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is not logical.

Mr. LAWRENCE: It is. I have listened to the member for Mt. Lawley; I think the fair rents inspector came under his jurisdiction when he was a Minister. I also listened to the member for South Perth.

Mr. Oldfield: You know nothing about it; the fair rents inspector comes under the Chief Secretary.

Mr. LAWRENCE: You get back to your kennel!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He is quite right.

Mr. LAWRENCE: The member for South Perth made the statement that the fair rents inspector generally prosecuted those people who were caught overcharging. That shows how much the member for South Perth and the member for Mt. Lawley know, because when I interjected and said he does not prosecute, they said he does.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: He does.

Mr. LAWRENCE: He does not prosecute; he cannot do so. Therefore, continuing in logical vein and having established that members of the Opposition do not know anything about these matters, how can they say there should be an inquiry?

Mr. Perkins: How many prosecutions have there been as a result of his investigations?

Mr. LAWRENCE: I will deal with that.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I asked that question last session.

Mr. LAWRENCE: The hon. member is always babbling. We must follow this through to its logical conclusion. If members of the Opposition do not know very much about this matter, how can they say to the Government that there should be an inquiry into it? Tell me one member of the Opposition who has got up and shown that he knows anything whatever about the housing position today, one member who has shown he knows anything about evictions or the true position about rent racketeering.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You do not know anything about the law; you may know something about the wharf, but you know nothing about the law.

Hon. D. Brand: And not much about the wharf, either.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I might take the hon. member up on that one day. He has made one blue about the law tonight.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I have not.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I say you have.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is why I say you know nothing about the law.

Mr. Perkins: How about those prosecutions as a result of the rent inspector's investigations?

Mr. LAWRENCE: The position is that a complaint is made to the fair rents inspector; he makes an inspection and, if he considers fit, he may then write—if a case of overcharging has been established—to the lessor who has committed the offence. He then has an interview with him; the matter is recorded and the tenant is advised that he can go ahead with a prosecution. In the interim, the rent is set from a certain date at a certain rate, which has been fixed by the rent inspector. Then there is an appeal to the court against the decision of the inspector.

Mr. Perkins: Does not the Crown Law Department take any interest when the law is broken?

Mr. LAWRENCE: Of course it does. The point is that the Act does not allow the rent inspector to prosecute.

Mr. Perkins. The Crown Law Department has every opportunity to prosecute.

Mr. LAWRENCE: It does not.

Mr. Perkins: I suggest that you look at the law.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I had a look and I have obtained advice that this is the position. I trust that answer satisfies the hon. member.

Mr. Perkins: It certainly does not satisfy me. I hope the Minister for Housing will give a reply to that.

Mr. LAWRENCE: It seems to me that some of the Opposition members who have spoken during the debate have admitted that there is a reason, not so much for the introduction of this Bill as the introduction of a measure to control rents and more or less to control evictions, because the member for Dale has suggested certain amendments to the Bill. Therefore, I assume that he considers the Bill should, on the one hand, be brought down, but, on the other hand, he castigates the Government for bringing in a Bill at such short notice, that is, since April last. I do not know if it is not a case of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. All sorts of insinuations were thrown around at the conference of House Managers during the

last session that the introduction of the Bill was due to the fact that the Legislative Council elections were in the offing.

Mr. Oldfield: That was the only reason the special session was called.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I suggest that the Opposition has not put forward tangible proof of that. As a member of the Government side, I know that is not the case. It seems to me that persons who insinuate these things are the ones who are trying to make a political football out of the rents and tenancies Bill. If they can bring forward some tangible proof to me then I will be satisfied. In my own mind I know they cannot do that.

The member for Dale, to my surprise, made his contribution by attacking the Minister for Housing and making all sorts of what I would suggest were filthy insinuations respecting the Minister's character. Perhaps a little bit of the whip around the member for Dale might do him some good because if he examines his own conscience, he might find that he would not come up to the standard of character of the Minister for Housing who introduced the Bill.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You are a purist now!

Mr. LAWRENCE: Look out that I do not convert the hon. member.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: To what?

Mr. LAWRENCE: To being a purist. The insinuation was that the Government of the day had not taken any steps to help people who were being evicted because it was not erecting more houses than did the McLarty-Watts Government, in which the member for Dale was Minister for Housing. He referred to a little place at Ashfield, but very conveniently forgot to mention places like Naval Base where the McLarty-Watts Government put up those small unit buildings. If ever there was a blot on the countryside, it consists of those houses put up by the Opposition.

If the member for Dale says that the past Government did everything for the evictees and this Government is doing nothing, he is misrepresenting the facts to the public because when those places I mentioned earlier were constructed, there was not even provision made in them for a bath. There were gaps in the walls where they joined. Women and children had to sleep in those huts in the winter time. Being close to the coast the bed clothes were absolutely sodden in the morning. One could imagine how serious an effect it would have on the poor unfortunates who had to reside in them.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: How many of such houses did you see?

Mr. LAWRENCE: I think there were 74.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: All letting the rain and weather come in?

Mr. LAWRENCE: Yes.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is a gross exaggeration.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I know it is not a gross exaggeration. As the Leader of the Opposition has made that interjection, I might say that they were built when he was Premier, and he should have known.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: We made every possible effort to put a roof over the heads of migrants. They were coming in in thousands.

Mr. LAWRENCE: Are they not now?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No.

Mr. LAWRENCE: They are not far behind that number. If the Leader of the Opposition cares to stop at Naval Base on his way down to his residence, he will see that they are in the condition I referred to.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It was a Labour Prime Minister who insisted that we must have the immigrants no matter what the conditions were.

Mr. LAWRENCE: What is the good of having immigrants when they are killed off by pneumonia?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It is better to have a roof over their heads than no roof at all.

Mr. LAWRENCE: A Government member of the day who now holds a seat in another place insinuated, when I went to town about the lack of a bath in those homes, that the children could be taken down to the beach to have a bath.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You are suggesting—

Mr. Oldfield: What about—

Mr. LAWRENCE: You be quiet!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for South Fremantle must address his remarks to the Chair and refrain from addressing his remarks to members across the floor.

Mr. LAWRENCE: The member for Dale also tried to indicate to the House that evictees were being put into five- and six-roomed houses. Never to my knowledge under the State Housing Act which is the old Workers' Homes Act, or the Commonwealth-State rental scheme has the commission built a six-roomed house. As a matter of fact, it built very few five-roomed houses. The only six-roomed houses that it built were put up under the War Service Homes Act, which is a different proposition, but these were not built for evictees. There is another instance of a misstatement of fact. It is surprising to me that the member for Dale, who is an ex-Minister for Housing, does not know his subject; if he does not, how could his colleagues know?

The Minister for Housing: The fact is they do not.

Mr. LAWRENCE: He does not even know the procedure for eviction. That is something which anybody who has to deal with these matters should know. He went on to display ignorance of the subject by saying that in his own electorate during the past 12 months no person under notice of eviction has approached him. Probably they realised the capabilities of the hon. member and went somewhere else.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Are you prepared to accept any of our amendments?

Mr. LAWRENCE: To be quite honest, I have not been given a sufficiently full explanation of the amendments to permit me to consider them. My mind on the question is quite open.

Hon. D. Brand: You opened it once before.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I have a knowledge of eviction and rental problems probably better than that of any other member, not because I desired to make a close study of them but because I have been forced to do so. My electorate is one of the most affected by rents and tenancies.

Hon. D. Brand: Were the lumpers the landlords at South Fremantle?

Mr. LAWRENCE: I would expect a stupid interjection like that from the hon. member.

Hon. D. Brand: Did not they toss out some of their tenants?

The Minister for Housing: It was found that the man concerned was not a lumper after all.

Hon. D. Brand: He was a lumper all right.

The Minister for Housing: He was not.

Mr. LAWRENCE: The member for Dale told us that he had rung a legal firm at Fremantle which handled the major proportion of the eviction cases there and the principal had said, "I would say that the number is no greater today than it was six months ago, the difference today being that of the last four cases in which I issued summonses, when I went to the court, I had only one case to fight because three of the tenants had left the houses and found other accommodation for themselves." Then the hon. member went on to say that that applied to the other three leading solicitors who had been handling these cases.

The hon. member told us that he had been given information by the Law Society, and therefore anyone would be justified in concluding that it was correct, but I maintain that this instance was deliberately picked out to mislead the House, the Press and the public. I make this statement because this morning I went to the person whom the hon. member had rung and asked him about the statement, and he gave me a totally different story. Today, at the local court in Fremantle, held every

Wednesday, there were 20 cases, and 19 orders were issued for eviction. The remaining case was adjourned sine die on a technical point as to the time when the 28 days' notice given to the tenant should commence. Had that time been given, there would have been 20 evictions out of the 20 cases.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Were you present at the court?

Mr. LAWRENCE: Yes.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Were there many applications from owners to recover possession of their houses?

Mr. LAWRENCE: There were some. When I spoke to the solicitor whom the member for Dale quoted, I was informed that the story was not as he had given it, but that the firm had more eviction cases on its hands now than ever. Incidentally, the hon. member quoted the firm as being the leading one at Fremantle. That is not so. The leading firm at Fremantle on evictions is Walsh and Mazza and the second important one is W. R. E. Solomon. So there was another misstatement of facts to mislead the House.

If the hon. member would mislead the House and the public in that way, how could we accept him as a member of a select committee, for which position he would probably be nominated by virtue of having formerly been the Minister for Housing? Possibly the hon. member, who I believe is a landlord, would not have a mind free, open and unpoisoned, especially after his exhibition yesterday in accusing the Minister of prostituting his position to appoint a mate of his to a certain position. That was the most vicious attack I have listened to in this Chamber.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Then there have been a lot to which you have not listened.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I think that was pretty raw. Does not the Leader of the Opposition think so? If it was said of him, I could imagine his objecting very strongly. The electorate I represent presents many problems. I agree that a person who buys a dwelling for occupation by himself or by a near relative should receive full consideration. I believe that no member would suggest otherwise.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What is your interpretation of "near relative?"

Mr. LAWRENCE: An aged mother or father, or a son and daughter.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Grandchildren?

Mr. LAWRENCE: I think so, but I was speaking in broad terms. Really I mean any relative close to one's heart. The owner should be given the right to select a tenant provided he is a near relative. In these times of stress, however, when there is a shortage of houses, many families

are living in overcrowded accommodation which in itself creates hardship and these people have to be considered.

There are more than a few bad landlords in spite of the statement of the member for Dale; there are quite a number. I suppose in many instances their actions may be said to be human nature asserting itself and that is what creates a problem. Immediately the lid was lifted, these landlords rushed in and lodged their eviction notices. They did not state their intention of raising the tenants' rent and intimate that they could remain in the houses. However, their reason was obvious because the Act permitted of the tenant being evicted and the house could then be advertised with vacant possession.

Knowing the grim position of housing, it was natural for a man to say, "I am desperate for housing. My wife and three kiddies have nowhere to go. Let me have that house and I will pay you £3 a week." All I have to say to him as the landlord or the owner of the premises, is, "Come back tomorrow as so-and-so has offered me £3 10s." He might turn around to me and say, "I am desperate. I will give you £4." I can then use that offer of £4 against the other person who applies, and so the rents go up to astronomical figures. I can take any member of this Chamber and show him a four-roomed asbestos house, furnished, admittedly, but very poorly furnished, that is being paid for at the rate of £11 a week.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You have mentioned that one before.

Mr. LAWRENCE: Yes, and it still goes on.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The tenant should take some action.

Mr. LAWRENCE: He cannot.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why not?

Mr. LAWRENCE: Because he is frightened. Members know the torture the fellow must undergo because he has the threat held over his head, "If you object you will get 28 days' notice to get out."

Mr. Wild: If you support our amendment, he will be protected.

Mr. LAWRENCE: For how long?

Mr. Wild: For 12 months.

Mr. LAWRENCE: What will happen then?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: A lot of water will have flowed under the bridge by then.

Mr. LAWRENCE: We could turn around in 18 months and probably solve this problem if the Opposition would allow us even to break down the evictions and let them go through in a slight trickle. We could probably do something then through the agency of the State Housing Commission.

Mr. Wild: You are going to clear it up in 18 months?

Mr. LAWRENCE: There are factors which lend themselves to preventing our clearing it up. The Leader of the Opposition suggested, and I think another member of the Opposition did, too, that the State Housing Commission had drawn all the building materials away from the private builders for its own use. That is not true.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I did not say that.

Mr. LAWRENCE: The Leader of the Opposition referred to a big proportion.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is so.

Mr. LAWRENCE: That is not a true picture of the position. I can show members big projects—factories, etc.—that were not thought of before. Where is the material for them coming from? It is all coming from the one pool. Where is the labour coming from? It is coming from the one pool. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, there are more factories, garages and shops being erected today than ever before. I can show members where, in Stirling Highway, Wentworth Motors are putting up a factory.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The State Insurance Office is putting up a big building.

Mr. LAWRENCE: That is so, but it is a necessity.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is a matter of opinion.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I do not suggest for a moment that Wentworth Motors are not entitled to put up a building, either, but I do say that there was no need for them to use bricks, which are necessary for house-building, for the inner walls.

Mr. Yates: I agree with you there.

Mr. LAWRENCE: What they have done is a crying shame. They also have a great retaining wall at the back where they have used tens of thousands of bricks, whereas they could have used other materials. This has probably prevented the private builder from erecting more homes. That is not the fault of the State Housing Commission.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are they using pressed bricks?

Mr. LAWRENCE: They are, but not on the inner walls, of course.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I am surprised that they could get them.

Mr. LAWRENCE: They got in early. The big contractors get weekly and monthly allocations, and there is nothing to prevent them from storing up the bricks.

Mr. Yates: There are two large hotels going up which will use 100,000 bricks.

Mr. LAWRENCE: That is true, and that is where the building materials are going. I was surprised when the member for Roe suggested that restricted rents had caused

property holders in country areas to off-load their houses. I suggest that that is quite good because whereas these properties were just used for rental purposes, they have now become the property of the people who live in them.

Mr. Perkins: How does the service population get on? Do you not think the country districts need some service population?

Mr. LAWRENCE: Yes, and in quite a number of instances they get it.

Mr. Perkins: Where are they going to live?

Mr. LAWRENCE: As the Minister has pointed out on a number of occasions in this Chamber, the country centres have had a pretty good spin in housing.

Mr. Perkins: If you can find any small country town that has half-a-dozen State rental homes in it, I will be interested to hear about it.

Mr. LAWRENCE: The member for Dale told us that in 12 months he had not had one eviction case. If that is so, it does not appear necessary for any houses to be built in that district because there is no requirement for them.

Mr. Wild: They do a bit for themselves out there.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I applaud them. It is good work and there should be more of it, but as I pointed out before, the obstacle of human nature is the large one to overcome. We are not all good. The member for Dale is lucky to have those people in his electorate. Not all the people are the same as that, and while some might be desirous of building their own homes, unfortunately circumstances prevent them from doing so. People with big families on a small income cannot get the wherewithal even to start. Blocks of land in the metropolitan area are a terrific price.

Mr. Wild: Would you agree with the suggestion I made last night that the £475,000 for the Subiaco flats should go to 1,000 self-help builders at the rate of £500 each?

Mr. LAWRENCE: No, I cannot agree with that because in the metropolitan area, which is the most affected by the housing shortage, £500 would not suffice to kick them off.

Mr. Wild: Is there any reason why they could not move a little bit out?

Mr. LAWRENCE: You mean out of the city to a cheaper block?

Mr. Wild: Yes.

Mr. LAWRENCE: No, except that they would have to be provided with transport, electricity, sanitation and water. By the time the £475,000 was spent, the total sum involved would be well over £1,000,000. I can see no objection to the Subiaco flats, if properly handled by the landlord, which will be the Statc, being used for the purpose for which they were first intended,

namely, accommodation for the small-unit family. I agree with the member for Dale when he suggested last night that he felt very sympathetic towards the old-age couple. No one feels more sympathetic towards those people than I do.

In the Fremantle district many old tenement houses have become more or less slums. They are let at a very cheap rental and many of them are inhabited by pioneers of our State who have grown old in the service of the State. Because industry is expanding, commercial firms buy up these places and convert them into factories and stores, with the result that the old people have to get out, and they have nowhere to go. If they could be put into places like the Subiaco flats which should be properly controlled—I do not see why the Government should not control them because it would have the power to evict even without the Act—it would be an admirable and desirable thing.

Mr. Wild: Will they be able to afford the rents that must be paid for those flats?

Mr. LAWRENCE: Yes.

Mr. Wild: Do you think, £3 a week?

Mr. LAWRENCE: I am not going to say what the rent will be, but it will be commensurate with their income.

Mr. Wild: I suggest you work out the capital cost and amortise it over 40 years. If you do that, you will find there will not be a flat in the Subiaco project which will be let at much under £3 a week.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Would the member for Dale keep his comments for the Committee stage? He spoke for an hour-and-a-half on his second reading speech and he ought to be satisfied. The member for South Fremantle will address the Chair.

Mr. LAWRENCE: Although I will not mention them by name, because at present they are acting within the law, I can refer members to at least 20 landlords who have done some shocking things since they were given power to increase rents. There was an instance last week of a woman who owned two houses, one in a certain street and another just around the corner. For the first house she had been receiving 26s. per week and for the second 30s. per week. She gave both tenants notice of eviction and then approached each of them and asked them to sign a consent form which stated that they would be given alternative accommodation.

The form stated that the one who lived in the 26s per week house would, when she shifted into the other dwelling, pay £3 per week, and that the tenant of that second dwelling, when she shifted into the first-mentioned house, would pay 52s. per week. I think that is one of the most vicious things I have seen done in this regard. I will next mention a man—I do not think there would be a better tenant than he in the whole of the State and I am almost certain the Leader of the

Opposition knows him personally and could vouch for him—who was evicted a week or so back from a flat for which he was paying 37s. 6d. per week.

The new tenant in that flat is now paying £5 10s. per week. All this is happening in a restricted area. Near the Park Hotel, where the houses are probably at least 100 years old, landlords are getting £2 2s. per week for the dwellings which have been under notice of condemnation by the Fremantle City Council for at least two years, and they are not spending a single penny on the properties. I agree that if a man invests money in a property he is entitled to a fair return but, while some landlords are fair, those in many parts of the metropolitan area are, in the main, not doing the right thing.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I think that is wrong.

Mr. LAWRENCE: It is not. The position often does not become obvious until one really gets to know the person concerned and overcomes his fear that if he tells the truth he will be evicted.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It is probably only natural that such glaring examples would be brought to the notice of the hon. member, but what about the hundreds of satisfied tenants?

Mr. LAWRENCE: I admit that there are hundreds of satisfied tenants in the metropolitan area, but in that area there are thousands of tenants and many of them are frightened to open their mouths about what is going on because they know that if they do so, they will be given notice to quit. That is the problem with which we are confronted.

Mr. Wild: If you support our amendment, the landlords will not be able to do that sort of thing.

Mr. LAWRENCE: What would be the position under that amendment if a landlord offered the tenant a short term lease?

Mr. Wild: The amendment would provide for a lease of 12 months or over.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I do not think the amendment mentions a lease.

Mr. Wild: Yes, 12 months or over.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! This discussion is very interesting but it must cease.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I will discuss this matter with the member for Dale at a later date. My challenge stands—that I will take any member of the Opposition and show him not figures but facts. Fourteen eviction orders were granted in the Perth Local Court against tenants yesterday and a further 19 were granted this morning in the Fremantle court, giving a total of 33. If evictions continue at that rate, we will be faced with a position where many families will be on the street, as we will not be able to deal with such a huge number.

While he was Minister for Housing I do not think that at any stage the member for Dale was faced with 33 evictions in a week, but that is what has happened now. If I remember rightly, the Minister, when introducing the Bill, said that in the next fortnight there would be still larger numbers of evictions and so I would impress on members that, as has already been stated during the debate, we have a duty to come to agreement on this question so that at least for the time being some real protection will be available for both decent landlords and decent tenants. I support the second reading.

HON. A. V. R. ABBOTT (Mt. Lawley) [9.37]: There has been a great deal of comment about the extortionately high rents charged for premises and for parts of premises leased severally. I think the member for Midland-Guildford mentioned a charge of £5 per week for one room and the member for South Fremantle quoted a number of instances and said that no action could be taken in connection with them. I have been urging this point for a long time because it has always been possible to take action, and for some time by an inspector on his own initiative—

Mr. Lawrence: Not court action.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes. I will quote the Act because I do not like to be told that I know nothing about a matter of law such as this.

The Minister for Education: You are recognised as one of the leaders in the profession in this State, at all events.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The Act states—

Where the premises are part of premises which part is leased separately for residential purposes a rent inspector may of his own motion determine the fair rent thereof.

Then, further—

Where a fair rent has been determined in pursuance of this subsection it shall as from the date upon which the determination comes into force until varied by the court on appeal or by a subsequent determination of the rent inspector be the rent of the premises in respect of which the rent was fixed.

Section 24A states

(1) For the purposes of this Act an inspector may—

- (a) enter on and inspect any land or premises;
- (b) require any person to furnish to the inspector such information as he requires;
- (c) require any person to answer any question put to him by the inspector;
- (d) require any person to produce any books, documents, or writings in his custody or control.

If that information is not furnished, it is an offence.

Mr. Lawrence: But that does not constitute court action.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I know. I read that to illustrate the powers of the inspector; they are very wide. If a person receives rent, payment or consideration, or makes any charge contrary to the provisions of the Act, he commits an offence against the Act. I want members to listen to the penalty provided; it is not insignificant. Section 30 states—

(1) A person who contravenes the provisions of this Act or the regulations commits an offence against this Act.

(2) On conviction of an offence against this Act, the offender shall, if no other penalty is prescribed, be liable to a penalty not exceeding five hundred pounds.

Mr. Lawrence: That is after the setting of the date of the fair rent.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is so. The rent inspector can, of his own initiative, make an inspection, and it need not relate to any particular tenant. He can go into an apartment-house and say, "What are the rents?"

Mr. Norton: Can the inspector prosecute?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes. If he finds that the rents are too high, he can say, "Your rents, from such-and-such a date, shall be so much," and if a rent above that figure is charged, an offence is committed and a large penalty may be imposed.

Mr. Lawrence: That is after the setting of the date.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes, I admit that.

Mr. Lawrence: What happens in this case is that he sets the fair rent and the tenant then pays only the normal or fair rent. He does not pay the rent he was paying before it was fixed.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Exactly. That is why there should be more inspections.

Mr. Lawrence: Therefore he cannot be prosecuted and he accepts a fair rent after that date—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is why I would have thought it essential for the Government to ensure that all apartment-houses were inspected. I do not know what inspections have been made since the 7th April but I do know what inspections were made prior to that date, because I asked a question in that regard. I was told that prior to the 7th April three inspections had been made on behalf of lessees and 34 on behalf of lessors. So the

majority of inspections by rent inspectors were made to decide for the lessors what was a fair rent.

Mr. Lawrence: There were more inspections on behalf of lessors because the lessees were frightened to call in the rent inspector.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: What interested me about the reply was—

No inspections have been made by rent inspectors on their own initiative.

Other inspections may have been made since the 7th April, but, to my way of thinking, if the Government had been interested in these unfortunate people who are living in apartment-houses and paying excessive rentals, it would have had an inspection made of all apartment-houses to decide the fair rents. Not one inspection had been made prior to the 7th April, although some may have been made since. Had inspections been made and fair rents fixed, it would have prevented all the racketeering that we hear about in apartment-houses and shared accommodation.

Mr. Lawrence: Where did you get the information that the rent inspector had not made any inspections?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is the reply I received to a question I asked on the 7th April. It is reported on page 40 of "Hansard" of last session. I have not asked any questions relating to the period from the 7th April but I doubt whether many inspections of apartment-houses have been made. It is ridiculous for anyone to say that the owner would blame any one of his tenants if an inspection were made of all apartment-houses. If all these houses in the metropolitan area were inspected, the position would be fixed and there is no reason why that should not be done. This would ensure that a fair rent was charged to all tenants who live in such premises. Members of the Opposition have never suggested that such a provision should not be carried out.

There is one other point that has never been made clear to the public. I do not suppose for one minute that the Government will accept any compromise in this House. We tried hard enough on the last occasion, and if our amendments had been accepted, the provisions of the Act would have continued until the 1st September. The Upper House proposed something similar, and I venture to suggest that if the Government accepts the compromise we put forward on this occasion, full protection will be given to those who are sharing accommodation, and reasonable protection will be given to everyone else. I am sure that another place will accept this proposal. But if the Government intends to be adamant about these amendments and allows the measure to go to a conference, one member can wreck the legislation, if he so desires. If the Government

intends to be obstinate and uncompromising, which is what happened on the last occasion, anything might happen this time. It is the responsibility of all parties to give reasonable protection to tenants and to ensure that landlords also get fair treatment.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [1948]: Had it not been for the friends of our friends opposite, the shortage of houses might never have arisen. The Leader of the Opposition will recall that in 1937 the then Labour Government brought down a Bill under which houses would be provided for the people. He knows what happened to it. He knows that his friends in another place destroyed it. Again, in 1944, the then Premier, Mr. Willcock, introduced a similar measure, and that too was swept aside. It is to the credit of the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Country Party, that on the last occasion such a measure was introduced they both spoke strongly in favour of it. But the stalwarts in another place did not miss it; they did their job.

Racehorses can be rubbed out for being inconsistent but I do not think our friends in another place will ever be rubbed out for inconsistency. They carry out their job faithfully and well; they did so on both those occasions, and the Bills were destroyed. The Opposition at that time had previously been known as the "Work-for-all-Government," but, unfortunately, there was little work for anybody. When Mr. Willcock tried to do something, that is what happened. What have our friends opposite got against a court comprising three people? When there is industrial trouble the matter is taken before an arbitration court of three members and yet our friends opposite never cease telling us, "Go to the Arbitration Court."

If it is good enough for industrial disputes to be taken to the Arbitration Court why should we not adopt the same system in regard to a fair rents court? The members on the other side of the House have never explained their objection to such a court. I think that a court comprising three members would be much better than one presided over by a magistrate. It would create a more friendly atmosphere. Friends of mine have come to me in tears because they have had notice to appear before a magistrate. I have tried to calm them down but they always remain extremely nervous about the situation.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I think they would shudder when they knew they had to go before a court of three.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I do not think they would. They would know that Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith was on their side and the atmosphere would be more friendly. It would be much more satisfactory than appearing before a magistrate who would pronounce judgment on them. If any

member of the Opposition can tell me what his objection is to a fair rents court, I will consider it.

Several members on the other side of the House have stated that they have never had an eviction case brought before them. The member for Dale and the member for Nedlands have both said, "We have not had one." I wish I could say the same. Hardly a day passes without my getting a telephone call from someone or other who has been evicted requesting my assistance. It is time something was done, but we do not want any more of these evictee homes. The member for Dale is looking at me now.

I remember the time when the Mosman Park Road Board objected to evictee homes being erected in its district. However, the Minister for Housing at that time and his departmental officers said, "We can do no wrong and we are going to erect them whether you like it or not." So those homes were erected in defiance of the local governing authority in whose area they were built.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The Subiaco flats are being built in defiance of the local governing body.

[*Mr. Hill took the Chair.*]

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I know nothing about them, but I know something about the evictee homes and the member for Dale, who was Minister at that time, and the heads of his department went on with their erection despite the objections of the Mosman Park Road Board. As I have said, most of the Opposition members who have risen to their feet during this debate have said, "We have not had one case of eviction", but we know of one member who has had such a case and that is the member for Cottesloe.

From a Press report it was noted that he presented to the Premier the case of a chemist who was evicted from his premises. Therefore, he is one member who knows something about one case of eviction and there are a few more cases in close proximity to the chemist concerned. This is not an instance of their being requested to pay more rent; they are being bluntly told to get out. What I object to is that tenants who are being given notice to quit lose the goodwill of the businesses they have built up over a period of years.

I know of one couple who took over a small shop and have now built it up into a nice little business. When the husband learned that the landlord was thinking of selling the property, he approached him and said, "If you are considering selling this place I am prepared to buy it." However, the landlord was not prepared to listen to him and in a short time the premises were sold and since April last he has been given 28 days' notice to quit. These premises do not give this man a home only, but also are the means of his livelihood.

He cannot obtain other premises in which to conduct his business and in consequence he has to walk out because the new owner has given him 28 days' notice. As a result, he loses all his goodwill. Therefore, I do not agree with this new Bill on that account. It is 99 per cent. good and 1 per cent. bad. I do not know how the 1 per cent. bad came to be in the Bill, but those on the Opposition side of the House were successful in getting the Minister to agree that instead of a new owner holding the premises for a period of 12 months, he now has only to wait six weeks in order to obtain possession. I know of premises that have been let for 20 and 30 years and it is quite unfair for a new owner to come along and say to the tenant, "You have 28 days' notice to quit." The member for Greenough appears to agree with me because he is smiling in my direction.

Hon. D. Brand: I am hoping I can give you a hand with that bridge.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I trust the hon. member will give us a helping hand with the Bill and do the right thing. I do not know how the members of the Opposition were able to get the Minister to agree with the provision I have just mentioned, but they did. The member for Mt. Lawley referred to a conference, but I hope there will be no conference on this Bill.

The holding of a conference of managers is merely a confidence trick. I formed that opinion years ago and I have consistently opposed conferences. A conference is held and one man has only to dig his heels in and say, "Wake me up when you come to a decision and then I will give my opinion on it." So I hope there will be no conference on the Bill. We should say to the Legislative Council, "You accept or reject this measure; there will be no conference." That will be the end of it.

The Commonwealth Constitution provides for conferences, but no one ever hears of one being held in the Federal Parliament because it is considered they are of no value. Further, some of the Opposition members favour the appointment of a select committee. I have been a member of quite a few select committees, but I have never seen any good come out of them yet. The last one on which I sat as a member was appointed to inquire into the marketing of potatoes. We made several recommendations, but what was done? Not a thing!

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER: We are not discussing potatoes under this Bill.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I know that, Sir, but I point out that I am merely giving my opinion on the appointment of select committees.

Mr. Bovell: I was a member of that select committee and it performed a great service to the community.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Yes, the hon. member was on it, but he was not much help to us. We were instrumental in

bringing down a majority decision, but not one thing ever resulted from its recommendations. I remember also being a member of a select committee that inquired into the activities of the legal profession, but nothing was ever done following the recommendations that were made. When the House agrees that a select committee shall be appointed someone gets up and moves that two members on the Opposition side of the House and two from the Government side should be appointed. The mover has a majority of three to two, so what is the good of appointing a select committee?

In about half an hour the member for Mt. Lawley will rise to his feet and move for the appointment of a select committee. If the motion is carried they will then have a pow wow outside the Chamber and reach a decision. Personally, I hope there will be no vote in favour of the appointment of a select committee. I support the Bill and I trust we will be able to improve it by providing that an owner shall own a house for 12 months instead of six weeks before having the right to gain possession of the property.

MR. HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe) [9.59]: I will not delay the House for very long because I can see that the Minister is rather anxious to reply to the debate. I feel however that there should be some light thrown on the question of shared accommodation and the apparent neglect on the part of inspectors to police the section of the Act dealing with such premises. That legislation was enacted to curtail the activities of some of the landlords who let part of their premises. This matter is of interest to members on both sides of the House and also to the public by and large.

We have heard of instances only this evening and also on two previous occasions when this House debated similar legislation. These cases referred to the exorbitant rents charged for single rooms and shared premises. Yet in the Act special provision is made to cater for just that particular crime, if crime it can be called. Accordingly I feel the Minister would be well advised to give us some more information on that point. He probably has noted it already. I feared, however, that it might have been possible for him to have overlooked it. The member for South Fremantle was under some sort of misapprehension, although not completely so, when he said the rent inspectors have no powers of prosecution, when indeed they have, through the Government.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: They are only Government servants.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: Exactly. The provision in the Act that caters for the exorbitant and astronomical rents charged by landlords is Subsection (2) of Section 13, which reads as follows:—

Where the premises are part of premises which part is leased separately for residential purposes, a rent

inspector may upon application being made to him by the lessor or the lessee, or of his own motion, determine the fair rent thereof, including also premises with goods leased therewith. The rent inspector may determine the fair rent of the leased premises together with goods leased therewith, and such determination shall come into force on a date fixed by him, but the date so fixed shall not be earlier than seven days after the date of determination. The lessor and lessee concerned shall be notified in writing of such determination and the date fixed on which it comes into force.

There also happen to be rights of appeal in that connection. Members have given instances of exorbitant rentals which they say have been charged by certain landlords. Even though they have cited those cases to the House, unless they go further and report them to the Chief Secretary for action to be taken, I feel those members will be remiss in their duties because there is a special provision made to curtail such activities on the part of landlords. So I hope the Minister will give some explanation in relation to that matter. He probably has quite a satisfactory answer.

It is a matter of extreme necessity, however, that this part of the Act be policed because we are on common ground there. This side of the House feels, as does the other side, that these activities should be curtailed. To speak further to the Bill would only be adding more words to a lot of words that have already been spoken. I hope a certain amount of tolerance will be shown not by the Government alone but by the Opposition as well, and I trust that the Bill will be carried to a decent conclusion in the Committee stages. By and large, the Bill that has been presented and the provisions outlined by the member for Dale can help us to arrive at a satisfactory solution to the problem.

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [10.41]: I want to have a few words before the Minister replies. When he does so, I hope he will let us know what his attitude is towards the amendments which are on the notice paper. It might be said by the Minister that he wants to hear more fully in Committee just what the amendments mean. I would suggest to the House, however, that the Minister and the Government have had an opportunity to study the amendments and must have come to some conclusion about them. A lot has been said tonight about co-operation, and sympathy has been expressed for both landlord and tenant. I have heard those expressions from both sides of the House. Let it be remembered that the Government has 25 members on that side and we have 24 on this. Surely some worth-while amendments can come from this side of the House! If our amend-

ments are not to be accepted then it is just hopeless from our point of view to go on with this legislation. During the last session of Parliament, with others, I was very disappointed at the attitude of the Government. The Government's stand was that it would not accept any amendments; that it was to be the Bill or nothing.

Mr. Heal: How many amendments did the Opposition submit?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Opposition supported at least two important amendments.

Mr. Heal: One was accepted.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: No. it was not.

Mr. Heal: Yes, it was.

Mr. Yates: One small one out of about nine.

Mr. Heal: There were not nine amendments.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Two of the really important amendments we put forward were not accepted by the Government.

The Minister for Housing: That is not unusual.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think it is unusual, when we have important legislation like this—legislation that is contentious and affects all sections of the community.

The Minister for Housing: Do you remember the Arbitration Act Amendment Bill?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do, and I remember accepting amendments both from the Minister for Housing and the present Premier.

The Minister for Housing: Only in respect of penalties.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We accepted certain amendments, but in this legislation the Government just says "No." The attitude of the Government reminds me of the stand adopted by Molotov when he attends a meeting of the Foreign Ministers. All he says is, "No, no, no," the whole time.

The Minister for Housing: You are only anticipating; the Government has not said "No."

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I hope my anticipations are wrong. A number of members on this side of the House who have spoken have indicated to the Minister that it is their desire to co-operate. Do not let the Minister take up the attitude that those are mere words, and that there is no desire on this side of the House to co-operate with the Government in the effort to solve this difficult problem. When the Minister does rise to speak, I hope he will indicate to us just how far the Government is prepared to go in relation to

the amendments that have been placed on the notice paper. Last night the Deputy Premier spoke but he did not deal with any of the amendments.

The Minister for Housing: They were not on the notice paper then.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I suppose the Minister is right in that respect, but the member for Dale did give some indication of what the amendments would be. In fairness to the Deputy Premier, however, I would say that he did not have a full opportunity of studying the amendments to the extent he would have wished, and, in the circumstances, he would not have been prepared to express an opinion on them when he spoke last night. But since he has had an opportunity of looking at the amendments today, I hope the Minister will indicate just what the attitude of the Government is in relation to them.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. H. E. Graham—East Perth—in reply) [10.10]: I am pleased that the Leader of the Opposition contributed to this debate in order to bring it back to the plane on which I endeavoured to place it when I introduced the measure. He would be the first to admit that no heat or partisanship on my part was displayed in introducing this Bill. I indicated what the official figures showed in the matter of notices to quit that had been given to tenants. At the same time I outlined the steps that the Government had taken during its term of office to increase supplies of building materials and to speed up the building of homes.

From those facts I drew certain conclusions and quoted sets of statistics to show that there was more than a reasonable anticipation of a greater number of evictions than the responsible Government could possibly handle, and for that reason there was necessity for the continuation of a form of control so that the rate of evictions would be within measureable proportions.

Further, I indicated that the rate of home-building by the State Housing Commission, which provides the accommodation for the great bulk of those people who will suffer if nothing is done to fill the gaps, would be accelerated, particularly in the metropolitan area. It was my confident hope that in approximately 18 months' time the position would have been resolved to the extent that there would be no necessity for further legislation dealing with evictions. That was the proposition put forward.

Then we had the spectacle of the official spokesman for the Opposition devoting the greater part of his time to a tirade of abuse against the Minister for Housing! If anyone cares to refer to page 5 of "The West Australian" of today he will see that more mention is made of the Minister for Housing than of the Bill, rents, evictions,

or anything else. Needless to say, the speech of the member for Dale, if it can be so called, was received by an exceedingly accommodating person in the office of "The West Australian."

So prominence was given to those portions which were criticisms, untruths, and only half-truths concerning myself. I am amazed that one who was until recently a Minister in the Government, and one who should have intimate knowledge of the housing position and the provision of accommodation for the people, could, within such a short space of time after ceasing to be a Minister, pretend—and try to make us believe—that there is no such thing as a housing problem in existence. For six years regularly the member for Dale supported his Government on each of the six occasions it introduced legislation to continue controls.

The Bill now introduced by the Government extends further concessions than those that were offered by the McLarty-Watts Government. It is not suggested for one moment that the Bill is a perfect document, but surely we can disagree on its terms without necessarily descending to depths of degradation by implying improper practices on the part of the Minister, whoever he may be. Such, however, was the tenor of the torrent of abuse which was delivered by that member last evening.

Apologues of that aspect, we have been accustomed to a model of virtue, in the person of the member for Moore, delivering homilies to us. I am sorry he is not in his seat at the present moment. I shall quote from a speech of his made on a past occasion when he addressed himself to the rents and tenancies legislation. He said—

I wish it were possible to remove all controls entirely now, rather than do it by progressive stages, but there is no gainsaying the fact that there are landlords who, if given the opportunity, would exploit the people in their premises. In fact, in front of me, I have a statement by one such who admits that his premises cost him £6,000 in 1939 and who wants his rents based today on a £16,000 valuation with interest and depreciation and all the rest. While there are instances such as those, there must be some measure of control.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: When was that speech delivered?

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That was in 1950. The position is that there is still a housing problem, not to the extent that there was in 1950, but a housing problem nevertheless. Progressively the situation has been eased, so that it will culminate, I hope, in the abolition of this form of legislation—as affecting evictions at any rate—in 18 months' time. I shall be disappointed if we do not reach that stage.

The present Government is no more fond of controls than any other Government. As I have indicated on a previous occasion, it is animated by an earnest sincerity in that direction. I did not hesitate to take certain risks in regard to recommending to the Government that there should be introduced no new Bill to continue controls on building materials and building operations. Certain risks were undoubtedly taken, and in some respects the Government has had regrets. At the same time it indicates the attitude of the Government.

The member for Dale pretended—he was supported in this respect on occasions by the member for Subiaco and others—that if people received eviction notices, it was a short cut to receiving houses through the State Housing Commission. I might state that persons who are evicted by order of the court, because no attention is paid to eviction notices, are placed not in houses but in temporary dwellings in the various camps.

Mr. Hutchinson: How long do they remain in those camps?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: To my knowledge, some of them have been there for three years. Unfortunately, on account of the great number of eviction cases, it was necessary to shift some of those people from the camps into houses, ahead of their turn, in order to make way for fresh batches of evictees because I have resolved, on account of collusion which unquestionably existed a little while ago, that no one, if I can help it, will get a house because of eviction, owing to the shortage of houses.

Many people did not relish the prospect of living in the dwellings of which mention has been made. I must say something in regard to that. The Government is not going to build evictee huts. They are uneconomical; they are unsatisfactory; they do not do the job so far as the people are concerned. We have resolved to accelerate the rate of erection of permanent and conventional dwellings. For that reason we have stepped up considerably, and during the coming year will step up further the production of pre-cut homes in accordance with the policy speech delivered by the Premier some 18 months ago. We are building far more complete homes today than the previous Government did, even counting homes, evictee cottages and everything else.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Surely that is the natural thing with the increased output of timber, bricks and cement which we were able to bring about!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I intend this in no way to be interpreted as a criticism of the previous Government or the number of houses it built. Without question, the supply position has improved and more houses are being built,

but I am making the point that the Government is today providing accommodation at a greater rate than the previous Administration did, and therefore the charge that this Government is doing nothing is completely unfounded.

If any member is interested, I have with me some prints of the types of dwellings that were erected. Some of them have a total of only 300 square feet, a kitchen of less than 70 square feet, with a bathroom off the kitchen, a bathroom without a bath, a shower recess 2ft. 6in. wide, and a cold water system only, and this for a man, his wife and children to bath in. Those places were unlined, and when a period of wet weather occurred, the moisture came through the walls, which consisted of a single thickness of asbestos.

Mr. Wild: Were not they better than being out in the street?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You know that we had to provide for many migrants.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: They are shocking places, and this Government is going to build no more of them. They were built with two bedrooms; they had no guttering and in wet weather the moisture was swept into the rooms so that the occupants had either to put up with that, or live under unhygienic conditions with the windows closed. It was necessary to go out through the rain in order to get to the kitchen; there is now a corridor connecting the kitchen with the bathroom.

The Deputy Premier: What was the size of the kitchen?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It was 70 square feet, which is about two-thirds of the size that any local authority will permit. That is the type of place that was built and the member for Dale thinks we should continue to erect them.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I understand that they have been considerably improved by the tenants and by the Housing Commission. Surely the Housing Commission would not stand idly by, knowing that a family was living in a house where the rain could pour in, without doing something.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: This Government has had to do quite a number of things to repair the ill-conceived plans given effect to by the previous Government and there is no desire on our part to repeat that. Any member who is familiar with these hovels will not pretend that they should be allowed to remain as permanent dwellings.

Mr. Wild: Have you power as Minister to tell the Housing Commission what to do?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes.

Mr. Wild: Then you must have obtained more power than I had.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I am amazed that the member for Dale should have masqueraded under the title of Minister for Housing apparently without having read the Act under which he operated, for the Act says that there shall be a commission known as the State Housing Commission which shall operate under the direction of the Minister.

Mr. Wild: Subject to the Minister, which means that the Minister may veto the decisions but not give directions.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The authority of the Minister is all-powerful in respect of the commission, and the member for Dale cannot wriggle out of it in that way.

Mr. Wild: With the large number of migrants that were coming in, you would sooner have those people out in the street than build some humble place for them?

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Rather than waste hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Mr. Wild: Answer the question!

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I would sooner build decent houses, which is precisely what I am doing.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Did not the other States also import this class of house?

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: They were not imported; they were the creation apparently of the then Minister for Housing.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Have not you got people living in small houses?

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes, in small houses erected by the Government of which the hon. member was a Minister.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Then you are doing precisely the same thing.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Those places are being used, but they are no credit to anyone.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: Then why use them?

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Because the legislation has been eased to the extent that it is not possible to house all the people in conventional homes at present. That is the explanation. During the time the member for Dale was Minister for Housing, he tried an experiment which the present Government does not intend to adopt, namely, erecting canvas tents for these people. What sort of a civilised country is this if we are, in accordance with some theory we hold, going to crucify legislation and condemn hapless families to live under those conditions?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You seem to forget the enormous number of migrants who were coming into the State. I told the Labour Prime Minister of our difficulties and he replied that we had to take those people.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is so.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: They were coming into Western Australia at a faster rate than they were entering any other part of Australia.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That may be so, and it all indicates the necessity for us to be particularly careful not to whittle this legislation away too much because there is a necessity for a measure of control to continue. This should be obvious to every member. I know that the member for Dale, when speaking about the evictee cottages, forgot to mention the shacks that I have been describing. Those evictee cottages, in the majority of cases, are condemned by the people who live in them and are certainly condemned by the local authorities.

I am now confronted with the position of having to lend money to the occupants to endeavour to convert those cottages into reasonable living accommodation, because they were so uneconomic. I have to lend them £600, £700 or £800, and the job is not worth the sum total of money when it is finished. The member for Dale adopted the attitude. "You are compelled to buy those places or we will not give you any accommodation."

Mr. Wild: Was there anything wrong with that?

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The people have occupied those places, which were not worth the money charged for them, but I am being compelled, on the score of decency, to advance the money on an uneconomic proposition so that they may have an opportunity to provide some reasonable form of accommodation. It is exceedingly difficult to convert those places into decent accommodation.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They cost £1,200, did they not?

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: And the rest—£1,600 and £1,700.

Mr. Wild: About £1,100 when we started off.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I throw out a challenge to the member for Dale that not one of them was completed and sold for £1,100 or anything like that amount. That shows how much the hon. member knows about the department he was charged with administering.

Mr. Wild: We shall get you to table the papers tomorrow so that we can see.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I shall be pleased to do so. The member for Dale frequently speaks without his book. He told the Chamber, and of course the public, that I was complaining of the lack of publicity I was getting in connection with rents and tenancies. I have done nothing of the sort. Then he said we must have a select committee in order that the Press and the public may learn all about

the position and then we would really get at the truth regarding evictions. I say the hon. member speaks without his book, because Standing Order 356 reads—

The evidence taken by any select committee of the House, and documents presented to such committee which have not been reported to the House shall not be disclosed or published by any member of such committee or by any other person.

That would include the editor of the newspaper.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Without the leave of the House.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There were no provisions or conditions made by the member for Dale. He just put it forward. He did not have the vaguest notion of what a select committee was. He was merely on a fishing expedition, as he has been previously, not knowing where he was going or what he wanted but hoping that we would get some sort of a clue; and if he ran true to form, he would draw a wrong conclusion from that clue. The member for Dale trespassed against what has become a practice, namely, that when conferences of managers are held there shall be no divulging of what transpires at such conferences.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Your own Premier disagreed with that.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He did not hesitate about Mr. Roche in another place.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Let us get our feet on the ground in connection with this. A question was asked of the Premier and he read the Standing Order which stated, contrary to practice, that a report of the proceedings of the conference should be made to the respective Houses. But I say the practice is that a report of the proceedings is never made. A report of the final determination is made to each House. I could name very vividly, because I remember so well, the individual responsible and almost the exact words he used, and it was upon that rock that the conference held some ten weeks ago collapsed.

I am not going to be, notwithstanding what I stated earlier, led to the point of disclosing it to the House, although I am prepared to do so to any individual member; and I say this now after consultation with the Acting Premier. No person who is honest and who was there—and I can say this on a Bible—will say that the Minister for Housing was the person responsible for the breakdown of that conference. If the member for Dale will be honest in this matter, however great an effort that may be, he will tell his friends, the Press and anybody else, the attitude of a certain member of the Legislative Council before, as a matter of fact, the other members representing the two Cham-

bers sat down to do business. I will say no more than that. I will leave it to the integrity of the member for Dale.

Mr. Wild: Will you deny that your colleague tried to persuade you to accept our amendments, and you refused? Of course you will not.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I think that once and for all we had better clean up this question about the famous amendment that the member for Dale talks so much about. I have indicated that he knows nothing at all about housing, or the Housing Commission, and that he makes all sorts of irresponsible statements. He does not even know what the Leader of his own party did at the other end of the building. Mr. Simpson, the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, on the 13th April this year moved an amendment in the following terms:—

Section twenty A of the principal Act is amended—

(a) by substituting for the words "thirtieth day of 'April'" in line 1 the words "thirty-first day of August".

That ought to ring a bell in the mind of the member for Dale, if he remembers anything. Mr. Simpson addressed himself to the amendment and Mr. Watson disagreed with him. It was put to the vote, and defeated by, amongst others, members of the Liberal Party itself.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Was a division taken on it?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There was no division on it.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: How do you know it was defeated in that way?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I know a bit because the Minister for Housing happened to be in the Legislative Council listening to the debate at the time. The hon. member cannot take a trick there.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why did not the Labour members call for a division? Did they not want to test it?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The man in charge of it was the Liberal Party Leader in the Legislative Council.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: There was no one in charge of it.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: If instead of our having all these wild charges made, the Leader of the Opposition would endeavour to instil a little discipline into those who run under his banner but occupy seats at the other end of the building, then these misunderstandings would not occur.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I have not got the power of Mr. Webb.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Who is Mr. Webb, for the purpose of this argument? When the member for Nedlands commenced to speak, I thought he was

going to disappoint me, because he adopted a demeanour which, from my experience of him, was entirely foreign to his make-up. Fortunately, a little later he got down to his usual style of being quite logical. He raised the question as to what would be the position of people who had let premises after the 31st day of December, 1950. It is perfectly clear, if he will refer to the Bill which is before us, and also to page 9 of the existing Act.

He will find that if the proposition of the Government is agreed to, Section 17 (1) will read then exactly as it is printed now, that is to say, that premises let after the 31st December, 1950, shall be excluded from the provisions of this part of the Act; and this part refers to the recovery of premises. Because I am the Minister for Housing and not the Chief Secretary, who is the Minister in control of this Act—I am merely endeavouring to handle it for him in this Chamber—I am unable to give all the information that has been sought in respect of the activities of the rent inspector as applying to premises which are parts of premises.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. Yates: The rent inspector does not come under your jurisdiction?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is so, but I have a note from him to the effect that since the 1st May the rents of 77 tenancies have been determined; 51 are in the course of being valued and the rents determined; and, further, lessors are being advised from time to time of intention to fix rents. That, I appreciate, is not necessarily the entire story, but from the 1st May, at any rate, whatever may have been the activity or inactivity of the rent inspector prior to that time, this does indicate that he has been busying himself. But this is a matter which should be taken up with the Chief Secretary.

Mr. Hutchinson: All members, do you not agree, should avail themselves of the opportunity to inform the Chief Secretary of certain cases?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is a little difficult, because I have seen reports by the rent inspector showing that he has been implored by tenants to take no action because they feared the penalty of 28 days' notice; and that is a very real fear. That is why the Government has insisted all the way along that while the landlord has the power, without having to show any cause or reason, to give 28 days' notice merely because of a whim, anything that might be said to be done in the way of rent control in cases where extortionate rentals are being charged, is completely meaningless.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But not for shared premises.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is in respect of shared premises, because there is nothing to prevent the landlord

giving notice, and it is poor consolation to a tenant who has been turned out into the street to know that his successor is to get the accommodation at the same rental or possibly a lower figure.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why should the landlord give the tenant notice when the rent inspector does it of his own initiative?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Out of pique.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What, give notice to all his tenants?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: All I am doing is to indicate that the rent inspector has reported to his Minister that that is a problem and that many tenants have appealed to him not to take action in the matter of rentals because of the penalty that they fear would follow.

Mr. Hutchinson: What does he do in those circumstances?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I am afraid I cannot answer that. Needless to say I am not familiar with the details of the administration of that department, which comes under another Minister. There has clearly been an attempt to make a political football of this measure. It has been stated, ad nauseum, that the Government held a special session in April for the purpose of creating a situation by which it might gain some advantage at the Legislative Council election.

For my part, I well remember the Premier expressing concern because the stage was being reached when the legislation, as we knew it, would come to an end—namely on the 30th April—and he said it would be fatal if we waited until the time had run out before trying to do something. In that event we would be blamed by the Opposition for not having taken steps, when we felt something was happening, to prevent that stage being reached and, of course, we would have abuse heaped upon us by landlords, tenants and everyone else because of the confusion that would be created.

For that reason Parliament was called together—I think commencing on the 6th April—giving a reasonable time for both Houses to determine the legislation prior to the 30th April. If there were political repercussions, that merely indicates—in accordance with the Gallup poll, details of which I read to the House last week—that the great majority of people are of the firm opinion, whether Labour or Liberal in their political sympathies, that there should be a continuation of control. This session has been called earlier than usual in order to deal with the situation before it gets completely out of land.

I hope and trust that the balance of the debate on this measure can be held at a reasonably high level. After all, it is not politics we are playing. We are playing with the happiness and comfort of very

many families, men, women and children. We are dealing with persons engaged in business who are confronted with the absolute ruin of their future prospects.

This is a most serious matter and so the Government has brought down a Bill to provide for a fair rents court. I can see nothing wrong with the proposition, that, instead of having to wait until one of the magistrates has time apart from his ordinary duties, there shall be a special court set up so that cases can be dealt with with the utmost expedition and that the magistrate shall be advised by persons representing the two parties concerned. Surely there is nothing unfair in that proposition! It is a court to which aggrieved parties, either landlord or tenant, can appeal.

It is not proposed that there shall be any terms or conditions laid down, and there is nothing peculiar about that. I have before me the legislation of 1951, 1950 and 1939, passed and re-passed in succeeding years by Governments of different political colour, and all along there was an open charter so far as the courts were concerned. There has been some hysteria in connection with this question, but there is nothing unreasonable or unusual about it.

With regard to tenancies or the occupation of premises we say that any owner who wants a house for himself or members of his family can get possession of it by three months' notice, and the decision of the court in such a case is automatic. Where there are bad tenants, 28 days' notice is provided; but, where the tenant is fair and reasonable, pays his rent and looks after the property in every way, why should we give the landlord power to evict him and what benefit would it be to the landlord if we did so?

It would mean a whole lot of upset and chaos for the man and his family under existing circumstances and no additional reward or benefit for the owner of the premises. I feel that the general proposition put forward by the Government is fair and reasonable as long as the Opposition acknowledges, as it must, that there is still an emergency in this State in the matter of housing, although the position is improving. I believe it must admit too, that until such time as the present difficult situation has been largely overcome, there should be some means of limiting the number of eviction cases that come before the courts and the number of families evicted.

The Deputy Premier has stated that the Housing Commission could probably find accommodation for 40 or 50 families a month. By stretching things and by denying people who have been waiting for a number of years, it is possible that the commission could cater for more families than that, but to allow to continue a situation where the court is going to deal with

40 cases every week would make it physically impossible for the Housing Commission to meet the needs of all the people concerned.

Surely members opposite appreciate the situation and the fact that the Government is charged with the responsibility in this matter—speeches from the Opposition, but action from the Government! If members opposite can devise something that will water down or regulate the flow of evictions, we, as a Government, will be prepared to give generous consideration to such a proposition, but if on a matter of high principle, as seen for the first time now by members opposite, but not seen by them when they were on this side of the Chamber and had the responsibility—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Which we did see.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: If they do believe that people should be willy-nilly turned out into the streets, then we part company, but if they are honest and acknowledge that we do not want to be unfair to anyone, the Government will enter the Committee stage on that basis. I know that I have to some extent offended this evening, but I hope and trust that in dealing with this measure, there will be no more of the thrust and parry where personalities are concerned and no more party politics. I trust that we will, as responsible representatives of the people, measure up to this legislation and have regard to the fact that we are not dealing only with printed words, but also with many hundreds and indeed thousands of human beings who are vitally affected in one way or another, dependent upon the course of action taken in this Chamber and another place.

Hon Sir Ross McLarty: Are you prepared to accept some of these amendments?

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I almost forgot. The Premier would like some indication of the attitude of the Government towards the amendments that have been placed on the notice paper.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You mean the Leader of the Opposition.

The Minister for Education: He used to be Premier.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: And he will be again, too.

The Deputy Premier: That is a long way away.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Only 18 months.

The Deputy Premier: Wishful thinking!

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It appears that the position of the Government in 18 or 20 months' time is being resolved at the moment. Several of the amendments on the notice paper have been considered by the Government but a final decision has not been made. I can say, however, that it is not my intention, or

that of the Government, to reject these amendments out of hand. I think at this stage several of them can be accepted subject to some modification. It is not usual, at this stage, to indicate in more precise terms the attitude of the Government, but as we reach the various clauses concerned, during the Committee stage, we can be more precise.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You had better leave the Committee stage until tomorrow to give you more time to consider these amendments before we meet again on Tuesday.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: As a matter of fact, I have considered them and discussed them with my advisers. I have formed certain opinions but, as is appreciated, this is a Government Bill and I want an opportunity of discussing with my colleagues the propositions that are involved.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Certainly.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I have already indicated that I am prepared to go part of the way by accepting, at least in part, some of the amendments. If the Government rejects certain propositions which are regarded as vital and important by the Opposition, it will be only because the Government honestly feels that the terms of the Bill are preferable and better calculated to deal with the situation. I commend the Bill to the House in those terms.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

To Refer to Select Committee.

MR. WILD (Dale) [10.53]: I move—

That the Bill be referred to a select committee.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How many?

Hon. A. F. Watts: That will be fixed later.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do not look like that! You can have more.

Mr. WILD: Without battling again, the Minister queried my suggestion that the hearings of the committee should be open to the Press. I have been a member of this House for only seven years and I have had no previous experience in this regard. I asked one or two of my colleagues who have been here for about 20 years or so and they said that the precedent was established by resolution of this House on the 19th October, 1939. The Press were admitted on the motion of Mr. Latham, as he then was. So I think I should be forgiven for the mistake I made the other day. I was not a member in 1939 but I was always of the opinion that the Press could be present during the proceedings of a select committee. If this proposition is successful, it is my intention to move a

motion similar to that moved by Sir Charles Latham in 1939 so that the Press can be admitted.

Yesterday and today we listened to all sorts of conflicting opinions about the position regarding evictions and tenancies. The Minister stated his case; I, on behalf of the Opposition, stated our case and indicated that I did not agree with the Minister's views. Members of both sides of the House also aired their opinions. But, as a House, we know little more now than we did two or three days ago or even three or four months ago when we debated the same measure. We could go on discussing the problem until we were blue in the face without arriving at any worth-while conclusion.

Firstly, we must say to ourselves "Are the figures that have been given to the Minister by his officers entirely correct?" I have no doubt that they are correct, but will all the people who go down to the Housing Commission be thrown out on to the street if the Bill is defeated, or if some of our amendments are accepted? We must also ask ourselves "Are all these people genuine? Has there been any connivance?" There is no doubt that in certain cases there has been. We must also ask ourselves, "What have these people done to help themselves?"

When I was at the Housing Commission three and a half years ago the position was much more critical than that now facing the Minister. I am quite sincere when I say that, and if the Minister looks at the records of the court he will find that seven or eight tenants were being ejected each week. Yet, as members were told by the Minister for Justice the other evening, only two tenants have been ejected since January of this year. Three and a half years ago we appointed a committee to inquire into the bona fides of these applicants and we found that we were able to whittle down the 14 or 15 people per day who said that they were to be ejected from their premises to six or seven. Probably the same position would apply today.

During his speech the member for South Fremantle said that at Fremantle there were 15 or 16 and approximately the same number in the Perth court in a week. Who is to say that a large number of those people cannot look after themselves? I repeat what I said the other evening, the next four or five weeks will be the most difficult. Even if the numbers approximate 40 per week, once we get over the next four or five weeks the position will ease. I may be quite wrong and that is where a select committee could help us. The members of the select committee could study these applications and they might find that many of the people who say they are about to be evicted have merely panicked, as the Minister said, and rushed

down to the Housing Commission. I am sure that many of those people could look after themselves.

The members of the select committee could also look into the rent aspect. Expert evidence could be called from the members of the Real Estate Institute and from agents at Fremantle, Midland Junction and other places in an endeavour to find out if the rents being charged were excessive. If the rents are excessive, are they resulting in evictions? A select committee could also ascertain the position regarding vacant premises. Members on the Government side have said that there are no empty houses and that there is no accommodation available. Members on this side of the House say, "Well, you have only to pick up the daily paper and find advertisements showing that six, eight or ten houses are vacant." The rents for those houses may be high, but all of them may not be high. That is evidence that could be adduced by a select committee.

Then we come to the question of business establishments, on which we cannot agree. When that question was raised in the House, I heard one or two members say that they were not quite sure of their ground on the same premises as those mentioned by the Minister. That is another aspect that could be investigated and so there is every justification for the appointment of a select committee. It would clarify the doubts that exist in our minds. As I said to the Minister this evening, "Let us have this motion agreed to by the House and permit members of the Press to be present at the inquiry" because he cannot deny he has several times indicated that he has had from the Press the treatment to which he thinks he is entitled. Therefore, I say, "Let us have the Press present" and he will have all the publicity he wants during that inquiry.

The Minister for Housing: I do not want publicity; I wish they would leave me alone.

Mr. WILD: I have pleasure in submitting the motion.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. H. E. Graham—East Perth) [11.1]: The Deputy Premier has already indicated that the Government cannot agree to this proposition. The reason why we are in session at the moment is because of the urgent necessity to do something to meet the position which is developing following the virtual cessation of control on the 30th April last. It is only this week that the first cases, in any number, are coming before the metropolitan courts.

Apparently it will be approximately a fortnight at least before Parliament has finished dealing with the Bill, without any interruptions in the nature of motions for the appointment of a select committee and the like. Therefore, the very object the Government had in mind in convening Parliament some six or seven weeks earlier

than usual will have been defeated. The crisis has arrived. Between the 30th April and the present moment we have been going through the process of notices to quit being served, and of the owners of premises consulting their legal advisers as to their next step; applications being made to the court for a hearing date and so on.

It is only now that the result of the legislation, as passed in December of last year, is being felt. Are we to fiddle while Rome burns? I know that there are 40 or more applications this week and the week after, and yet apparently we are to go gleefully on, inquiring into the pros and cons of this question as though there were no urgency about it. We surely would give the impression to the public that we have no real sense of responsibility. What is to happen in the meantime?

It is physically impossible for the State Housing Commission to deal with all the cases. Let me make myself perfectly clear. When I say "every case," I do not mean every one that comes before the court. Unfortunately, we are unable to do anything for the two-unit family and I am reminded about this by quite a few on this side of the House. Where there are families that include daughters who are over 21 and sons over 18 years of age, we regard them as being two-unit families and the sons and the daughters have to go out and fend for themselves.

That is the position at the moment. People who are able to find accommodation of their own accord do not wait for the case to come before the court and thus be forced to meet the court expenses. They obtain alternative accommodation before that occurs. So, by and large, all the cases of more than two-unit families that come before the court concern people who are either out in the street or for whom accommodation is found by the Housing Commission. I repeat that the numbers that will be coming up by the end of this week will make it impossible for the State Housing Commission to cope with them.

I am merely stressing the need for us to get on with the job. The appointment of a select committee sounds quite appealing, but what can be ascertained from it? I have been given figures by a reliable authority; by an officer of the State Housing Commission. They are figures compiled by him as a result of people calling on him and of that officer making visual inspection in detail of the notices that they bring with them.

It is not a question of hearsay. He has also consulted those associated with the local courts. In consequence, he knows, approximately, after allowing for the duplication of those who have fallen by the wayside, the number of cases involved. We can have select committees for the next six months, but we cannot get a more accurate picture other than by folding our

arms and allowing the poor beggars to come to the courts. However, it will be too late then; the damage will be done.

As to the accommodation to be provided for them, I can supply the exact figures in regard to the turnover, namely, the completion of houses by the State Housing Commission. We have to ignore war service homes because people get them in their own right. I cannot put anybody into a war service home. However, it is possible to do something for those who are eligible for a Commonwealth-State rental home or a home provided under the State Housing Act.

Quite a number of houses are being built in the country. So all the Commonwealth-State rental homes are not available for evictees. Then we have to look beyond and say, "Is it fair that somebody who has been in a comfortable house for years and who is now to be evicted, can get a brand new house, while some other poor unfortunate family which has been living on a leaky back verandah is denied the accommodation for which they have been waiting for several years?" We can judge from the figures that are available on the output of houses by the State Housing Commission. Any member of Parliament can call on Mr. Prince, the eviction officer, and get full details of the size of families and the predicaments they are in, by making an appointment to see that gentleman.

Those of us who are in reasonably close contact with our electors—and I realise that this is largely a metropolitan problem—are aware, from our own personal knowledge and experience of what is going on, that there is no need for any select committee to be appointed. Who could the select committee approach? The court? Anybody can do that without a select committee. The State Housing Commission? That can be done without a select committee being appointed.

The estate agents or the trustee companies? That can be done without a select committee being appointed. By going to the Housing Commission and getting details of the families concerned and, if necessary, making personal inspections? As to that, I do not know whether the members of the select committee would care to inspect the premises these people are occupying and ascertain how they are placed and how much money they have in the bank, among other things. The whole thing is fantastic!

In 1939, when war broke out, there was no housing crisis. There was no select committee but, because of the impending emergency, all Parliaments and members of all parties agreed that there should be some restrictions and, as a matter of fact, the legislation enacted was made retrospective in Western Australia. That is to prompt the memories of some who tend to forget. That was accepted without question. While there is an emergency,

it is tapering off and we, the Government, are appealing to the Opposition members to allow us to continue a little longer in getting on with the job of solving the housing problem. We will not then be engaged every year in these arguments in this Chamber, or have one Chamber versus another.

There is nothing to be gained by a select committee, but something to be lost—time. It is true that the Council could by their own vote decide to have a select committee and accordingly do exactly the same thing, namely, waste time whilst this terrible business goes on. Unfortunately we cannot do anything to affect the situation there except hope and trust that they will appreciate the predicament in which the Government finds itself, and realise that the Government is anxious to stop up the holes where the weaknesses have been revealed.

I do not think there should be much argument or disputation about it. It was an idea advanced by the Leader of the Opposition in the first place. What he hopes to achieve by it I do not know, but it will have the effect of wasting time, precious days; it might be two, three or four weeks, we do not know. A select committee generally proceeds along its way, finds that it cannot present its report in the time allowed it, applies for an extension of time and we have little alternative but to grant it.

Of course, I do not want the position to be misconstrued, but when a select committee is appointed, there would be a majority of members from the Opposition. There would be the mover, and two members from both this and the other side of the House. The member for Dale, who has not the task and responsibility of coping with the situation, could most diligently go into this question and most exhaustively cover every corner of the State and meanwhile the flood gates are open. I feel that no case has been made for the setting up of a select committee—Press or no Press.

HON A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [11.14]: In supporting the motion my contribution will be a comparatively short one. But I would like to express the hope that the Minister and his Government reconsider the point of view he has just expressed. This matter is obviously, from all that has been said in the last few days, substantially one affecting the metropolitan area. It has been said by members representing, as I do, rural constituencies—many of them far from the City of Perth—that the problem in their electorates is virtually non-existent or completely so.

It is the responsibility of every member of this Legislature to cast an intelligent and responsible vote. I am not pledged to this Bill, or to any amendment that is proposed to it. I expressed the opinion here recently when this matter was

pending, that I desired to see the fair thing done. There have been conflicting statements in this House on a great number of matters in the last couple of days, as affecting this measure. I am not prepared to disbelieve the Minister or some of his colleagues on the Government side of the House, but I am none the less disinclined to disbelieve members who sit on this side of the House.

Other than by some method of inquiry, however, I am quite without the means of determining which of them is right, and so far as I am concerned—and I think so far as many of those who are positioned like me are concerned—the situation is that it is virtually impossible for me to arrive at a decision as to what should be the ultimate action taken in regard to this matter, without some opportunity of closer examination. That puts shortly, and without taking up too much time, the most important aspect with regard to this measure, so far as I and a number of other members in this House, are concerned.

There are, of course, other aspects and I desire to make reference to one or two of them. First of all, I think there are provisions—supposing there is such a case as the Government would have us understand—that ought to be in this Bill, but which are not there. One of them I would suggest is a formula for determining what should be the fair rent of premises. There is something in the parent Act, as I understand the position—mutilated though it has been in recent times—which provides for a rental of between 2 per cent. and 8 per cent.

That is not a very satisfactory proposition so far as I can see. In past times I have expressed the opinion that perhaps the formula suggested and drawn up by the Real Estate Institute might be a satisfactory basis. But I do not know, and one of the things I would want to do would be to examine closely the representatives of that institute as to the whys and wherefores of that proposition. At this stage I would venture the opinion that if the formula in the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement were to be accepted as a basis for fixing fair rents, some of these charged by landlords today and which are regarded as exorbitant, would have to be increased to reach that figure.

Mr. Andrew: Some would be reduced.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Very few would be reduced from what I can see after a pretty close examination of the position. I would bear in mind the fact that that formula was arrived at, not by the Government of which the Leader of the Opposition and I were members, but before that time. The other day I asked the Minister for Housing—and I will tell him now straight away that I did not ask him with this question in mind, but, as I

think he knows, for quite another purpose—some questions relative to the cost of erecting brick and timber-framed houses in the metropolitan area. The Minister replied that, including sewerage and a picket fence, the Housing Commission could get them erected for £270 a square.

That figure was much lower than I expected him to quote; but we will take that as the figure. Nobody can argue that a 12½ square house is a mansion; it is only a small cottage, and it costs £3,390 to erect. If one follows on those figures, and allowing the minimum interest that an ordinary individual would have to pay, namely, 4½ per cent., plus an amortisation fee over 53 years of 10s. per cent. as provided for in the Housing Commission formula; valuing the block on which the house was built at £300, which is the average price for a respectable block; allowing only £10 a year for maintenance, which nobody can regard as excessive, the Housing Commission formula for the rent of that house would be £4 9s. a week.

That includes a reasonable amount for rates and taxes. It does not matter whether they were bought at inflated prices or not. That is a very low price today. I am talking about houses that have to be built today of 12½ squares at the rental based on the Housing Commission's formula. It comes to £4 9s. per week. So there is a lot of room for inquiry into this matter. There is a lot of room for us to inform ourselves by the only means at our disposal as to what we ought to do in regard to some of these difficult problems.

I say without hesitation that I am not going to accept any amendment or any measure which I feel is not justified by the facts. I honestly do not know what the facts are. As one who, I believe, is as responsible in his duty as any other member of the Legislature—no more responsible than most, I admit—I feel that I am entitled to know. This evening I heard select committees ridiculed in more ways than one. As I previously said, I sat on a good many of them. I agree that all of them have not been successful.

Some of the problems they had to tackle were probably such that it was almost impossible to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. But the majority of them did so. I venture to say the the legality of the State Insurance Office would never have been ensured at the time it was had it not been for a select committee. I venture to say that the passage of the very large and substantial Companies Bill, which was handled by the Minister for Justice in his first term of office, would never have passed this House without a select committee, which was subsequently converted into an honorary Royal Commission. And there are many others I can

quote. I hope the Government will be prepared to reconsider its views on the matter. If I am appointed to the select committee, I will make every effort I can to ensure a speedy inquiry and a prompt disposal of its business.

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY: (Murray) [11.23]: I first made the suggestion for a select committee when I was speaking on the Address-in-reply, and I did so in order to give the Government full opportunity of considering my suggestion. I am sorry that the Minister has indicated, as was also mentioned by the Deputy Premier last night, that the Government will not agree to a select committee. When I made the suggestion, I did not do so with the object of holding up the legislation. The Opposition would not derive any benefit from such action. I did so with a genuine desire to obtain all the information possible, and not only to let Parliament know the facts but to let the people know as well, because of the very considerable public interest.

Mr. Andrew: This is the third session that this Bill has been before Parliament, and only now do you suggest a select committee.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I know. If I may comment on the remark of the Minister, he spoke of playing about with the select committee. I would not suggest that there was any playing about. I feel it would be the duty of the select committee to help him to get on with the legislation as early as possible. If it is so urgent, I think it could be agreed that Parliament should adjourn for a week in order that members of the select committee could give the whole of their time to the matters which would be brought before the committee. I mention the adjournment of Parliament because we know that when the House is sitting, the select committee cannot continue its sessions.

The Minister for Housing: Will you answer this question? Why did you support the rents and tenancies legislation in 1952, which was the sixth time this legislation was continued, without expressing a desire for full investigation, which you are now doing?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: In reply to the Minister, he knows that conditions have altered very considerably since 1952.

The Minister for Housing: That would suggest that the change of Government did a world of good.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: As pointed out by the member for Victoria Park, during the last three sessions of Parliament we have dealt with this legislation and certainly with not very satisfactory results. I cannot help but again stress the belief that a select committee would be able to collate valuable information. Because of that, I think it should be accepted by the Government.

The Deputy Premier: What points do you want information on?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: There are many points.

The Deputy Premier: What are they?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It is all right; I am not in the witness box! We have heard very considerable differences of opinion during this debate, and I think they need some clarification. They can be clarified if evidence is taken. I believe the evidence should be taken in public. The Minister made some reference to the possibility or probability of a select committee being sought in another place. That may be a possibility.

The Deputy Premier: Were you not the first to suggest that?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I made the suggestion to the Deputy Premier the other night that there was a possibility. I think there still is.

The Deputy Premier: I would not doubt that.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I would prefer that the select committee should come from this House. If we are to have one, why not have it from this House?

The Deputy Premier: We might finish up with two.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not think so. Perhaps the Government might give consideration to a joint select committee. I do not know if it is possible to put a time limit on the select committee. Certainly I would not approve of any time-wasting. The Deputy Premier might give some consideration to the suggestion that Parliament should adjourn for a certain period in order to allow the select committee to get on with its work. I hope the Government will reconsider its attitude in this regard because I am still of the opinion that a select committee would do a considerable amount to clarify the position. Furthermore, with amendments that would have to be drafted, it would give the Parliamentary Draftsman a clearer conception of what was required. As we know, amendments to this class of legislation are somewhat intricate and need to be clearly understood. So I still support the proposal for a select committee, and I am hoping the Government will agree to it.

THE DEPUTY PREMIER (Hon. J. T. Tonkin—Melville) [11.29]: It is passing strange that we should now have a request from the Leader of the Country Party and the Leader of the Opposition for a select committee to inquire into this question when on a number of occasions similar Bills were brought down to continue protection and they made no suggestion that a selection committee was desirable or necessary.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Did any member ever ask for one?

The DEPUTY PREMIER: I say it was never suggested that it was desirable or necessary. It was Liberal policy in 1951 to let controls lapse.

Mr. Wild: To ease them out.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: To let them lapse.

Mr. Wild: I say, to ease them out.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: I am telling the member for Dale that it was Liberal policy to let controls lapse. Apparently the hon. member was not in the confidence of the Leader of the party though an official announcement was made to that effect.

At the period in 1951 when legislation was before the House the Government of the day believed it had all the necessary information. For example, the present Leader of the Opposition said that there would be less than 1 per cent. of the persons affected by the removal of controls as was then proposed.

We on our side said it would be a lot more, and we urged that even with the lessening of controls at that stage, the Housing Commission would find the greatest difficulty in making provision for people. We also said that one of the things that would make it difficult for the Government to cope with the situation would be the number of houses that would have to be provided for migrants. What did the present Leader of the Opposition say to that? He said—

I do not think a great number of new people are coming in and getting houses.

Tonight, however, he urged, as a reason why his Government was in difficulty, the great number of migrants who had to be provided with accommodation. In 1951 the then Chief Secretary—the member for Narrogin—who was in charge of the Bill, spoke of “the frightening sky-high level of heavily-inflated rentals charged by those who have been in the habit for a long while now of outwitting the law.” Those were the terms he used and they were very strong words indeed, and rents are very much higher today than they were in 1951. We know this, just as the Government in 1951 knew the circumstances then prevailing.

I asked the Leader of the Opposition upon what point he expected a select committee would furnish information, and he had no answer to my question, except to say that he was not in the witness box. Surely when one desires a select committee, one has in mind some specific points upon which evidence would be required! Can members of the Opposition furnish even a couple of points upon which they think they have insufficient information and a select committee would provide more?

Mr. Wild: Yes, the number of evictions.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: We do not need a select committee to tell us the number of evictions. That information can be

obtained from the court and from the Housing Commission without setting up the machinery of a select committee to report subsequently to the House. The Minister for Housing has already given the figures and he obtained them from the only source to which a select committee would apply.

From the Opposition side, repeated reference has been made to the small number of evictions that are supposed to be taking place. The member for South Fremantle tonight mentioned the number of cases that had come before the Fremantle court today.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Fourteen was it not?

The DEPUTY PREMIER: No, 20.

Mr. Wild: There is a big difference.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: Yes, and the member for South Fremantle was right.

Mr. Wild: That is one reason why we want a select committee.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: We do not want a select committee to find that out. If a man is living in the present and not in the past, he will know that it is inevitable that with 28 days' notice and evictions automatic, there will be a spate of evictions, and will it matter whether it is 600, 800, 900 or 1,000?

Mr. Wild: That is only your guess! We want a select committee to check up.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: It is not a guess.

Mr. Wild: It is.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: We know the number of evictions that took place in 1951 and 1952.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: How many evictions can a bailiff do per day?

The DEPUTY PREMIER: The hon. member knows that only in a few cases where a bailiff has a warrant for eviction does the tenant wait until the bailiff actually enters to use physical force to put him out.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: He does not wait if he can get alternative accommodation.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: He does not wait for the bailiff to arrive.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Where does he go?

The DEPUTY PREMIER: He gets out into the street.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: No.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: I say it is so. Then the viewpoint of the hon. member is that the only cases where evicted people have not got alternative accommodation to go to are those cases where the bailiff has actually to push them out.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: No tenant goes out on to the street if he can get alternative accommodation.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: That shows how unreal the attitude of the Opposition is to this question. What happens in most cases is that the next door neighbours or a number of friends, knowing that the bailiff has threatened to enter on a certain day, say to the tenant, "I will take Bill or Betty for the time being. You can put some of your furniture in my place." Thus they are able to makeshift for the time being to avoid being put out into the open.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: A good many go to relatives.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: They are pushed into all sorts of unsatisfactory conditions, and that is not decent alternative accommodation.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Some go to mothers or to other relatives.

The DEPUTY PREMIER: Only in those cases where tenants have no relatives or friends prepared to help them do they stay until the bailiff actually arrives and puts them out. Australians being as they are, very few will stand by and see a tenant in that position without offering help by promising to take them in for a brief time on the back verandah or in the wood shed so that they will not actually be pushed out into the street. That is what takes place. Members should not take notice only of the number of cases where the bailiff puts the tenant out. That does not represent the number of evictions that occur. The number of evictions is represented by those cases where warrants are issued and the bailiff tells the tenant he had better get out before he is pushed out.

I have had instances where the bailiff has told me that he has a warrant for the eviction of a tenant. The tenant has been advised of the issue of the warrant and has been given a few days to do something. If the bailiff carried out his duty properly, he would go to the tenant as soon as he received the warrant and tell the tenant to get out. But the bailiff endeavours to give the tenant a chance. I want to tell the member for Mt. Lawley—and the member for Dale will know this is perfectly true—that during the term of the previous Government there was an arrangement so that the cases would be heard on only one day a week, and there was full co-operation between the magistrate, the bailiff and the Housing Commission. The bailiff would let the Housing Commission know when he proposed to take action against the tenant, and he would hold the warrant back in order to give the commission an opportunity to provide accommodation. That is not the normal process of the law.

Mr. Wild: Is there anything wrong with that?

The DEPUTY PREMIER: No, but it is not the normal process of the law.

Mr. Wild: But there is nothing wrong with it?

The DEPUTY PREMIER: No. It is done because the commission is unable, if the law takes its proper course, to cope with the evictions that will occur. They were not the actual evictions to which the member for Dale now refers. He wants to take notice only of those cases where the bailiff goes down and says, "Get out." But the eviction is just as much an eviction where the bailiff says to the tenant, "If you are not out by Monday, I will have to put you out." We all know that, and we all know that these evictions occurred when there was still some measure of protection, although it had been lessened.

The existing legislation gives no protection. After 28 days, the eviction is automatic. It is because we know that, that we are absolutely certain there will be a spate of evictions; and the number of cases already listed is conclusive evidence of that fact. That being so, why do we require a select committee to tell us that we need protective legislation in order to prevent such wholesale evictions taking place? It would only be a complete waste of time; no tangible result would accrue; we would not be advantaged in the slightest degree.

We, as a Government, are convinced that this legislation is necessary, and no select committee could adduce evidence which would strengthen our conviction, because it needs no strengthening. I suggest, therefore, that the right and proper course for us to follow, if we believe in protection, is to push on and give it, because at the present time scarcely any exists.

MR. WILD (Dale—in reply) [11.43]: The Deputy Premier says he is not convinced.

The Deputy Premier: Who says he is not convinced?

Mr. WILD: The Deputy Premier says he is not convinced that there is any necessity for a select committee.

The Deputy Premier: That is all we are convinced about.

Mr. WILD: The Deputy Premier got up and blasted all over the place and said he was sure of this and that. We, on this side of the House, say we are equally sure on the other side of the fence.

The Deputy Premier: What do you want information on?

Mr. WILD: We say there is every reason to have a select committee, and the extra 14 days will not make a great amount of difference. The Minister said this morning he was told by the member for South Fremantle that the spate of evictions, to which he referred, had already commenced. That is to say, from today

the tenants will have 28 days' notice unless the magistrate exercises any other prerogative he may have. I do not know that he has very much at the moment, but I noticed in the Press recently that he had suspended making the order for seven days, but, assuming it is 28 days from today, there is at least that interval of time before these people can be thrown into the street, if the worst comes to the worst.

Coming back to my original contention, there is not the shadow of a doubt that members are in a cloud. The Minister for Housing and I are the two who have the best picture of the conditions. The Minister knows the position as it is at the moment and I know it as it was three years ago when it was, I submit, equally as bad as today, if not worse. I think that members on both sides of the House do not know the right course to adopt. All we want is to do the right thing by the tenant and the landlord. There has been so much smoke and haze about the whole question that the Leader of the Country Party has said that he cannot make a correct determination. That is the viewpoint of a person of his calibre. So, I submit we should have a select committee.

Question put and a division taken, with the following result:—

Ayes	19
Noes	20

Majority against 1

Ayes.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Brand	Mr. North
Dame F. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Court	Mr. Owen
Mr. Doney	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hill	Mr. Wild
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Yates
Mr. Manning	Mr. Bovell
Sir Ross McLarty	

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. McCulloch
Mr. Brady	Mr. Moir
Mr. Graham	Mr. Norton
Mr. Heal	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Seeman
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Styanta
Mr. Lapham	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Lawrence	Mr. May

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Mann	Mr. J. Hegney
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Hawke
Mr. Thorn	Mr. Guthrie
Mr. Nalder	Mr. Hoar
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nuisen

Question thus negatived.

In Committee.

Mr. Moir in the Chair; the Minister for Housing in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Progress reported.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying the personnel of sessional committees appointed by that House.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £16,500,000.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 11.54 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 1st July, 1954.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.