

at present. I will await the opportunity on the Estimates to discuss other matters of more detail.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

BILLS (21)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Transfer of Land Act Amendment.
- 2, Fauna Protection.
- 3, Public Trustee Act Amendment.
- 4, Prices Control Act Amendment (Continuance).
Introduced by the Attorney General.
- 5, Reserve Funds (Local Authorities).
- 6, Traffic Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Local Government.
- 7, Country Areas Water Supply Act Amendment.
- 8, Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Water Supply.
- 9, Inspection of Scaffolding Act Amendment.
- 10, Public Works Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Works.
- 11, Bush Fires Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Lands.
- 12, Western Australian Government Tramways and Ferries Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Education.
- 13, Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act Amendment and Continuance.
- 14, State Housing Act Amendment.
- 15, Roads Agreements between the State Housing Commission and Local Authorities.
Introduced by the Honorary Minister for Housing.
- 16, Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Acting Premier.
- 17, Health Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Health.
- 18, Licensing Act Amendment.
Introduced by Mr. Cornell.
- 19, Electoral Act Amendment.
Introduced by Mr. Rodoreda.
- 20, Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act Amendment.
Introduced by Hon. A. A. M. Coverley.
- 21, Wood Distillation and Charcoal Iron and Steel Industry Act Amendment.
Introduced by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke.

House adjourned at 8.44 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 13th September, 1950.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourteenth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [4.34]: As I must be about the 24th or 25th speaker to participate in the debate on the Address-in-reply, that in itself provides ample justification for the objection raised last session by members on this side of the House against the discontinuance of this feature of our proceedings. We voiced that complaint because of the procedure adopted by the Government at that time. Instead of having the routine orderly session, for reasons best known to itself, Cabinet decided to abolish members' age-old privilege of speaking to the Address-in-reply, thus denying them an opportunity of referring to many subjects with which they desired to deal. If one cares to peruse the speeches made by members to date, it will be found that almost every subject under the sun has been dealt with. In fact, so many topics have been aired that I am almost at a loss for words—

Hon. H. Hearn: Do not give us that!

Hon. G. FRASER: —with which to refer to any matter. Therefore, if, during the course of my remarks, I touch on questions already dealt with, I hope members will forgive me. However, before I proceed with general matters, might I say how much I regret the passing of the late Mr. Baxter. For something like 20 years we were colleagues in this House, and although on many occasions we clashed politically, we still had time to engage in many pleasantries. There was one exception, of course, when he called me a "parrot" and I retaliated by calling him a "screeching cocky." Notwithstanding our few differences, I sincerely regret the ending of his long and successful political career.

To Mr. Daffen, who was defeated at the last elections, I offer, shall I say, my commiseration, but he, of course, left this Chamber in circumstances that could apply to each one of us. We know full well that at some stage or another in the future we may go before the electors for the last time. However, I do regret that Mr. Daffen is not with us again this session. He was not a member for very long but his presence was lengthy enough for

members to appreciate his many good qualities. As to my other two old friends, Messrs. Miles and Thomson, I am sorry that we no longer can enjoy their company. They were sensible because they left the political arena while they still had years in which to enjoy their retirement. While most of us remain here as long as we possibly can—I do not know why, but we do—it is indeed refreshing to see that others have sufficient sense to retire while they are still able to enjoy their leisure hours.

To the new members, particularly Messrs. Jones, Thomson and Baxter, I offer my congratulations on their success in the last election. In doing so, I hope they will help to make this Chamber more democratic than it has been in the past. I do not think I am speaking in any derogatory way when I say that the infusion of new blood, at all times, does assist to improve the tenor of the debates and the atmosphere of this Chamber. I repeat that I trust their presence here will help to make this House a more democratic institution than it has been in past years. May I say that, later in the session, we shall test them out, because we are hoping to have some measures before us, the object of which will be the improvement of the franchise for this Chamber.

Hon. H. Hearn: You are not very serious in that.

Hon. G. FRASER: If that eventuates, we shall have an opportunity of judging just how democratic those three new members are. Although they are not present this afternoon I, as an old member, should like to give them a little advice. I suggest that now that they have been elected as members of the Legislative Council, they will be called quite a lot of names—anything from a politician to something I cannot repeat here. I advise them to take no notice of that sort of thing, but to allow all their actions during their political career to be dictated by their consciences. So I hope that their actions will be dictated by their consciences, and I suggest that they allow no party Whip to interfere with their better judgment.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Does not that apply to all parties?

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes. I am not referring to the various planks on the party platform, as one would not be a member of a party if he did not believe in them. There is no need to whip up a man about something he conscientiously believes in, but apart from the items on party platforms, quite a number of other matters will be the subject of discussion during the session and, in order to obtain a victory, the party Whip will be busy. So I urge those members not to be hoodwinked or thrashed into voting for a particular measure if conscience dictates that it would not be right to do so. If they wish to remain long in politics, they would do well to be guided by their consciences.

I almost overlooked my colleague, Mr. Strickland, in extending congratulations to the new members. Naturally I extend to him an even more hearty welcome than to the others.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And tender the same advice to him?

Hon. G. FRASER: I know that the advice I have given to other members will not be required by him because he belongs to a free and untrammelled party.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Oh, oh!

Hon. G. FRASER: Mr. Strickland, like myself, belongs to the true political faith and there is no need for me to offer him advice.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: He gets it in the party room.

Hon. G. FRASER: May I suggest that the presence of Mr. Strickland amongst us bears out what I told the House last session or the session before. I then mentioned that men of our political faith would be increasing their numbers in this Chamber. Although, like a big steam roller, we may be slow in our movements, we are nevertheless sure, and Mr. Strickland may be said to be the first in that new movement. I mention this for the reason that I wish to emphasise to other members that they should be very careful of their actions this session. If they are not, and if they do not vote according to conscience, they might possibly meet the same fate as quite a lot of others have done.

Hon. H. Hearn: Do not make us nervous.

Hon. G. FRASER: Consequently, I give that warning to the older members, because the steam roller has started to move and no doubt will gain additional speed as it goes along.

I congratulate Mr. Simpson on his appointment to Cabinet rank, but I hope that his judgment in future will be a little more sound than that which he displayed last week. Admittedly the hon. member is occupying a position that is quite new to him, but it does not inspire confidence in us when the hon. member, after notifying the House on behalf of the Government that it was not his intention to oppose a certain motion, actually did so when the vote was taken.

The Minister for Transport: That was done as a protest against your refusal to give the mover the right to withdraw his motion.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know what the Minister's excuse is: I can only judge the matter on its face value. No opposition to the motion was offered on behalf of the Government and yet, when the vote was taken, the Minister opposed the motion. That sort of thing is not calculated to inspire confidence. As I said, the Minister is new in his job and I hope there will be no repetition of that sort of thing.

The Minister for Transport: There will not be.

Hon. G. FRASER: Then I do not need to refer further to the matter. During the past three years, my colleagues and I have assisted the Government considerably—in many cases against the wrath of their own followers. We might have been prepared to continue doing so, but for two actions taken since the close of last session that are not conducive to our continuing such help. The Government, by its action, could be likened to a highwayman because it adopted the tactics of a highwayman—throat-cutting and sand-bagging—in a way that does not indicate any gratitude for the assistance received from us. I have no objection to members of a different political faith from my own doing everything possible to defeat me or one of my colleagues—in fact I expect it—provided they do it in an orderly manner, but we take strong exception to the Government's attempt to defeat our candidate by adopting the throat-cutting and sand-bagging methods I have mentioned.

Hon. H. K. Watson: You have not mentioned any yet.

Hon. G. FRASER: I shall tell the hon. member what was done. First of all, a prosecution was attempted against a candidate thus to cut his throat by having him convicted of an offence under the Electoral Act. When I have related the circumstances, I shall, as is done with radio audiences, leave members to judge whether my accusations are correct or otherwise. A member went around during the period when enrolments for this House were being made and, in the course of doing so, witnessed an electoral card.

One of his constituents visited him in connection with a housing matter in a certain area. He asked the member to do what he could to further his application for a hut or a house. In the course of conversation the constituent said, "My conditions are deplorable. My wife is expecting another child, and I have had to send her away to the country to have the baby because she could not have it here." So he went on with the housing matter, and some time later was granted a flat in one of the camps. The hon. member was informed of this and he notified his constituents. Some three months later, when he went around with his electoral cards in connection with an impending election, he met these people and filled in cards for them with respect to his own province. In conversation, the woman said, "We have not changed on the Assembly roll, would you mind filling in those cards for us, too?" So he filled in cards for both the husband and the wife, witnessed them and sent them into the Electoral Office.

Some little time later the woman visited him and said, "I have received a summons for sending in a card which the Electoral Department thinks I am not entitled to." He said, "Well, all you can do is either to go to the Electoral Department,

or appear in court and tell the magistrate exactly what the circumstances are." That happened on a Thursday. On the following Tuesday, when the hon. member was out, and his wife was ill in bed, a policeman visited his home to serve a summons on him for having witnessed this card. That occurred at 7.30 p.m. on the Tuesday, and the summons ordered him to appear in court on the Thursday morning.

After a little investigation it was discovered that the summons the woman received on the previous Thursday was not on account of her filling in a wrong card, but merely ordering her to appear as a witness against the hon. member. She received her summons on the Thursday, and the hon. member got his on the following Tuesday at about 7.30 p.m., requiring him to appear on the Thursday morning. Of course, there was no case against him because, in the course of filling in the cards, he said, "Where were you enrolled for last?" The address given was in the same constituency. The three months' qualification did not apply because they were still in the same electorate.

After a lot of negotiation the case was not gone on with. The point I am making is that the Government, sensing it had a case against a man who, within a few weeks, would be a candidate opposed to its political parties, was so keen to seize that opportunity that it gave him 36 hours' notice to appear in court. He was given no chance, in the first place, to explain what had occurred.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Was not the same thing done in connection with one of the Government's own supporters?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know about that.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I can say that it was.

Hon. G. FRASER: I could be ungenerous and say that the Government only did that to cover up its tracks.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: There was a person charged up north.

Hon. G. FRASER: Does the hon. member know that he was called on for an explanation before a summons was issued?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: No.

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member does not know the circumstances of the case. I am telling the full particulars of an instance of which I am aware. That sort of action is beyond me. To make it worse, the case was called on for hearing in Perth, and not in Fremantle where the alleged offence occurred. The reply of the representative of the Government was, "All they have to do is to go to the court and defend the action." Is that the proper procedure? People do not like being dragged into court for offences they have

not committed. As I pointed out at the time, if any offence was committed by this woman it was that whilst she was away having a baby she filled in a claim card for that district. So, the offence, if any, was not in connection with the card that the hon. member, to whom I have referred dealt with but in respect of another card. The hon. member concerned was Mr. Davies, and I do not suppose a straighter man than he ever entered this Chamber.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Hear, hear!

Hon. G. FRASER: He was not given an opportunity to explain the position, except that if the action had been gone on with, he could have defended himself in court. All I can think is that the Government anticipated it had something there with which it could blame Mr. Davies. That was on the eve of the election.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: No.

Hon. G. FRASER: Why was he not called on, as I understand everyone else is, for an explanation?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I thought you said you did not know anything about it.

Hon. G. FRASER: I said I did not know anything about the case which the hon. member mentioned.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: How do you know he was not called in?

Hon. G. FRASER: Yours is not the only one. I think in nearly every instance an explanation is sought before a summons is issued.

Hon. H. K. Watson: By whom?

Hon. G. FRASER: If a private individual is concerned, the Electoral Department generally asks for the explanation, and after it is given the papers are sent on to the Crown Law Department.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Are you not attributing to the Government something which is nothing more than ordinary departmental routine by one of the Government offices?

Hon. G. FRASER: No, because this case was particularly taken to a representative of the Government. I understand that whereas the Electoral Department would require an explanation from a private individual, instructions have been given that if a member of Parliament is concerned the department must refuse to have anything to do with it.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I think you are wrong there.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am going on information given me by a representative of the Government.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: He was misinformed.

Hon. G. FRASER: The instruction was that where a member of Parliament was concerned the Electoral Department was not to deal with the matter. No blame can be put on the department; the Government

must accept the responsibility. That is one phase. The other, which I mentioned, is that when the Government failed there, it still had another trick up its sleeve for the defeat of the hon. member, by cancelling a polling booth which gave figures of 139 to 18 in our favour. That polling booth was wiped out.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Where was it?

Hon. G. FRASER: On Victoria Quay.

Hon. H. K. Watson: On the wharf?

Hon. G. FRASER: Exactly.

Hon. H. K. Watson: At the pick-up centre, or thereabouts?

Hon. G. FRASER: Thereabouts, yes; but the hon. member must know that there is no pick-up on Saturday mornings. That booth was there for the convenience of travellers and people frequenting the waterfront. On the other side of the picture, there is an entirely different story. An area where only 214 votes were recorded was accommodated with two polling booths. After I visited the Electoral Office and was told what booths would be provided in that area, evidently pressure was brought to bear, and a third polling booth was established there. But the figures were different in that locality. The 214 votes worked out at something like 49 to 165—the other way around. So we find that where 157 people voted at an election, which is a pretty good poll, a booth was wiped out, yet in an area where 214 votes were cast, but the figures were reversed, an extra booth was provided.

Hon. H. Hearn: Are you trying to suggest that the Government follows the individual fortunes of every candidate, and does what it can to see that we get preference over the other side?

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member can form his own conclusions about an action in which a booth where a big poll for a Legislative Council election is registered is wiped out.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Was not the poll you quote taken when there was a pick-up?

Hon. G. FRASER: No. The circumstances were exactly the same as when the booth was wiped out.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: How would you get people on to the wharves when no work was being done?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know anything about the people who voted at that particular booth. I am giving the hon. member the actual voting figures at the booth. There are other booths where the combined total would not be 70 votes, and yet additional booths are installed in those districts. I raise no objection to that practice. In the case to which I refer there were only 214 votes all told, and a further booth was put in. What I am concerned about, however, is the wiping out of a booth. I take the attitude that every encouragement should be given to all elec-

tors, and every facility provided for them, so that they may record votes for the Legislative Council elections.

As far as I am concerned, the Electoral Department can put a polling booth on the golf course, in the Chamber of Manufactures, or anywhere else. Provided all facilities possible are given, I raise no objection. To my mind, the methods adopted in the wiping out of this booth were most unfair to certain candidates and gave an advantage to others. I have no objection to the Government parties legitimately trying to defeat us, but I take exception to this type of action. It will make one think twice before one gives unlimited assistance in the future, such as has been done in the past.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Let your conscience guide you.

Hon. G. FRASER: I hope that my conscience will dictate to me at the right time.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: And help the right way, too.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, I believe that it has always done that. I am sorry that one member has left the Chamber, because there was a particular matter I wished to discuss.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Talk about something else.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, I will talk about housing for the time being, until the hon. member returns. Like many other members, I am most disappointed with the attitude of the present Government and with its performance regarding the housing position. We who represent the West Province in this Chamber have continually complained that we have never received a fair go. I repeat, we are very dissatisfied about the housing position in the Fremantle area. Last year, I asked questions regarding rental homes in Fremantle, and I intend to read those questions again to refresh members' memories. I asked the then Chief Secretary—

1. Is it a fact that for some time past all Commonwealth-State rental homes at Hilton Park have been allotted to camp dwellers and key personnel of the South Fremantle power station?

2. Should the answer to No. 1 be yes, will he state what provision is being made for other urgent applications in the Fremantle area.

The Chief Secretary replied—

1. Yes.

That means that it is a fact that all homes are being allotted in the direction I stated. The answer continues—

2. Urgent cases in the Fremantle area are provided with flat accommodation in converted Army camps at Hilton Park East, Naval Base, Gun Park and Leighton as flats become available.

A week later, again on the same question, I asked—

What is the Government's reason for forcing applicants for rental homes in the Fremantle area to serve a term in the converted Army hut camps before allotting them a home, when this condition is not enforced in any other part of the State?

The reply was—

In the Fremantle district the Housing Commission converted into flats a number of Army camps to provide temporary accommodation for urgent hardship cases. The occupants of these flats were given to understand that, subject to satisfactory tenancy, they would be transferred to Commonwealth-State rental homes as opportunity offered. In order to honour this promise, the Commission has for some time past allocated the homes erected at Hilton Park to the occupants of the Army flats in the Fremantle district and key personnel of the Electricity Commission employed at the South Fremantle power station. Accommodation vacated in the flats is then made available to other urgent cases.

A similar policy is not necessary in districts other than Fremantle, as the Commission has only two small converted camps at Wembley and South Guildford and the placing of tenants from these camps does not present the same difficulty as there are a number of centres in proximity to Perth in which they can be housed.

Those are the questions I asked, and the answers I received. A few months ago, a certain body in Fremantle took up this matter and sent a letter of protest to the Housing Commission about the embargo on people in the Fremantle area which prevents them from going straight into homes. Let me read the Minister's reply—

Your letter of the 8th of June, which I have already acknowledged, has been further considered, and I took the opportunity of discussing your submissions with the State Housing Commission at a meeting on the 22nd June.

It is not correct to state that applicants are compelled to serve a term in the Army huts at Melville, as this is really dictated by the overall shortage of housing in the Fremantle district. There are cases of extreme hardship continually arising and whilst houses are under construction the Army huts are the only means of immediately solving these problems. Then, as houses become available, those who have been living in the Army huts are transferred to houses as they become available.

Assuming the Commission was to adopt the policy of placing families directly into houses ahead of those who have lived for some time in Army huts

at Melville, surely there would be strong objections from those people living in Army huts and who had probably applied much earlier than the other families mentioned. The Commission has decided, therefore, that the present arrangement must continue, but every consideration will be given to special cases arising from time to time.

Fremantle is not the only district in which the Commission is being compelled to use Army huts as a temporary method of housing. At the present time there are over 100 families who have established a housing need and who have expressed their willingness to accept an Army hut as a temporary method of overcoming their housing problems. These families can only be housed as soon as some of the existing families in Army huts have been transferred to dwellings.

There is an absolute contradiction. The replies given to me in this House show that an embargo is placed on applicants in the Fremantle area unless those applicants first serve a term in Army huts. I read this letter from the Minister because I believe it is an absolute gem. The Minister starts by saying that it is not correct to say that the procedure, of which I was informed last year by the Leader of the House, was followed. Then he goes on, in the letter, explaining why it is correct. It appears to me that the Minister handling housing is the only person who does not know that the embargo exists. The fact that there is an embargo is borne out by the action of the Housing Commission in the allotment of its houses.

I will defy the Honorary Minister for Housing to show me one house in the Hilton Park district—at least, since the embargo was introduced some couple of years ago—that has been given to an applicant who was not either one of the key personnel of the power house or an inmate of one of the Army camps. When a local body complains about the situation, it receives a reply such as that. A “no” and “yes” letter. Surely that is not the way the Government intends to run its affairs. If the Government is ashamed of this embargo, then why does it not take some action to remedy the position? If the Government is not ashamed of it, then why does it not tell the truth to these organisations?

Any person employed by the Housing Commission can tell members that there is an embargo. Yet a reply like that is sent out by the Minister. I repeat, we in Fremantle are most dissatisfied with the Government's handling of the housing situation, especially in the port area. We are dissatisfied with the number built in the district—I refer to rental homes—as we have not received nearly the quota to which we are entitled. Also, I cannot understand the Government's attitude on the small-unit family homes. The Gov-

ernment made promises on the hustings about these dwellings, but little has been done. When one looks at facts and figures one finds that after three years in office the Government has built only 12 dwellings for small-unit families in the Fremantle area. Yet, dozens have been built in other parts of the metropolitan area. We have just as many small-unit families requiring homes in our area as have other parts of the State. We do not want preferential treatment but we do want just treatment for our constituents. But, we do not receive it.

I cannot understand the attitude of the Government in not pushing on with the erection of homes for small unit families. If a large number of such homes were built, there would be less dissatisfaction in this State. My experience leads me to believe, rightly or wrongly, that it is the small-unit family which does not get a fair deal. These families are comprised mostly of young people, with perhaps one child in each family, and they are forced to live with their in-laws. That is causing all the trouble. They are quite friendly with their in-laws, but it does not need me to emphasise the fact that where there are two families in a home there is always dissatisfaction. Therefore the Government should push on with the small-unit home project to a greater extent than is apparent now. If that is done, it will go a long way towards relieving much of the dissatisfaction and the bad friendships that exist among families. We are dissatisfied with the Government's actions on all aspects of housing whether it be war service homes, rental homes or workers' homes.

I cannot understand why the Government has not given greater consideration to the building of more workers' homes, as distinct from the rental homes. Altogether only about two or three dozen have been built since the war. The Commonwealth-State rental homes are financed by the Commonwealth but the State Housing Commission homes are financed by the State. There is a lot of difference between the two proposals. I know that persons can purchase State rental homes under the Workers' Homes Act but that prevents a large number of people from participating. It is generally accepted—now that the State Governments are permitted to sell State rental homes—that the sale of State rental homes is being carried out under that agreement. That is not so. Houses cannot be sold, under the rental scheme, to any person other than the occupant. Therefore, I cannot understand—and I want the reason for it—why the Government has not given greater consideration to the building of homes under the old Workers' Homes Act or the new State Housing Act.

While I am on that subject let me say that I would like the Government also to make a slight alteration so far as repayments are concerned. The expectant life

of a State rental home is 51 years; that of the war service home is 45 years and that of the Workers' Home Board home is 40 years. We know that the cost of building today has increased to such an extent that hardship is being experienced by those who are purchasing workers' homes because the repayments are so high. I make this request that in any future legislation it introduces, the Government should extend the period of repayment under the workers' homes scheme from 40 years to either 45 or 51 years. By that means some of the burden will be lifted from people concerned.

Let me put it this way: There are four methods under which Commonwealth rental homes can be purchased. The first is where the applicant pays for it himself; the second, he is financed by a bank; I forget what the third method is for the moment; the fourth method is he can purchase under the Workers' Homes Act. A Commonwealth rental home, made of weatherboard and asbestos, today costs about £1,800 and £1,900. The limit of expenditure on a dwelling under the Workers' Homes Act is £1,500. It means, therefore, that a person purchasing under the Commonwealth rental home scheme has to find the difference between the £1,500 and the actual cost of the building. In addition to this, the repayments to the Workers' Homes Board are stretched over a period of 40 years. If the suggestion I have made, to stretch the repayments over a period of 51 years is accepted, it will considerably lighten the burden of the individual.

Some members might say it is not wise to lengthen the period. It should be taken into account, however, that the average individual will be the best part of 30 years of age when he is allotted one of these homes. At present he has 40 years to pay the amount off. He would therefore be about 70 years of age before he could own his own home, so I can see no objection to making it 75 or 80 years as the case may be, as I feel sure it would ease his burden considerably, and permit him to live more decently than he is able to do today. I make that request in addition to asking the Government to build more workers' homes. They have only built about 28 or 30 of these homes, and these were built under the Commonwealth rental scheme and purchased by the Workers' Homes Board. The Government should use a little more of its own finance to build under the State Housing Act.

One other phase of housing with which I am not satisfied is that regarding McNess homes. I asked a question as to how many had been built. I know there were five duplex homes erected in recent years. I also asked how many it was intended to build in the future. The answer was "Three." Therefore with the five already constructed, there will be a total of eight duplex homes. How far will eight duplex

homes go among the number of applicants entitled to homes under the McNess scheme? I know the Minister's reply will be that there is no money in the McNess Housing Trust, and that the only building that can be undertaken is on the basis of the finance derived from the homes already built. I believe that to be true. Even if that is the case, it should not stop the Government from building more homes.

Cannot the Government make grants to the McNess Housing Trust similar to those made in the past? The original donation to the McNess Homes Trust was only about £15,000. Later on, further money was added, but the great majority of McNess homes built in this State have been erected, I think I am safe in saying, with Government money. If it has been all right to build homes under that heading in the past, what is wrong with similar action being authorised now? By such means justice would be meted out to elderly people and widows entitled to homes under that heading. I trust, therefore, that the Government will give some consideration to the phases and suggestions I have presented.

I know that the housing problem is a very difficult one for any Government to deal with, and I know that the Government has set a target of the number of houses it is going to build every year. From the way the situation is developing, however, it seems to me that it is a case of putting the roofs up before the foundations are laid! The Government can build houses only according to the materials available. What is the use of setting a target of 5,000 houses for this year without first giving consideration to the basic principle of seeing that extra materials are available? As I have said, it is like putting on the roof before laying the foundations.

To my mind, the Government has not given sufficient consideration to the provision of materials. I know there has been quite a song about the Government's efforts to provide more material, but activity in that respect has been rather belated. No person will convince me that with the resumption of building operations after the cessation of hostilities the best that can be done after a period of five years is to increase the number of homes erected by about 1,000 a year. That is what is happening. The figure pre-war was 2,326 houses a year, and that for last year was about 1,000 up on that. That is, as I have said, after five years from the resumption of building operations in this State. It will take a lot to convince me, therefore, that proper attention has been paid to the provision of materials during those years, when the best that could be done has been to build another 1,000 homes.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What was done in the first two years?

Hon. G. FRASER: In the first two years—in fact in 18 months—after the cessation of hostilities a lot was done when materials were scarce.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What could the Government do when it could not get materials?

Hon. G. FRASER: Let the hon. member refute the accusation I have just made. Never mind about making comparisons; they are at all times odious. Let him defend the Government against the charge of being able to build only about 1,000 more houses than were being built pre-war—and this after five years from the cessation of hostilities.

Hon. H. K. Watson: The Government was not building pre-war.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am talking about what is being done now.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is not this Government's responsibility.

Hon. G. FRASER: It is the Government's responsibility, because it has control of certain materials and must therefore be linked up with the position. Pre-war it was not linked up in that respect and the building rate was the figure which I have mentioned. Today, after five years from the resumption of building, the best that can be done is the building of an extra 1,000 homes over and above the pre-war rate. I say that is so because the Government has not given adequate attention to the provision of materials.

Hon. H. Tuckey: There is a lot of material which cannot be obtained; it is not being produced.

Hon. G. FRASER: Exactly. I am glad the hon. member has said that, for I am blaming the Government because it has not been produced.

Hon. H. Tuckey: A good deal of material cannot be obtained at all.

Hon. G. FRASER: Nothing can be done if the Government does not try. I am blaming the Government for not trying. Let the hon. member prove to me that it has been trying and for how long, and we will then get down to the root of the matter. It is a sorry spectacle that after five years of production, the best we can do is to build 1,000 more homes than we did pre-war. It is useless the Government's saying we are going to build 5,000 homes, without giving more attention to the production of materials. I believe a lot more could be done if production were stepped up.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Much of the material is not manufactured here.

Hon. G. FRASER: It cannot be, if the Government does not try. I am very pleased to see that at least one member of the Government is prepared to open out and give some reasons why we are not getting the materials we should be.

Hon. H. Tuckey: We have not been able to get iron for some years.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is what we have said to the Government for a long time. What I am trying to say now is that the Government is not paying sufficient attention to the production side of the business. I am very pleased, therefore, that one particular member of the Government has opened up and spoken a few home truths. We hear so much about private enterprise, but I should like to mention one or two instances where private enterprise has not done the right thing. I want to be quite clear on this point, because I have no grudge against private enterprise, which has done a good job in some avenues. But there are other spheres in which we must have government control. When private enterprise falls down on the job, the Government is required to take action. One industry where the Government will have to step in, if it wants any improvement, is that of tile manufacture. I have a case here, which I should like to quote, to illustrate the kind of deal we get from private enterprise. I know of an instance where a person was kept waiting for 12 months by private enterprise, for three sheets of asbestos. I could take members to a place that was started last November and is still not completed, because no iron is available. The particular case I wish to refer to was a re-roofing job. The tile manufacturers went to the Government and asked it not to issue permits for work that entailed re-roofing. That private arrangement stood. For 2½ years I fought in order to get the O.K. to do this particular job. Tiles were not controlled, but the tile manufacturers said: "Produce a permit and we will give you the tiles." When I approached the State Housing Commission I was told to produce a letter that the job could be done and a permit would be issued. For 2½ years I was a buffer between one and the other. Finally I wrote a stiff letter to the Housing Commission. The cost of the work was £250 and I therefore had to get a permit.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is necessary under the Act.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, otherwise we could have carried on without any reference to the State Housing Commission. The tile manufacturers used the position as a bluff.

Twelve months ago the individual concerned was in consultation with the tile manufacturers and they told him there were 250 applicants ahead of him. That was after we had been battling for over two years to obtain a supply. Finally, I wrote a strong letter to the Commission, objecting to the manner in which I had been buffeted between one and the other, and eventually a permit was granted. I wrote to the tile people in April and sug-

gested that this individual be placed on the list for a supply in November, six months ahead. This is the answer I received—

Dear Mr. Fraser,

Many thanks for yours of the 7th inst., with reference to re-roofing Mr. J. A. Cook's residence at East Fremantle.

I have discussed this matter with our sales manager, Mr. Harwood, and we cannot accept any re-roofing jobs at present, especially in Fremantle, where there is so much re-roofing to be done, and the number of new houses waiting to be roofed appears to be on the increase; but Mr. Harwood and I are watching the position carefully, and if by any chance we are able to do any re-roofing jobs at Fremantle, we will push Mr. Cook's job forward and get it done if we possibly can, but warn Mr. Cook not to touch his roof until he has made definite arrangements re roofing.

That is a reply obtained after a battle extending over 2½ years and after giving them a further six months' notice. It was a Kathleen Mavourneen answer. We might get our supply and we might not. That position arises because there are not sufficient tiles manufactured in this State; and that is one of the directions in which the Government has fallen down on its job. When it found that the company could not supply sufficient tiles to meet requirements, the Government should have taken steps to make up the leeway.

Hon. H. Tuckey: You know, of course, that tiles have been used excessively because it has not been possible to obtain galvanised iron.

Hon. G. FRASER: That only emphasises the point I am making.

Hon. H. Tuckey: This Government is not to blame for the shortage of iron.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am not talking about iron, but about tiles.

Hon. H. Tuckey: It is the same thing.

Hon. G. FRASER: Of course it is not the same thing!

Hon. H. Tuckey: People in the country have to use tiles because they cannot obtain iron.

Hon. G. FRASER: If they cannot get tiles, is that not a reason why the Government should do something to step up production? But what do we find? The Government sits down and leaves it to the company. That is the treatment we get. The company does not even promise that we can be supplied in January or February.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: How does the production of tiles today compare with that of pre-war days?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know. I suppose one would naturally expect the production to have increased.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: It is about treble, I think.

Hon. G. FRASER: The fact that it has increased means nothing. Has it increased sufficiently to cope with the programme outlined by the Government? All I am doing is to emphasise the fact that, where private enterprise falls down on the job, the Government should step in and do something.

Hon. H. Tuckey: I think there was a shortage when your Government was in office.

Hon. G. FRASER: Our Government was in office 18 months after the war and naturally one would expect shortages if manufacture had been in abeyance for six years. Anyone in a kindergarten would realise that.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Had the Government prepared plans for the manufacture of tiles?

Hon. G. FRASER: The Government made plans for a lot of things.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Including tiles?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know what its full programme was, but in the course of 18 months it would have found out what the position was and whether the tile manufacturers would not be up to their job. One would naturally expect the Government's programme to include something on those lines. I consider that the present Government has not given sufficient attention to improving the situation in relation to the production of materials, so that better progress could be made with the State's building programme.

I wish to make a request to the Government in connection with assistance given to kindergartens. Until last year the method of financing kindergartens was the payment by the Government of a subsidy of £4 per child per year. At that time the payment of the teacher's salary was the responsibility of the local committee of the kindergarten—that is, the committee operating the kindergarten in a particular area. The committee had to pay the salary of the teacher and any other salaries, such as those of the caretaker and other people engaged in the building; and it also had to provide the milk and such fruit as the children might have, and requirements of that description. It also met the cost of any playthings that were required. That was the responsibility of the local committee. As an offset, a subsidy of £4 per head was paid by the Government to the local centre.

Last year an alteration was made by the Kindergarten Union in the method of payment. The union took over the payment of teachers' salaries and, in return, kept the whole of the £4 subsidy per child paid by the Government as an offset against its own expenditure. Under the altered arrangement each local committee has to pay something like £1 11s. per

quarter per child. This means that a small local centre with an attendance of 30 children has to find a levy of £1 11s., near enough to £47 in round figures, plus the payment of a caretaker and the cost of milk, fruit and other incidental expenses.

It will therefore be seen that local committees which are conducting kindergartens are involved in a fairly big expenditure—roughly, well over £50 per term. There are three terms in the year. Even the smallest local kindergarten has to find approximately £3 per week. In a small district, that is a large sum to raise, particularly in view of the fact that in most centres other charitable organisations are engaged in attempting to obtain finance. I bring this question forward in the hope that when the Government gives consideration to making increased payments to kindergartens, it will bear in mind the need for granting assistance to local committees so that they can finance their work.

I believe that on account of the heavy expenditure involved, a number of kindergartens which would have been opened in various parts of the State, have not been established. Recently I had an inquiry from a man in the South West as to the expenditure involved in running the kindergarten in my district. There was to be a meeting in his town and information was desired with a view to ascertaining the possibility of opening a kindergarten there. This man had been on the committee of my own local kindergarten at one time and had some knowledge of the matter, but he wanted the exact figures. I supplied him with the information he sought, and the next thing I heard was that the people had abandoned the project. Possibly similar action has been taken in other places because local committees have discovered that the provision of the necessary finance is beyond them. I therefore suggest that when any increased subsidy is being proposed by the Government—and I think there will have to be additional expenditure in this direction—some of the money should be earmarked for local committees. If that is done, there may be an increase in the number of kindergartens established.

With regard to the traffic problem, Dr. Hislop spoke from one point of view and I wish to touch on another aspect. The subject is too big to go into in detail, but I want to speak of one phase. I have been greatly concerned by the newspaper reports of accidents in which people on motor-cycles and bicycles have run into the backs of stationary trucks. The fact that so many accidents of this kind have occurred led me to believe that something must be wrong. I made a close survey of trucks that passed me on the road and of others that were parked in the metropolitan area, and I made a discovery that I think is worth mentioning. On motorcars and runabouts the rear light is right at the

back of the vehicle, but on trucks and heavier vehicles it is placed underneath, some two or three feet in.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: On some it is more than that.

Hon. G. FRASER: It seems to me that there may be some connection between the position of the red light and the number of accidents of this kind. I do not know how that can be overcome, because I am not a mechanic or an engineer. But I think the brains of the Traffic Branch or of the motor firms should be exercised to ascertain whether it is possible to place the red lights on trucks at the rear as in the case of motors. If that were done, there might be fewer instances of motor cyclists crashing into stationary trucks.

Hon. H. K. Watson: In one American State they are experimenting with luminous number plates.

Hon. G. FRASER: There might be something in that, because the number plate would be at the rear.

Hon. A. L. Loton: The height of the back of the vehicle off the road has a lot to do with it. Lights do not show up underneath the vehicle.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am hoping some consideration will be given to the matter by someone who knows more about it than I do. There is a possibility that something could be done in the direction I have indicated. I may be wrong, but I hope the suggestion will be considered.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It could be due to excessive speed, too.

Hon. G. FRASER: Of course, there is a lot of speeding, but that is a different thing altogether. I ask members to take particular note of the number of accidents in which stationary trucks are involved. There must be some explanation. I have tried to discover the reason. Whether I am right or not, I do not know.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Frequently the load protrudes beyond the rear limit of the vehicle.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is another factor. But if a load protrudes, there is generally a white or a red flag to indicate the fact.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It is not visible at night.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is so. Another question with which I want to deal is that of the basic wage. When addressing the House the other night, Mr. Tuckey made a startling statement. He said something that was entirely new to me. He said that when the basic wage was being fixed, consideration was given to possible increases in prices. If that were so, I think all the unions in this State would be fairly happy.

Hon. H. Tuckey: What about a fall in prices?

Hon. G. FRASER: I am dealing with rises in prices. A fall in prices would make only this difference, that if prices fell for three months the worker might get a little benefit, but that would be adjusted at the end of the three months. The hon. member stated that some provision was made for probable price rises, in the assessing of the basic wage.

Hon. H. Tuckey: I did not put it in that way, but it goes without saying that the basic wage will not be altered on account of every individual commodity that goes up in price.

Hon. G. FRASER: I mentioned the hon. member's statement as I desired to correct it. He said that the basic wage was arrived at on the prices that operated in the previous three months plus probable rises. The basic wage is always at least three months behind any rise in prices just as it would, if prices declined, be the best part of three months before the adjustment could be made accordingly. I wanted to correct any misapprehension that might arise in the minds of members through the statement of the hon. member. In the assessing of the basic wage no provision is made for what might happen in the ensuing three months. The assessment is made on the Government Statistician's figures for the past three months, and it therefore stands to reason that no provision can be made in that assessment for something that might eventuate.

Hon. H. Tuckey: I was dealing with the rise in the price of meat, and not with rises generally.

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member dealt with the rise of prices in connection with the basic wage and that is why I wished to correct his statement. I come now to the question of the T.B. allowance. It might be said that, as the allowance is paid by the Commonwealth authorities, this is a Federal matter; but it is a wonderful scheme, one that has done an enormous amount of good and will continue to do good in arresting the dreaded scourge of T.B. in this State. However, like any other new scheme, it contains at least one anomaly, and it is that which I desire to point out. I am dealing with this as a State matter because a State department administers the scheme, although it does not handle the money. I hope the Minister will pass my comments on to that department so that it can take the matter up with the Federal authorities and endeavour to have an adjustment made. Prior to July of this year a person suffering from T.B. had first of all to apply for an invalid pension and was also paid a T.B. allowance.

Commencing from July of this year the payments have been amalgamated and the sufferer has not now to apply for an invalid pension. Instead, he or she applies

for the T.B. allowance, which is paid on a very generous scale. A married man without dependants now receives £6 10s. per week under the scheme which means, as members will realise, that a T.B. sufferer will now have no hesitation about entering an institution to receive the treatment that is so necessary from both his own point of view and that of the community in general. The allowance of £6 10s. per week relieves such a sufferer from financial worry.

Further than that, the individual is allowed income—either by himself or his wife, or both—of £4 per week which, together with the allowance, amounts to £10 10s. per week. When a sufferer reaches the stage of treatment where it is considered that he can do some light work, the department will specify certain jobs that he may do, or permit him to work for perhaps two or three hours a day. The amount that he is then allowed to earn, without interfering with the T.B. allowance, is £2 per week. Both he and his wife are allowed to earn that sum, but I want to deal now with the earnings of the sufferer himself. He can earn £2 per week and still draw the £6 10s. allowance, making in all £8 10s. per week. Therefore, taking the £6 10s. as a basis, any earnings of over £2 per week immediately reduce the allowance, until, when he reaches the stage of earning £6 10s. per week the T.B. allowance is cut right out.

I realise that this is difficult to explain, but I am endeavouring to make clear what I want members to understand. The point I am emphasising is that a man can be earning £6 5s. per week from his work and still receive a payment of £2 5s. from the T.B. allowance, making up a total of £8 10s., but immediately he reaches the stage where he is earning £6 10s. per week the T.B. allowance ceases. As he would at that stage still not be able to undertake full employment he would, with the basic wage at over £7 per week, immediately find his income reduced below the basic wage. I believe this anomaly should be rectified. I cannot speak too highly in praise of the T.B. allowance, which is one of the finest things that has ever been done for the sick in this State, but I think it could be improved in the way I have suggested. That would make it almost perfect. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by the Minister for Transport, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT
(Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 19th September.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.53 p.m.