

orary Minister for Agriculture, to have these Bills dealt with and sent to another place.

I assume that the Legislative Assembly will get on with its work as it is anxious to attend to public business, and I am anticipating that we will have further work from that Chamber in the very near future. For that reason I ask members to agree to the adjournment until tomorrow afternoon. The House cannot be adjourned conveniently to the ordinary hour of 4.30 p.m. owing to the unfortunate position of lighting and transport, and there is no desire on the part of the Government to keep members here until the peak period of transport. Therefore if we get through our business early tomorrow afternoon it will be all to the good. If it is inconvenient for Mr. Fraser to come along and attend—

Hon. G. Fraser: It is not inconvenient when there is business to attend to.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I should say that if the business is disposed of in a quarter of an hour, it will be to the hon. member's advantage, but if he desires to stay and enlighten himself, he might go along and listen to questions somewhere else. However, I do ask the House to agree to the desired adjournment.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.4 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 28th June, 1949.

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

PETITION—WESTRALIAN BUFFALO CLUB.

Mr. NEEDHAM presented a petition from the Westralian Buffalo Club Ltd., praying for the introduction of a Bill to resolve certain difficulties concerning the legal position of the Westralian Buffalo Club Ltd., a company duly registered under the Companies Act, 1893, and to vest the assets of the company in an association to be formed and registered under the Associations Incorporation Act, 1895-1947, and for other purposes arising out of such difficulties and incidental to such vesting.

Petition received and the prayer of the petitioner granted.

BILL—THE WESTRALIAN BUFFALO CLUB (PRIVATE).

Introduced by Mr. Needham and read a first time.

Referred to Select Committee.

On motion by Mr. Needham, Bill referred to a Select Committee consisting of Messrs. Yates, May, Nalder, Triat and the

mover, with power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned and to report on Thursday, the 7th July.

QUESTIONS.

TIMBER.

(a) *As to Production and Exports.*

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) How many loads of jarrah, karri and pine were produced in the years ended June, 1947, 1948 and to May, 1949?

(2) How many loads were produced by the State mills and by private companies in those years?

(3) How many loads were exported by the Government and how many loads by each of Millars, Bunning Bros. and other concerns—

(a) To the Eastern States, and

(b) oversea in those years?

(4) What was the average price per load of jarrah, karri and pine for each of those years received from—

(a) within the State,

(b) Eastern States,

(c) oversea?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Loads of jarrah, karri and pine produced—

1946-47 — Jarrah, 154,280; karri, 34,000; other, 11,000 (includes 2,850 loads of pine); total, 199,280 loads.

1947-48 — Jarrah, 154,000; karri, 32,000; other, 14,000 (includes 3,100 loads of pine); total, 200,000 loads.

July, 1948-April, 1949—Recorded production only, not including a number of small mills operating on private property and submitting annual returns:—Jarrah, 125,600; karri, 21,000; wandoo, 5,650; pine, 2,000; other, 2,550; total, 156,500 loads.

(2) (a) Loads produced by State Saw Mills—

1946-47—Jarrah, 20,600 loads; karri, 25,000 loads.

1947-48—Jarrah, 24,700 loads; karri, 23,100 loads.

1948-April, 1949—Jarrah, 15,650 loads; karri, 20,000 loads.

(b) Loads produced by private companies—

1946-47—Jarrah, 133,600 loads; karri, 9,000 loads.

1947-48—Jarrah, 129,300 loads; karri, 8,900 loads.

1948-April, 1949—Jarrah, 109,950 loads; karri, 1,000 loads.

(3) Loads exported to Eastern States and oversea—figures not available for individual firms.

(4) Average price per load of jarrah, karri and pine—The average price of each timber is not known, but the value of all timbers produced in Western Australia has been stated as follows:—

Within State—1946-47, £9 5s.; 1947-48, £10 5s.; 1948-49, £10 15s.

Interstate—1946-47, £9 5s.; 1947-48, £10 5s.; 1948-49, £11.

Oversea—1946-47, £19 5s.; 1947-48, £22; 1948-49, £23 10s.

With regard to—

Question (1): "Other timbers" include wandoo, blackbutt, sheoak, morrell, tuart, marri, yate, river banksia, bullich and pine.

Question (2): Figures in the case of State Saw Mills have been supplied by the general manager, and are approximate only. Loads produced by private companies have been obtained by deduction.

Question (4): The average price per load. Interstate and oversea values have been obtained from information supplied by the Statistical Department, and those for Western Australia are approximate only, usually determined by Mr. Gregson from his knowledge of the trade and in comparison with interstate values.

(b) *As to Allowance to Settlers, etc.*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) What quantity of timber is allowed a settler for fencing posts and other farm requirements of timber, to be cut from his holding?

(2) What is the policy of the Forests Department in regard to timber on C.P. leases?

(3) What are the conditions laid down by the Forests Department in regard to fire breaks along railways as affecting settlers and the railway department?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Where a location is held subject to conditions reserving the marketable timber to the Crown, the conditions provide that he may fell sufficient timber for his own reasonable requirements in connection with his farming operations.

(2) The department only controls the timber on C.P. leases containing conditions reserving the marketable timber to the Crown. On such areas the policy is to try to prevent the destruction of a Crown asset and market the timber to best advantage, at the same time leaving sufficient timber for the settler's reasonable needs.

Action is taken to protect improvements and areas under pasture.

(3) The Bush Fires Act is not administered by the Forests Department and no conditions have been laid down. Conferences between representatives of interested parties, namely road boards, farmers' unions, Railway Department and Forests Department are being arranged to discuss this matter.

(c) *As to White Wood, Imports.*

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) How much white wood was imported for purposes other than fruit cases during the years ended June, 1947, 1948, and to May, 1949?

(2) What was the landed cost of this white wood used for building purposes?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Softwoods (excluding case shooks) were imported as follows:—

	Quantity. c. ft.	Value. £
Year ended the 30th		
June, 1947 ..	93,382	47,521
June, 1948 ..	87,366	54,942
From the 1st July, 1948, to the 30th April, 1949 ..	215,149	91,139

(2) Answered by No. (1). It is not known whether the softwoods imported were used for building purposes.

(d) *As to Fruit Cases.*

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) How much white wood was imported for fruit cases during the years ended June, 1947, 1948, and to May, 1949?

(2) What was the landed cost per dozen of these white wood fruit cases?

(3) What was the cost of jarrah, karri and jarrah-karri fruit cases?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The quantity of case shooks (hardwoods and softwoods) imported was as follows:—

	Quantity. c. ft.	Value. £
1946-47	*155,255	68,622
1947-48	13,203	10,774
From the 1st July, 1948, to the 30th April, 1949 ..	131,592	73,933

*Includes 28,021 c. ft. re-exported to Tasmania in 1947-48.

(2) 1946-1947—Not known.

1947-48—Apple cases approximately 3s. per case. Grape cases approximately 4s. 2d. per case (including 4d. to be refunded on the export of the case).

1948-49—Selling price about 4s. per case to growers ex country depots.

(3) The maximum prices fixed for semi-seasoned hardwood cases ex mill as from the 1st April, 1949, varied from 21s. 3d. to 22s. 9d. per dozen shooks. This price includes 1s. 3d. per dozen for commission.

(e) *As to Pinewood Exports.*

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Forests:

How much, if any, of our local pinewood was exported to—

(a) Eastern States,

(b) overseas,

for the years ended June, 1947, 1948, and to May, 1949?

The MINISTER replied:

No local pinewood was exported as sawn timber to the Eastern States or overseas during these years. Some local pine was used as cases for produce exported.

(f) *As to State Saw Mills' Output, Allocation.*

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Forests:

What percentage of output from State mills went to—

(a) private millowners,

(b) building contractors,

(c) State concerns,

for the years ended June, 1947, 1948, and to May, 1949?

The MINISTER replied:

The percentages ex mills were as follows:—

Period.	(a) Private Mill Owners. %	(b) Building Con- tractors. %	(c) State Concerns. %
1946-47	less than 1	not obtainable	8.87
1947-48	"	"	14.00
From the 1st July, 1948, to the 31st May, 1949	"	"	13.72

The figures for "local trading yards are not obtainable.

(g) *As to Sleepers and Mill Outputs.*

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) What quantity of jarrah sleepers was sold to private buyers for purposes other than railway construction during the years ended June, 1947, 1948, and to May, 1949, from—

(a) Banksiadale railway mill,

(b) other State sawmills?

(2) Who were the purchasers and how much was supplied to each?

(3) What quantity of jarrah sleepers was used within the State for railway construction by—

(a) W.A.G.R.

(b) private companies, during these years?

(4) What quantity of sleepers was exported to—

(a) Eastern States,

(b) overseas, during these years?

(5) How many loads of timber were sold for these years to private interests from—

(a) Banksiadale,

(b) Holyoake,

(c) Hakea?

(6) By how much has the price of jarrah, karri and pinewood increased during these years?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Number of jarrah sleepers sold to private buyers for purposes other than railway construction during years ended June, 1947, June, 1948, and May, 1949:—

(a) From Banksiadale mill: June, 1947, nil; June, 1948, 3,468 sleepers equal 136½ loads; May, 1949, 2,260 sleepers equal 90 loads.

(b) From other State Saw Mills: June, 1947, nil; June, 1948, nil; May, 1949, nil.

(2) Purchasers, and number supplied to each:—

June, 1947: nil.

June, 1948: Millars' Timber & Trading Co., 1,379; Bunning Bros., 640; Thompson Bros., 300; Sandwell & Wood, 578; McLean & Son, 271; Australian Lumber Co., 150; Anderson Timber & Hardware Co., 150; total 3,468.

May, 1949: State Saw Mills, 450; Anderson Timber & Hardware Co., 150; N. O. Reece, 150; Hawkins, 150; Sandwell and Wood, 300; C. H. Richardson, 300; Joiners Ltd., 150; Harris & Chinery, 150; Australian Lumber Co., 60; McLean & Son, 200; Pickendike & Sullivan, 200; total, 2,260.

(3) Sleepers used within the State for railway construction by —

(a) W.A. Government Railways for railway construction and maintenance: June, 1947, 408,692 jarrah, blackbutt and wandoo equal 16,080 loads; June, 1948, 390,273 jarrah, blackbutt and wandoo equal 15,360 loads; May, 1949, 368,194 jarrah, blackbutt and wandoo equal 14,300 loads.

(b) Private companies: June, 1947, 20,600 jarrah and wandoo equal 1,000 loads; June, 1948, 9,515 jarrah and wandoo equal 462 loads; May, 1949, 23,717 jarrah and wandoo equal 1,152 loads.

Note.—Separate figures for jarrah are not obtainable.

(4) Quantity of sleepers exported to—

(a) Eastern States: 1946-47, 10,594 loads; 1947-48, 9,545 loads; April, 1949, 7,037 loads.

(b) Oversea: 1946-47, 6,363 loads; 1947-48, 10,683 loads; April, 1949, 11,260 loads.

(5) Timber sold to private interests from—

(a) Banksiadale: June, 1947, 2,902 loads; June, 1948, 2,738 loads; May, 1949, 2,958 loads. (The above includes dockings and billets for case manufacture.)

(b) State Saw Mills: June, 1947, Hakea 5,160 loads, Holyoake 4,721 loads; June, 1948, Hakea 4,833 loads, Holyoake 5,043 loads; May, 1949, Hakea 3,360 loads, Holyoake 4,045 loads.

(6) The price of jarrah has increased by 10s. 7d. per 100 super feet, that of karri by 12s. 1d. and of pine by 5s.

BROOME-TERRACE, NORTHAM.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister for Works:

Has a decision yet been made to assist the Northam Municipal Council to widen Broome-terrace, Northam?

The MINISTER replied:

The question of the widening of Broome-terrace has been held up pending advice as to the dredging proposals of the Northam council.

RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Trucking, Fremantle Cargo.*

Mr. FOX asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Are the interests of the Railway Department being subordinated to the interests of a private transport company?

(2) Why were railway trucks allowed to remain idle in the Fremantle railway yard while Bell Bros. were carting phosphatic rock that was discharged from a ship at North Wharf, Fremantle?

(3) Why were the said trucks allowed to remain idle on Friday, the 20th, Saturday, the 21st, Sunday, the 22nd, and Monday, the 23rd May, whilst a railway checker was standing idly by all the aforesaid days waiting for the trucks to be put into commission?

(4) Who paid the wages of the said checker?

(5) Will he in future see that railway transport is used to the maximum in the transport of cargoes unloaded at Fremantle?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) The hon. member's statement is too vague for a specific answer. If he will quote individual numbers of the alleged trucks and the periods each was allowed to remain idle, further inquiries will be made.

(3) Answered by No. (2). There was no railway checker standing idly by.

(4) Answered by No. (3).

(5) This is the general practice.

(b) *As to Standard Gauge.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Will he make a statement outlining the present position regarding the construction of a standard gauge railway line between Kalgoorlie and Fremantle?

(2) Has any agreement with the Commonwealth yet been signed?

(3) If so, when is construction likely to commence?

(4) If not, what are the outstanding obstacles to an agreement being reached?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) to (4) The matter of standardising the gauge of the Western Australian Government Railways has recently been examined by a committee, consisting of Commonwealth and this State's representatives.

The committee's report has been received, and is being considered in conjunction with the rehabilitation proposals consequent upon the report of the recent Royal Commission on the Government Railways.

A decision on the matter of standardisation of our railways should be possible in the near future.

NATIVE AFFAIRS.

(a) *As to Moore River Settlement and Munja Station.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

(1) What was the total amount expended on the residence of the Superintendent at Moore River Settlement since the 1st February, 1949?

(2) What was the total amount expended in repairs or renovations to the kindergarten building at Moore River Settlement up to the 1st February, 1949?

(3) On what date was Cabinet's decision obtained to finalise arrangements to hand over the administration of Munja Native Station?

(4) Has a Cabinet decision been obtained for the closure of Udialla Native Station?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £300 7s. 11d. This residence was in a defective condition of sanitation and repair, no adequate maintenance having been attempted for many years, and the expenditure mentioned for renovation and sanitation followed on an inspection of the dwelling made by the Assistant Commissioner of Public Health when inspecting the settlement between the 3rd and 6th February, 1949.

(2) No record of any such expenditure has been kept. Repairs and renovations, if any, would have been paid from the general expenditure of the settlement.

(3) The 10th March, 1949.

(4) Udialla Station remains the property of the Department of Native Affairs, although not at present being used as a native institution, and would be available for further use for that purpose if required. Consideration is being given to the location of an institution to serve native children, when the suitability of Udialla will be examined in conjunction with representations from Kimberley residents favouring a different locality.

(b) *As to Departmental Staff.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

(1) How many officers are at present employed by the Native Affairs Department, who have had previous service in the administration of natives in the territory of Papua?

(2) What is the present salary of these officers individually?

(3) What is the total yearly increase in the department's expenditure as a result of the employment of these imported officers?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Six.

(2) Mr. S. G. Middleton (Commissioner), C-I-13, £906; Mr. Elliott-Smith, C-II-3, £695; Mr. D. L. Pullen, G-II-4, £664, plus district allowance £80; Mr. F. W. G. Andersen, G-II-4, £643; Mr. N. P. Hawke, G-II-5/6, £559; Mr. A. L. Ethell, G-II-4, £643.

(3) £806.

(c) *As to Welfare Expenditure.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

What is the anticipated increase in the annual expenditure on native welfare during the year ended the 30th June, 1949?

The MINISTER replied:

£20,216.

(d) *As to Officers' Classifications.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

In view of the Press statement from the Commissioner of Native Affairs appearing in "The West Australian" of the 22nd June, 1949, will he advise what is the classification grade under the Public Service Act of each individual officer referred to in the Press statement?

The MINISTER replied:

Northern Region.—Mr. Elliott-Smith, C-II-3; Mr. J. Rhatigan, G-II-4; Mr. D. L. Pullen, G-II-4; Mr. L. O'Neill, G-II-4.

Southern Region.—Mr. C. L. McBeath, C-II-3; Mr. F. W. G. Andersen, G-II-4; Mr. C. R. Wright-Webster, G-II-4; Mr. N. P. Hawke, G-II-5/6.

(e) *As to Industrial Trouble, Marble Bar District.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY (without notice) asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

(1) Is he in a position to make a statement to the House on the recent industrial trouble caused by natives in the Marble Bar district?

(2) If so, when will the statement be made?

The MINISTER replied:

In answer to Questions Nos. 1 and 2, I can state shortly that the same influence, with communistic affiliations, which became active industrially in the Port Hedland district in 1945-46 is now being manifested in the Marble Bar area. The result is that the natives have been instigated to appear in considerable force on some stations. The natives employed there, who would, I believe, have been happy to stay, feel constrained by the show of numbers and potential force to leave their employment. The Commissioner of Native Affairs has recently been up in the Marble Bar district and a senior inspector—Mr.

O'Neill—is now stationed in the district to watch the situation and the Commissioner or a senior officer is proceeding by air to Marble Bar on Thursday.

(f) *As to Industrial Trouble, Carnarvon District.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY (without notice) asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

In view of his statement to the House, and his knowledge of the communistic influence in certain districts in the North, is the Minister prepared to return Inspector Rhatigan to the Carnarvon district because I am informed that the same influence is in evidence there?

The MINISTER replied:

I would be glad to give consideration to the suggestion made by the hon. member.

GOLD MINING.

(a) *As to Assistance to Prospectors and Mines.*

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

(1) How many prospectors are receiving Government assistance at the present time?

(2) How much did the Government expend on assistance to prospectors for the year ended the 30th June, 1948?

(3) Excluding Federal advances for gold mining, what amount did the State Government advance to goldmines for the year ended the 30th June, 1948?

(4) What amount has been advanced to date during this financial year?

(5) What mines were assisted, and to what extent?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) Twenty-three prospectors assisted as at the 31st May, 1949.

(2) £6,057, 9s. 6d.

(3) Excluding Federal advances to marginal mines, the Department of Mines advanced the goldmines for the year ended the 30th June, 1948, £8,200 15s.

(4) Excluding Federal advances to marginal mines the Department of Mines advanced to goldmines from the 1st July, 1948, to the 23rd June, 1949, £7,648 12s. 4d.

(5) Goldmines assisted from the 1st July, 1947, to the 23rd June, 1949 (excluding Federal advances to marginal mines)—

Caledonian Mine, Nannine—£157 4s. 9d.

Rocklea Mine, Meekatharra—£1 1s. 11d.

Lady Mary Mine, Sandstone—£1,191 2s. 9d.

Blue Pedro Mine, Nannine—£803.

Scots Greys Mine, Southern Cross—£500.

Prince Charlie Mine, Bamboo Creek—£250.

Clamps Central Mine, Southern Cross—£301 0s. 6d.

Australian Gold Production Limited (Emu G.M., Agnew)—£3,710 16s. 5d.

Town Talk Mine, Marble Bar—£500.

Eundynie Mine, Coolgardie—£29 15s. 5d.

Trump Mine, Marble Bar—£340.

Evanston Gold Mining Company, Evanston—£1,193 14s. 9d.

Lancefield Mine, Berin—£5,199 4s. 10d.

Yerilla King Mine, Kookynie—£672 6s. 8d.

Bluebird Mine, Meekatharra—£499 19s. 7d.

Federation Mine, Marble Bar—£500.

(b) *As to Government Assistance, etc.*

Mr. STYANTS asked the Premier:

(1) In what ways, if any, has his Government assisted the goldmining companies of this State to tide them over the difficult financial period through which they are passing?

(2) What is the estimated additional cost, both directly and indirectly, annually, to the goldmining industry of this State, of the recent increase in railway freights?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) This Government has rendered the following assistance to the goldmining companies:

(a) It has guaranteed the Rural and Industries Bank to the extent of £160,000 to enable a company at Kalgoorlie, comprising representatives of gold producing companies, to purchase and operate the Goldfields Firewood Supply Company which, through unprofitable operations, had signified that it proposed to close down. This company

produced the fuel for the Kalgoorlie Power Company, the source of mining power in that locality, and the Government assistance ensured continuity of such fuel.

(b) It has reduced domestic water charges in the Eastern Goldfields, thus encouraging workers to settle and remain on the Goldfields, shortage of labour being one of the goldmining companies major worries.

(c) It has made, and continues to make, vigorous approaches to the Commonwealth Government in an endeavour to have the price of gold in some way increased in order to meet rising costs. These approaches and the discussions subsequently inaugurated between the Commonwealth Government and its officials and this Government and its officials were greatly responsible for the Commonwealth's providing financial grants to marginal mines.

(d) Further to encourage labour to the fields, the State Housing Commission, by arrangement with the Commonwealth, has built 40 homes in Big Bell, and has undertaken a building programme at Kalgoorlie and Boulder.

(e) Financial assistance has been granted to goldmines for development, installation and erection of plant, etc. During the last two years 16 mines have been so assisted to the extent of approximately £16,000.

(f) Despite greatly increased costs of operation, State Battery charges have been kept at pre-war level, and batteries operated at a loss to enable miners and such companies who use them to have their ore treated at reasonable rates.

(g) Every assistance has been rendered to ensure the expeditious importation and delivery of machinery and supplies of every description.

(2) It is impracticable to assess the additional cost as earnings from freights affecting the mining industry are not segregated. However, the mining industry benefited from the fact that rail freights were tapered according to distance. While freights for distances up to 150 miles were increased by 25 per cent., those for distances over 450 miles were increased by only 10 per cent. Broadly, Boorabbin to Comet Vale and Pindar to Munbhinia rates

from Perth were increased by 15 per cent. and Yunndaga to Leonora-Laverton and Yoweragabbie to Big Bell-Wiluna by 10 per cent.

(3) (a) Subsidy to the 21st June, £116,400.

(b) Estimated subsidy from the 15th June to the 30th June, £9,000.

CREAM, SYNTHETIC.

As to Constituents and Nutritive Value.

Mr. LESLIE asked the Minister for Health:

(1) What substances or ingredients are used in the manufacture of the synthetic cream now on sale in Western Australia?

(2) Has this product any nutritional value, and if so, how does it compare with true cream in this regard?

(3) In view of the stringent health laws and regulations applicable to dairies and places where milk and true cream products are handled, are similarly stringent regulations, in the public interest, being applied in connection with the manufacture of synthetic cream?

(4) Is it intended, in the interests of public health, to take action to ensure that deleterious substances and ingredients of doubtful quality will not be used in the manufacture of synthetic cream?

(5) Is it possible for ingredients or substances of doubtful food value, though not actually harmful, to be used in the manufacture of synthetic cream without such substances or ingredients being detectable by consumers?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Synthetic cream is an emulsion of vegetable oil in skim milk.

(2) Its nutritional value varies with that of the oil used—it would usually lack the vitamin content of true cream.

(3) The preparation is subject to the by-laws applicable to the preparation and marketing of food, but no minimum standard for its composition is laid down under the Food and Drug Regulations.

(4) Yes.

(5) Yes.

TELEPHONES.

As to Shortage and Service.

Mr. LESLIE asked the Premier:

(1) Is it a fact that there are in the Commonwealth 120,000 unsatisfied clients of the Postal Department wanting telephones at the present time?

(2) Is it a fact that the Postmaster General, Senator Cameron, stated in Melbourne on the 7th February of this year, that "as labour and materials are both in short supply, postal officers must in the meantime improvise to improve the service"?

(3) Will the State Government supply to the Postmaster General some of the arguments being used by the Opposition in the Western Australian Parliament, in respect of housing, with a view to endeavouring to accelerate the rate of production of telephones?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) From information published in the Press I understand that this is correct.

(3) The difficulties which confront the Postmaster General's Department in regard to shortage of labour and materials are also experienced by the State Government in regard to its activities.

BUILDING SUPPLIES.

(a) As to State Saw Mills' Output.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Minister for Housing:

What percentage of the total output of State Saw Mills is going into the building trade in sizes used in ordinary home construction?

The MINISTER replied:

I am advised that this information is not available without a great deal of research, but supplies for building purposes on what is listed as No. 1 priority by the State Saw Mills include housing, War Service Land Settlement, schools, Public Works building, Commonwealth railway housing, and small supplies to other Government departments—and the total 48½ per cent. of production.

(b) As to Embargo on Asbestos Exports.

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Housing:

Is the Government not able to place an embargo on the export of the asbestos when so much is needed in Western Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

Under Section 92 of the Constitution, neither the Commonwealth nor any State Government has power to prevent exports from one State to another. Representations have been made with a view to a proportion of the production of blue asbestos from the Hammersley Ranges being reserved for use in this State.

BASIC WAGE.*As to Items Subsidised.*

Mr. STYANTS asked the Attorney General:

(1) From which edible items contained in the regimen upon which the basic wage is computed has the Commonwealth Government withdrawn its subsidy?

(2) How many of the items of the above regimen are subsidised by the Commonwealth Government?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) Potatoes.

(2) Tea—subsidised. Butter and cheese—subsidised on a butterfat content.

CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS.*As to Publishing Results.*

Mr. YATES asked the Minister representing the Minister for Police:

Will he ensure that organisations conducting street collections in Perth on Fridays publish in "The West Australian" within five days of such collection the total amount collected, so that the public who subscribe are made aware of the amounts received?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

The regulations provide that a short audited statement shall be published within 14 days of a street appeal. It is considered impracticable to shorten the period.

BULK HANDLING FACILITIES, FREMANTLE.*As to Signing of Agreement.*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Lands:

On what date was the agreement between the Government and Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., regarding the taking over of the bulk handling facilities at Fremantle signed by the company?

The MINISTER replied:

The parties concerned signed in turn and the agreement was finally completed on the 27th April, 1949.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT.*As to Sale of Farms, etc.*

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Will he lay on the Table a return showing the number of farms that have been sold in Western Australia during the past 12 months—

(a) privately;

(b) the number purchased by the State Government for the War Service Land Settlement Scheme for that period?

(2) In the fixing of standards of the farms to be bought for the War Service Land Settlement Scheme for the 1939-45 ex-Servicemen, what part did the Western Australian State Government, or Western Australian officials, take in it, if any?

(3) Were these standards fixed by the Commonwealth Government, or officials entirely on their own?

(4) Who were the officers concerned in this standard-fixing in Western Australia?

(5) What steps are being taken by him to honour the promises made to ex-Servicemen regarding the purchase of farms, as it would appear that hundreds of ex-Servicemen will again be missing another cropping season in spite of the existing good prices?

(6) Would it not be possible for him to take up with the Minister for Reconstruction (Mr. Dedman) the possibility of re-drafting whatever purchase arrangements they made in 1945-46, considering the great increase of the basic wage, together with the greater value of primary products, as

this would appear to be long overdue if the Commonwealth or State Governments intend to carry out the aforementioned promises.

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) From the 20th September, 1948, to the 31st May, 1949—1,518 properties. Control of land sales prior to September, 1948, was administered by the Commonwealth Government.

(b) From September, 1948, to the 31st May, 1949—84 properties. Twelve months ended the 31st May, 1949—132 properties.

(2) The minimum return to be obtained from dairy farms to service commitments under the Commonwealth-State agreement was determined by the Commonwealth authorities. The developed area to attain this return in different districts was determined by State authorities and accepted by the Commonwealth.

(3) The standards for wheat and sheep farms, after a number of discussions between Commonwealth and State officials, was finally recommended by the Department of Agriculture and accepted by the Commonwealth. The standards recommended are intended to be flexible.

(4) The senior officers concerned were M. Cullity, Superintendent of Dairying; I. Thomas, Superintendent of Wheat Farming; F. L. Shier, Assistant Superintendent of Wheat Farming; G. Burvill, Commissioner of Soil Conservation; R. W. Brownlie, Commissioner of Rural and Industries Bank; M. Austin, Chief Valuer, Rural and Industries Bank.

(5) Suitable properties are being acquired by the Land Purchase Board. Occupation is arranged wherever development is sufficiently advanced.

(6) No promise was made that all ex-Servicemen would be established on repurchased estates. The Land Purchase Board is not restricted to any greater extent than the private individual in the purchase of suitable properties for War Service Land Settlement.

MILK BOARD.

As to Compensation Fund Levies.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Has the Milk Board made any request to the Government to be empowered to take action for the recovery of amounts outstanding against sundry debtors who have not made the required contribution to the compensation fund?

(2) Is the Milk Board completely without power to take some disciplinary action against the recalcitrant persons or firms?

(3) Is the Government satisfied to allow a state of affairs to continue which virtually has the effect of permitting certain firms to obtain a higher price for milk than those who have complied with the Milk Board's requirements and met their obligations?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The chairman of the Milk Board has conferred on a number of occasions with the Minister for Agriculture and has consulted Crown Law officials with a view to ascertaining if any means could be discovered or provided to enable the board to take action for the recovery of the amounts outstanding.

(2) The Milk Board has no power to recover the amounts unpaid.

(3) Since the passing of the Milk Act Amendment Act earlier this session, milk vendors and treatment plants are exempted from the payment of contributions to the compensation fund.

SUPERPHOSPHATE.

(a) As to Rail and Road Transport.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What is the estimated loss to the Railway Department on the haulage of superphosphate for the 12 months ended the 21st June, 1949?

(2) What is the average cost per ton mile haulage on the railways?

(3) What is the freight rate per ton mile charged for superphosphate?

(4) What is the average cost of haulage per ton mile for superphosphate by road transport?

(5) What were the total tonnages of superphosphate hauled by the railways and road transport respectively for the above-mentioned period?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) £319,000.
- (2) 3.06 pence.
- (3) .59 pence.
- (4) Approximately 4.25 pence.
- (5) Rail—213,861 tons. Road—124,016 tons. June, 1949 figures are not yet available and the above information covers the period from the 1st July, 1948, to the 31st May, 1949.

(b) *As to Carting Subsidy.*

Mr. STYANTS asked the Premier:

What are the amounts involved in the subsidy paid to road transport of superphosphate for the 12 months ended the 21st June, 1949—

- (a) already paid;
- (b) estimated amount involved in the recent extension of the period in which the subsidy will be paid this year?

The PREMIER replied:

- (a) Subsidy to the 21st June, £116,400.
- (b) Estimated subsidy from the 15th June to the 30th June, £9,000.

(c) *As to Deliveries.*

Mr. REYNOLDS (without notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

An item appeared in this morning's paper under the heading of "Delivery of Super. Farmers' Union's Complaints," which set out the decisions arrived at by a meeting of the farmers' union representative of 14 different branches. The item stated—

Dissatisfaction was expressed about the delivery of superphosphate. The meeting agreed to a Bruce Rock motion that the union impress upon the Government the necessity for the railway department to concentrate on heavy haulage, such as wheat and superphosphate, giving particular attention to long distance haulage and that road transport be utilised as far as was economically possible.

Is it the intention of the Minister to comply with that resolution?

Mr. Marshall: That is, without a subsidy!

The MINISTER replied:

I did not get a copy of the question or a notification that it would be asked, but I am glad to say that a conference is being

called for Friday next, the 1st July, to make the necessary arrangements for the transport of super. for the next year.

ALUNITE WORKS.

As to Contract Carting.

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) How many contractors are employed at Chandler Alunite Works for the cartage of timber, salt, and all other commodities?

(2) What is the present annual tonnage carted to the works—

- (a) timber;
- (b) salt;
- (c) other goods?

(3) Is it the Government's intention to dispense with cartage contractors and install Government-owned and operated trucks for all road haulage?

(4) How many vehicles will be purchased, what type, and at what cost?

(5) How soon will they begin operations?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) Two.
- (2) (a) Timber—25,000 tons.
(b) Salt—500 tons.
(c) Other goods—outwards 3,444 inwards 5,000 tons.

(3) Government-owned trucks are now operating. Future policy will be dictated by circumstances.

(4) Four Monarch diesels and three ex-Army Ford semi-trailers have already been purchased at a total cost of £13,800.

(5) They are already operating.

PETROL SALES.

As to Illegal Trading.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) Is he aware that unrestricted sales of petrol are taking place at a number of city motor service stations daily after legal trading hours, also on Sundays and holidays contrary to the provisions of the Factories and Shops Act?

(2) What steps, if any, are being taken to prevent this unfair competition against law-abiding retailers?

(3) Will he have appropriate action taken to terminate the practice?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, but attention is drawn to the provisions of Section 101 (c) of the Factories and Shops Act as amended by No. 47 of 1946.

(2) Close co-operation exists with the Service Station Association. Inspectors observe and check the situation from time to time, but as the law now stands the position is most difficult.

(3) Every effort has been made and will be made to see that the law is observed.

BANANA INDUSTRY.

As to Promoting Expansion.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Minister for Lands:

In view of the undoubted success of the banana industry at Carnarvon, and the consequent keen demand for suitable land, will he arrange at the earliest possible date to have an authoritative inspection made, and report given, upon the availability of all land suitable for banana culture still undeveloped and adjoining the Gascoyne River; such report to take fully into account the quantity of water available to the whole of the industry including its prospective expansion?

The MINISTER replied:

There is already considerable information available in respect to the factors mentioned, and the Department of Agriculture will co-operate with the Department of Public Works in carrying out the investigation desired.

IRRIGATION.

As to Utilising Gascoyne River.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Minister for Works:

Will he cause a complete inquiry and survey to be made of all prospects within a reasonable distance of Carnarvon, of holding back the waters in the Gascoyne River to ensure a constant supply for irrigation being available to settlers?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, within the limitations of available staff.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL FRANCHISE.

As to Introduction of Legislation.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Attorney General:

Does he intend to introduce again this session the Bill to amend Section 15 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act which deals with the franchise of the Legislative Council, and which was defeated in the Legislative Council?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

It is not customary to announce the Government's legislative programme in response to parliamentary questions.

HOUSING.

(a) As to Construction at Wittenoom Gorge.

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Housing:

How many houses have been constructed at Wittenoom Gorge for employees on the blue asbestos mine during 1948, and to May, 1949?

The MINISTER replied:

Houses for employees of Blue Asbestos Mine—

(a) Under Commonwealth-State Rental Scheme—Completed, 15; under construction, 5; contract approved, 10; total, 30.

(b) Private permit issued to company for construction of 10 two-roomed huts.

(b) As to Small Unit Families.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many applications have been received for houses under the two- and three-unit family scheme?

(2) What is the number of permits that have been issued under this scheme?

(3) On how many such buildings has work been commenced?

(4) How many have been completed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Applications received from two- and three-unit families for houses—

(a) Under Commonwealth-State Rental Scheme—2,921.

(b) For permits to build privately, approx.—1,500 (separate record not kept until priority established).

(2) 921.

(3) (a) Commonwealth-State rental homes—238.

(b) Private permits—information not available.

(4) (a) Commonwealth-State rental homes—12.

(b) Private permits—information not available.

(c) *As to Ex-Service Tenants.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Housing:

Has the Government any intention of giving ex-Service tenants protection from eviction in view of the termination of Commonwealth authority in that regard?

The MINISTER replied:

All tenants are afforded certain safeguards against eviction under regulations made under the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act. The matter of continuing the special protection which was afforded to ex-Service tenants and their dependants under Commonwealth moratorium regulations is at present under consideration.

CAUSEWAY TRAMS.

As to Termination of Service.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) When is it anticipated that the tramway service over the Causeway will be terminated?

(2) Will motor buses or trolley-buses replace the trams?

(3) Is there any intention to hand over the routes to private concerns?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) As soon as the omnibuses are ready to take over the services.

(2) Motor buses.

(3) No.

FISH WEIGHING.

As to Provision at Fremantle.

Mr. FOX asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Has a permit been issued to a person to build a house on the jetty at the Fremantle Markets in which to place scales to weigh fish?

(2) Is he aware that ample weighing facilities are available at the adjacent fish markets?

(3) In view of the housing shortage, will he give this matter his early consideration in order to prevent building materials being used unnecessarily?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No permits issued, as cost of building was under £50.

Releases issued in December last for only eight sheets of galvanised corrugated iron and 14 small sheets of asbestos for store-room and office on jetty. Building was considered necessary as fishermen had been forced to vacate accommodation in Harbour and Light Department's building.

(2) The question of weighing facilities did not arise when the releases were applied for.

(3) The building is almost complete. The prevention of unnecessary use of building materials generally is constantly receiving consideration.

COAL STRIKE.

(a) *As to Government Printing Office, Auxiliary Plant.*

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (without notice) asked the Premier:

Has any action been taken to arrange for the Government Printing Office to function with the aid of an auxiliary plant and if so what action?

The PREMIER replied:

The Minister for Labour informs me that arrangements have been made for two auxiliary plants from the R.A.A.F. to be installed.

(b) *As to Electricity Supplies and Coal Consumption.*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What is the total quantity of coal at present in stock or in transit for the Electricity Commission?

(2) How much coal would be required to maintain the existing rate of supply of electricity to enable industry to carry on beyond today for the remaining part of this week?

(3) What is the estimated quantity of coal required daily to maintain a supply of electricity to carry on essential services such as sewerage pumping, water supply and hospital requirements?

(4) Is it absolutely necessary to cut off the supply of electricity at 6 a.m. tomorrow as is proposed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Approximately 11,000 tons.

(2) Approximately 5,000 tons.

(3) Approximately 200 tons per day.

(4) Yes.

(c) As to Power for Domestic Refrigerators.

Mr. LESLIE (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Can the Minister say whether it will be possible to supply electric current to domestic users for a limited period each day to allow domestic refrigerators to be kept in use and thus avoid damage to such machines which may result from their being out of operation for a protracted period?

(2) If unable, at the present juncture, to indicate the possibility of this service being given, will he have the matter investigated?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) In the known circumstances, I do not anticipate being able to give the hon. member a favourable reply.

(2) I will have the matter investigated.

(d) As to Sitzings of Parliament.

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Premier:

Will he give consideration, because of the present crisis, to this House meeting during daylight hours and if so why did he decide to instal a costly generating plant which at the best will give an ineffective light to certain portions of the building only and make it exceedingly difficult for

servants of this House, perhaps reporters, and staff attached to the kitchen, to work. Further in view of the fact that the lighting provided will be unsatisfactory, will he give consideration to my proposition that the House should, during the crisis, meet during daylight hours?

The PREMIER replied:

The plant referred to by the hon. member can be utilised by the Government in other directions when it is not required at Parliament House. It was decided that light should be provided because of the emergency conditions. I do not know what might happen as a result of the present position.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: Why not adjourn for a fortnight?

The PREMIER: It may be necessary to implement certain legislation but I can assure the hon. member that every consideration is being given to the conditions under which the staff are working. Later on in this sitting I intend to ask the House to sit at 2 p.m. tomorrow and adjourn, probably at 6.15 p.m. Further consideration will be given by the Government to the hours of sitting.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS.

(a) As to Supplying of Answers.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

In view of the fact that a Minister handed a set of questions to the member for Irwin-Moore to be answered, will he ensure that Ministers answer their own questions?

The MINISTER replied:

I know nothing of the matter referred to by the hon. member.

(b) As to Printing of Questions on Notice.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Ministers today have requested that some questions be put on the notice paper. I wish to make it quite clear that, in an endeavour to assist the Premier in the printing of the notice paper, questions, so far as we are concerned, handed in today need not appear on the notice paper, need not be printed, and can be answered by Ministers as if such questions were on the notice paper.

PRICE CONTROL.

(a) As to Foodstuffs.

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Attorney General:

What was the fixed price for the following commodities as at the 30th September, 1948, and the 23rd June, 1949, respectively:—

Meat—

Beef:—Sirloin per lb.; Ribs per lb.; Steak (rump) per lb.; Steak (chuck) per lb.; Sausages per lb.; Corned silverside per lb.; Corned brisket (rolled) per lb.

Mutton:—Leg per lb.; Forequarter per lb.; Loin per lb. Chops (loin) per lb.; Chops (leg) per lb.

Pork:—Leg per lb.; Loin per lb.; Chops per lb.

Jam—Plum, 1½lb. tin.

Potatoes—Per 7 lb.

Soap—Household, per lb.

Eggs—Standard, new laid, per doz.

Milk—Fresh, per pint.

Bacon rashers—per lb.?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

COMPARATIVE RETAIL PRICES.

30th Sept., 23rd June,

	1948.	1949.
Beef—per lb.:	s. d.	s. d.
Sirloin beef	1 2	1 7
Rolled rib	1 2	1 6
Rump steak	1 8	2 1
Chuck steak	11	1 4
Sausages	9	10
Corned silverside	1 0	1 5
Rolled brisket	9	1 2
Mutton—per lb.:		
Leg	1 1	1 3
Forequarter	8	9
Loin	1 1	1 3
Loin chops	1 2	1 4
Leg chops	1 2	1 4
Pork—per lb.:		
Leg		
Loin		
Chops—Best loin.		
Fore loin.		

(Pork was removed from price control by Commonwealth Government before the 30th September, 1948.)

	s. d.	s. d.
Jam—per 1½lb. tin:		
I.X.L.—Rosella	1 7	1 6
Potatoes—(7lb.)	10½	1 5
Soap—Household, per lb.:		
Peak, 2lb. bar	1 4	1 4
Signal, 30oz. pkt. . . .	1 5	1 5
Velvet, 24oz. bar	1 3	1 3
Eggs—(1st quality hen):		
Per doz.	2 7	3 4
(Wholesale prices determined by W.A. Egg Board.)		

Milk—	d.	d.
Bulk, per pint	4½	5
Bottle, per pint	5	5½

(Prices determined by W.A. Milk Board.)
Bacon rashers.—Deccontrolled by the Commonwealth before the change-over.

(b) As to Removal of Subsidies and Tabling List of Subsidised Goods.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I undertook, for the Leader of the Opposition, to place on the table of the House certain information in reply to a question which he asked. I now have this information as far as I have been able to obtain it. I was asked whether I would prepare a statement for tabling in the House showing the prices in Western Australia of all goods affected by subsidy as at the date the State took over prices control, the 20th September, 1948, and as at the 1st June, 1949. It is not practicable to show a list of prices existing as at the 20th September, 1948, of all goods affected by subsidy because of the great number of "brands," "sizes" and "types".

Many of the brands and types which may have been selling at the 20th September, 1948, are not on sale today, and vice versa. Another factor is that many goods sold in September are not sold in June because of seasonal requirements. The items on the lists which I propose to lay on the Table of the House are representative brands and are those goods generally in demand throughout the greater portion of the year. The increases, where these have occurred, would also be reflected in other brands by approximately the same percentage. I ask for leave to table these papers.

Leave given; papers tabled.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment (Continuance).
Introduced by the Minister for Education.
- 2, Licensing Act Amendment (No. 2).
Introduced by Mr. Graham.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Brand, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Hon. A. F. G. Cardell-Oliver (Subiaco) on the ground of ill-health.

On motion by Mr. Styants, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Rodoreda (Roebourne) on the ground of urgent public business.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE) (No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd June.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [5.18]: In my opinion, the lifting of restrictions on controls of certain materials has made for the slower completion of some houses. I am not accusing the Minister of going slow on the job, because I believe he has worked hard and conscientiously. However, I do believe the housing position in Western Australia has got out of hand. I heard the member for Mt. Marshall last week making apologies for the Government and saying that the cause of the present position was that the previous Government did not tell the present Government of the state of the East Perth power house. That was no reason whatsoever. I do know that the previous Government told the House many times that it was next to impossible, as things were, to provide houses for two-unit families. However, that did not prevent members of the present Government from promising what they would do for the two-unit families. In his Policy Speech, the Deputy-Premier said:—

We will appoint a woman on the Housing Commission and other commissions where a woman may be regarded as similarly interested. Permits to build will be issued where only two persons are to be housed and where hardship is shown.

I will endeavour to show that hardship has been shown with two-unit families and the fact of having a woman on the Commission has not seemed to improve matters at all, whereas the women of two-unit families are up against it for accommodation. Fremantle is one of the worst places in the State as far as being unable to get permits is concerned. I can truthfully say there are hundreds on the priority list around Fremantle but I can never get them off. I can quote letters to prove that they are on priority and there they stop. I hope that something will be done to remove them from the priority list and obtain homes

for them which they so much deserve. This is a sample of the answers I receive regarding people with two-unit families:—

Referring to your enquiries regarding the application of Mr. H. Brown for a Commonwealth-State rental home, I regret to advise you that it has not yet been possible to offer any assistance in this case owing to the number of applications pending from persons with families of young children who are suffering greater hardship.

That is the way they reply to applications from two-unit families and, if this sort of thing is to continue, no such family will be able to get a home. There are so many people with three-unit families or larger that they will get preference, so why does not the Government tell the people that they cannot yet provide homes for two-unit families? It is not the Government that is getting the blame; the people tell members that the Government is providing homes for two-unit families and ask why they cannot get homes. They invariably say that other members of Parliament can get homes for families of two units because the Government has made promises to provide them. I have another reply from the Housing Commission which shows that a three-unit family cannot get a home either. This family is living in a leaky old caravan and has been seeking a home for a long time. As to this instance, I would like to know what the woman on the Commission is doing, because the mother is expecting to be confined to hospital shortly for her second child. The letter reads—

Further to previous correspondence with respect to your application for assistance to build under the provisions of the War Service Homes Act, I have to advise that an inspection was recently carried out with regard to your present living circumstances and the matter placed before the Commission with a view to establishing priority.

Whilst it is agreed that your present living conditions are not of a very high standard, I regret that your case cannot be considered as an immediate emergency priority.

I shall be pleased if you will make further approaches to the Commission when your second child arrives, when the position can be further reviewed.

That is the plight of a three-unit family with the mother being told by the Commission that when the second child comes along she is to get in touch with it again to see what can be done. On the following day, the same family received this letter—

Receipt is acknowledged of your medical certificate regarding the expected addition to your family.

When the expected child arrives, will you please advise me and I will arrange for an immediate review of your application. No guarantee can be given regarding the early issue of a building permit, but your name, in any case, will be transferred to the four-unit priority list, which will mean a substantial reduction in the waiting time for this.

It is coming to something when a woman in the family way, with one child already, has to wait until the second child arrives before her application is considered. She will have to wait until she sets out from the leaky caravan to enter the hospital, and then she can go to the Commission and say, "The child has arrived, what will you do for me now?" I hope she will not have to wait for the arrival of a third child before she receives some consideration. I have dozens of such letters which have been sent to two and three unit families, and the excuse is always the same. I cannot even get an Army hut for them. The reply I received to my question regarding an Army hut was, "Unfortunately, although these people are in a very bad state regarding housing, we cannot put them into an Army hut because they are being reconditioned and people will have to wait for a considerable time before the huts are completed." This is a different type of reply, and is addressed to a man with a three-unit family. It reads—

With reference to your recent enquiry regarding the abovenamed, I desire to state that this applicant was placed on the priority list on the 10th April, 1948.

It will be at least 18 months before his turn can be reached.

He is one of those that I can always get on priority.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is the easiest part, getting them on priority.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: It will be at least 18 months before his turn comes. I hope the Minister will do something for these people and that he will not tell the public that two-unit families can obtain homes because it is the members who get the blame. The Government says that homes for two-unit families are being provided, but they are not. If all members cannot be treated the same, the Government ought to tell the public that there are too many people with large families

to be provided for and that two-unit families will have to wait. If the Minister is not prepared to tell the people this, he should ensure that all members get an equal percentage of homes for two-unit families. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's reply in regard to this point. I think it would be better to have an open go regarding materials than for the position to be as it is at present. With some materials restrictions are being lifted, whilst others continue to be restricted.

MR. McCULLOCH (Hannans) [5.28]: It was not my intention to speak on this measure, but after listening patiently to the member for Canning on Thursday last, I consider that he has made some very false and misleading statements to this House. Firstly, I will deal with his reference to the basic wage. It may be irrelevant to the Bill, but he told the House that his father, on a basic wage of £3 a week, built a home in Leederville. That statement is wrong. The basic wage was never £3 a week in this State. Secondly, he said that applicants for houses today were only adding to the shortage because these men or women should have saved their money in pre-war days to purchase homes. Unfortunately, prior to the war the workers did not have the money or the employment to enable them to buy homes. The member for Canning also inferred that these people were wasting their money. Very vividly I recall a gentleman by the name of Yates who had a practice on the Goldfields that was definitely illegal. I am not saying it was the member for Canning, but it was a gentleman of the same name. On many Saturday nights this man helped these people to waste their money.

So far as the shortage of houses is concerned, I would say that the Goldfields people are perhaps not so badly off as those in the metropolitan area. Press publicity recently has been given to bringing 360 migrant ex-Servicemen to the Goldfields. There are also indications that it is intended to house these men on the racecourse. I always thought a racecourse was a place for racehorses, but seemingly they are going to house this number of men on the Boulder racecourse. I understand that the Minister for Migration has authorised those men to go to the Goldfields. We can-

not expect them to live on the racecourse all their lives, and the Minister should make provision now to ensure that these men are housed in a proper manner. It may have been all right during the years of war when men had to submit to all sorts of hardships, but we cannot expect them to continue to live under similar conditions in peacetime. The municipality of Kalgoorlie has circularised residents as to the number of migrants they could accommodate. The response to the circulars was that 15 could be put up. This indicates that the housing position on the Goldfields is very acute. A man advertised a house for sale and had eight applicants for it between 8 a.m. and noon on the day the advertisement appeared in the "Kalgoorlie Miner." This again indicates the housing shortage on the Goldfields.

A contractor named Pike had four vacant houses at Kundip and had been awaiting permission from the Housing Commission for five weeks to shift them to Esperance. It was not until I made representations to the Commission on his behalf that Mr. Pike obtained permission to move the houses. I do not blame the Minister for this; I blame the administration. These little pinpricks arouse the ire of the people and make them realise that matters connected with housing are not O.K. There is a house that was finished in January and the family had everything but the key, and it was not until the day before yesterday that the family was advised that the house could not be allocated at present. I am not concerned about attributing blame to one party or another. During the war years, all building activity had to be directed to the Armed Forces, so that it is of no use blaming either the previous or the present Minister for Housing. We know that the housing problem is a heritage from the war years. As we could not take men from the Services to work on house construction, we have reached the present difficult position. During the week-end, I had a ring from people who wanted a house in Kalgoorlie, and I made inquiries of a house agent. I was told that it would be impossible for those people to obtain a home for at least a month. I warn the Minister that, if the 360 migrants are sent to the Goldfields, homes must be provided for them. I should like to see the population of the Goldfields increase, but I do not

want to see people living under adverse conditions. Nothing will give them a worse impression than treatment of the sort I have indicated. I leave it at that and support the second reading of the Bill.

MR. WILD (Swan) [5.35]: I cannot help feeling that during this debate some members have been rather destructive in their criticism. The member for South Fremantle, who I regret is not in his place at the moment, spoke about members on this side of the House not knowing what it was to live in poverty or in substandard houses. I think he conveyed the impression that we live in houses such as those to be found in Mount-street. I for one should like to set his mind at rest on that score. I live in a 5-roomed wooden house which cost £790 and when I took possession of it three years ago, I had to put in two windows and supply a fly-proof door. Thus I at any rate cannot be said to come in the category of those mentioned by the hon. member.

The Minister for Lands: He himself has a nice home.

Mr. WILD: The main issue should be, not what happened in 1938 or 1939, but what we can do for the many thousands of people who today are looking for homes. The member for East Perth has been conducting a wordy warfare in the Press with Mr. Mattiske who, I understand, represents the Builders' Guild. Last week, the Minister told the hon. member that there were something like 21,000 applications for houses. I have no doubt that the Minister, when he replies, will be able to explain that. Anyone who gives five minutes' consideration to the matter or has had the experience of calling on the Housing Commission will realise that the total includes many people who have applied for each of the four classes of homes.

Mr. Graham: That is, if that was the case.

Mr. WILD: It is the case today. The hon. member should read what happened in New South Wales 14 or 15 months ago. A circular was sent to the 32,000 applicants whose names appeared on the departmental files asking, "Are you still an applicant for a house? If so, what type do you desire?" At the bottom of the circular was the intimation, "If no reply is received

within 28 days, it will be considered that you no longer require a house." The 32,000 applications were fined down to 21,000, and I venture to say that if the 21,644 quoted to the hon. member last week were treated similarly, the total could probably be whittled down to about 10,000 or 11,000.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is impossible, because the Minister said there were 12,000 applications for Commonwealth-State rental homes.

Mr. WILD: That is so, but the hon. member knows full well that many people who find accommodation do not inform the Housing Commission and their names still appear on the files as applicants. The Commission might well investigate the administrative side of this terrific problem and ensure that there is no duplication or triplication of applications for homes.

As to the 10,000 or 11,000 people waiting for homes, we might well ask, "Where do they come from?" Many have come from mining towns that have been forced to close down in recent months. Many are migrants. It might interest members to know that during the last 12 months, we have received 5,250 British migrants. I appreciate that when migrants are nominated, relatives are supposed to provide accommodation for them for the first 12 months, but human nature is human nature; probably family rows occur and it is not long before some couple with two, three or four children approaches the Commission and gets on the list for a house by virtue of having five in the family. Instead of ranking at the tail-end of the queue, this couple finds itself at the head, and a man who has been waiting probably for two or three years is put lower down the list.

I believe that we are reaping the benefit of the return of many ex-Servicemen who left the State with the Armed Forces. Many of these men, from 1939 to 1946, were unable to increase their families, and now they are back have risen from 3-unit or 4-unit families to 5-unit or 6-unit families. Every day some good Western Australian woman is giving birth to another son or daughter, and that puts the family higher in the priority list.

I am not satisfied with the distribution of some of the essential materials. I wish to touch lightly on the items of cement,

bricks and timber. The Commission, in its wisdom, lifted control on these items a few months ago. Members know that the moment the control on bricks was lifted, garages and brick fences were being built everywhere. One of the first brick fences erected was for the Principal Architect, Mr. Clare, and it does not reflect any credit on him that that should have been so.

Recently, the Government sought to fill the gap between the cement requirements of the housing industry, the Public Works Department and private consumers by importing as a first consignment about 6,000 tons from England.

From my observations, I conclude that a large proportion of the local cement has found its way to the Public Works Department and that all John Citizen can buy is the English cement supplied by Harris Scarfe & Sandovers, McLean Bros. & Rigg, and other distributors, at double the price. The idea of importing cement was to relieve the local demand, the Public Works Department taking the imported cement at the higher price, leaving the cheaper local product for private citizens. Since the controls were lifted, we cannot help noticing the garden paths, kerbs and brick fences that have been constructed. Admittedly, we all have work to do about the home; probably for seven or eight years during the war we were unable to attend to these requirements. Everyone wanted cement, and, when we have various companies and numerous private people using it, the supply is soon exhausted.

The timber position, in my opinion, is far from satisfactory. I cannot speak on this subject with authority, but I listened with interest to the member for Nelson. I looked up his speech of last year on the subject and made a few inquiries. The problem bristles with difficulties and often I feel that we are moving round in circles. Anyhow, there is certainly something wrong with the timber position in this State. I heard a member say the other day that a lot of second-grade timber was being used in this State and that all the good timber was being exported to the Eastern States or oversea. I decided to spend Sunday looking around a few of the buildings that are being erected by large contractors at Welshpool, Queen's Park

and Belmont, and I would say that 50 per cent. of the timber being used was definitely of second-grade.

I have here the Minister's speech of last year on exactly the same Bill. He was questioned by the member for Nelson about the very subject I am mentioning and he said he would go into the position. But I regret to say that at the moment I cannot see very much improvement in regard to timber. Replying to the debate last year, and particularly to the queries concerning the amount of timber exported not only oversea but interstate, the Minister said:—

The State Housing Commission working through its liaison officer informs the timber industry, or the main general purpose mills which produce most of the timber, that there will be required timber—in this current year, for instance,—for 3,200 houses; and the timber merchants—that is, the main merchants who deal mostly with the timber trade—reserve materials as a first priority to fulfil the volume of permits anticipated to be issued.

I suggest to the Minister that that is the wrong way round. I realise that he quoted Section 92. That is something very much beyond me; but it seems to me that there must be some way to overcome the difficulty so that we can say to the timber people, "You are permitted to export only a certain quantity of your timber and you must leave the rest in Western Australia for this national emergency." Instead of that, as the Minister said, we are going to the timber industry and saying, "We want so much timber for so many houses," and that means to say that when we have that timber the rest can be exported.

I also feel that the system we have for the release of building materials is wrong. I have suggested to the Minister before—and I repeat it here on the floor of the House—that I think the South Australian system—and there is a very similar one in Queensland—is by far the best. I have the South Australian Act here and have looked into it very closely. There people are allowed to do anything they wish with building materials, except certain things set out in the second schedule. That means they can build houses and nothing else. If we reversed our procedure here, a terrific quantity of materials would be used in meeting the great urgent need for houses instead of going into the little home work jobs one sees all over the place.

Mr. Graham: Here you can do anything except build a house.

Mr. WILD: Some members have tried to belittle the work of the Housing Commission and the Minister but we must admit that during the past year great work has been performed and the Commission is building more houses today than ever before. I submit, however, that that is not the answer to the question. To build 4,000 houses a year is not enough. We must do much better. Some say the trouble is labour; some say it is the 40-hour week. All sorts of excuses are advanced. I say let us get on with the job. The thing we have to do is build more houses and it is up to all members to do what they can in this connection, irrespective of party. It does not matter on which side of the House we sit, we must put our shoulder to the wheel in order to overcome what is a national crisis in Western Australia.

One of the biggest aids that has been given to house-building in this State in the past year has been the self-help scheme. I heard one member the other evening say—and another member a little later on criticised him for it—that he felt some road boards were not amenable to assisting fellows who were not so fortunate and not so well off. In the electorate I represent there are four road boards by whom every assistance and co-operation are given to a man. If he has a block and wants to put up a little place on it—a one-roomed or two-roomed house—they give him a helping hand. I think that a worthwhile contribution has been made to this great problem by the issue of no fewer than 580 self-help permits in the last three months.

Mr. Marshall: You are referring only to some road boards. There are others which are the reverse.

Mr. WILD: I quite agree. I can only speak for my own electorate. The Gosnells Road Board and the Armadale Road Board have afforded excellent co-operation.

Mr. Marshall: That is your mellowing influence!

Mr. WILD: At present an individual is permitted to make additions or to erect a small building to the value of £50, without a permit.

Hon. A. H. Panton: If he can get the materials.

Mr. WILD: If my suggestion to the Minister were acceptable—namely, that building materials should be controlled for everything else except the building of houses—people would be able to get the materials they wanted. I would go one step further, and instead of making the permit cover a value of £50 I would increase it to £100. I want to compliment the Government on the appointment of a full-time chairman of the Housing Commission which was announced in the Press a few days ago. That was long overdue. Members on both sides of the House have been pressing for such an appointment for some time. I have nothing whatever against the Under Treasurer, but I submit there is no human being who can be Under Treasurer of the State, Chairman of the Housing Commission, and on about five other boards as well. It was not fair to him or to the 8,000 or 10,000 people who are waiting for houses. Having a full-time chairman who will be able to be on the board and on many of the small sub-committees full time, we are looking to see some improvement in the situation.

Like most members, not only on this side of the House—for I look back on the speeches of last year and the year before and find that members on the Opposition side share my view—I favour the lifting of these controls, but I feel that they will have to be continued for some short time to come. I leave with the Minister the suggestions I have made and support the second reading.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth—in reply) [5.53]: I am indebted to members for their unanimity in support of this Bill, even though, like the late King Charles, they may have taken an unconscionable time in expressing it. I am very appreciative of the number of references made by members to the State Housing Commission and staff. If any people want encouragement, quite apart from the Minister, it is the staff of the Housing Commission. They have a most difficult job. They live in an atmosphere where they daily meet so many people who are distressed through want of better housing accommodation, and I think they are rendering a devoted service in the course of

which neither nights nor holidays nor Sundays are taken into account when they have work to do.

Mr. May: Cannot some be paid a little higher rate than they are paid today? They are terribly underpaid.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: When the present Government took over the responsibility of housing I made an investigation of that aspect and a general or fairly general salary rise was provided for the whole or almost the whole of the Commission's personnel.

Mr. May: All of them?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: All of them. I think that was very proper and it was done. The Housing Commission does not move in a vacuum nor do even I myself move in a vacuum. We have associated with the Commission the housing advisory panel, a body composed of prominent men associated with the building trade and the building materials industry in various ways who, over the last 18 months, have met fortnightly and rendered a most important and entirely honorary service in advising me; criticising, where justified, anything they thought could be improved in the Commission's work; and making suggestions as to what could be done to speed up the State's housing programme. I would like to pay a tribute to those men, some of whom I think have not missed a meeting in the last 18 months or more, for the work they have done to assist the State.

I would also like to say that the Commission and I myself maintain a fairly close contact with any other organisations, which can bring any suggestions to bear on our building programme. On a number of occasions I have had the privilege of receiving representatives of the trade unions, in particular the building trade executives, to hear what they had to say, which was sometimes critical but often very constructive. Contact has also been maintained with responsible building organisations like the Building Industry Congress, the Master Builders' Association, and the Western Australian Builders' Guild, in order that their co-operation could be secured. Whatever credit may be due for housing expansion in this State, a proper proportion should be given to those organisations for the co-operation they have exhibited,

and particularly the base price system which I think is one of the best in any State and which has played a part in keeping our housing costs lower than those of any other State. That has been possible on account of the co-operation and assistance which have been so freely extended by the responsible organisations of builders.

I propose to deal in the first place with the matter of building materials and in the second place with the question of controls. Up to the end of last year no great concern was expressed as to the shortage of building materials. There was always a pressure from the housing programme and building generally on available supplies of materials. That is inevitable at a time when a big volume of arrears of building has to be made up after a great war, and it is going to be a feature of our economy for many years to come; because in addition to the arrears caused by the war, the Commonwealth Government's policy of a 20-year migration programme is going to mean that housing accommodation and other ancillary buildings such as schools and hospitals will press on available materials supplies for some time. That is healthy in one sense in a developing economy and a developing State.

I do not question the firm policy of the Commonwealth Government in bringing in migrants—a policy declared to be vital to the security of Australia. But, as the member for Swan suggested a moment ago, we must bear in mind the unexpected impact that that migration policy is having on the building problems of the various States. In this State, in the present calendar year, the expected arrivals of British migrants and displaced persons will total about 10,000 souls; men, women and children. In a State such as ours, that is no small accretion of population to be absorbed in one year. However, I do not for a moment challenge the urgent necessity behind the Commonwealth Government's immigration policy, in respect of which Mr. Chifley said—in a broadcast—that it is no use going without population in order to be able to have a better claim on the houses that are available, if before long people from some other country are to occupy those houses.

Broadly speaking, up to the end of last year the materials position was in a condition of scarcity, viewed from the stand-

point of equilibrium between supply and demand, though it was not as stringent then as it is today. Since the end of last year certain things have happened. Firstly we must bear in mind that between December last and the end of March there was a series of power breakdowns and the interruption to the production of building materials was severe, especially when superimposed on the usual experience of the first quarter of the year—namely, the three weeks' holiday taken in the building industry and other holidays at the beginning of the year in various industries concerned with the production of building materials.

Mr. Graham: This sounds like an apology—making excuses.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Inescapable facts are not excuses.

Mr. Graham: There were a few inescapable facts before you became a member of the Government.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I wish those facts were not there, but I am bound to tell the House that they were there.

Mr. Graham: You would not accept any of them in 1947.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I think the Minister will agree that they were there in 1947.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Undoubtedly there were some interruptions in 1947.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The war was a rather serious interruption.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I have said that it was a very serious interruption. However, the interruptions that took place in the first quarter of this year were of unprecedented length and caused great disturbance of industry. The power supply breakdowns placed a severe limitation on the production of building materials, and those difficulties have continued into the second quarter of the year. Other factors also have been involved—such as 50 badly needed locomotives having had to be put to carting water, owing to the extraordinarily dry season, and the fact that from that and other causes there has been a large accumulation of timber supplies at some of the country mills. At the Pemberton mill alone there is something like 700 loads of timber that has been there for a consider-

able period waiting transport by rail to the areas of consumption. Those are the facts relating to the first half of this year and the reasons why stringency developed during that period. It is, however, reasonably to be expected that as the year advances the stringency will be minimised, and I will tell the House the reason why that is so.

I think the Leader of the Opposition, who was Minister for Forests, will agree with me in this: Western Australia built up its timber industry on an export basis. The mills were built to cater for the export trade and were constructed to produce the sizes of timber required for that trade. That has been going on through the decades during which the industry has been built up to its present proportions. In the five years preceding June, 1939, this State retained for its own use 54 per cent. of its production and 46 per cent. was exported interstate or overseas. Those who have been associated with the timber trade will know it is a fact that, had it not been for the export trade, the mills would not have been able to carry on except on a restricted scale, and nearly half of the employees engaged in the industry pre-war would have lost their employment. It is also a fact that, so far from undervaluing the export markets of the timber industry, the general manager of the State Saw Mills, Mr. Sinclair, was sent to South Africa by the then Government in the early nineteen-thirties to try to build up a market there for exports of Western Australian timber in order to keep production going and to maintain employment in the industry.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: We have not that problem now. We could ourselves use all the timber that is being exported.

Mr. Reynolds: And a lot more, too.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: We have other problems, too, and I will deal with them if the hon. member gives me time. When the war came, the control of timber was assumed by the Commonwealth and the first Commonwealth Controller of Timber was Mr. Kessell, from this State. The procedure was that the Commonwealth Controller of Timber every half year met the representatives of the industries in the several States, and arranged a programme for the ensuing six months, which gave the outlines of the

quotas for consumption inside the State and that which was to be sent interstate and overseas. The way that programme is observed, and as to which there is some degree of influence or control, is that the Commonwealth retains power to allow or refuse exports of timber. That is under the Constitution. In arranging these quotas, the Commonwealth Controller of Timber can say to sawmillers in each State, "You may be allowed a certain quota for export overseas, provided you agree to the Commonwealth's quotas for consumption inside the States and exports to other States."

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There is a proviso that the State's requirements are to be met.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:

There is a proviso that the State's requirements should be met, and also another proviso, in the Commonwealth view, that the true interests of the States should be observed. That being so, as the Leader of the Opposition will remember, in the early days of the war it was agreed in conferences with Mr. Kessell and the State Government that the export trade should be continued, as it was of value to the State. In the Government of the Leader of the Opposition, at similar conferences, the Commonwealth Controller then being Mr. Roger, the same principle was laid down; that the export trade was of value to the State and every endeavour should be made to maintain it and not lose it. I think that was very proper. However, I want to say this—and I am not going into undue detail because I think I shall have an opportunity before long of saying something about the export of timber—that this Government, which has been in office for over two years, came into office and found—and I do not quarrel with it—a policy laid down by preceding Governments, one after another, where the export trade was considered to be of value to the economy of the State and there should be exports to maintain that overseas trade. This was a traditional policy on which the State's economy in the timber industry had been built.

Mr. Reynolds: You handled a mammoth building programme then!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There was not the same large programme being carried through at that stage.

Mr. Reynolds: We did not have the operatives then.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: But that went on right up to 1946 and 1947. A programme for the first half of 1946-47 was determined before this Government came into office.

Mr. Marshall: But we had no men to use timber in those days; the war was on.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I know something else that was determined before this Government came into office.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The war was over in 1946-47, and so this Government came in and found this traditional and settled policy. I want to emphasise this because it is only fair to the industry and the people engaged in it that they should not be repudiated by this Parliament or by any Government in respect of a policy which had been endorsed by Governments successively over the years and in which they had been encouraged.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: When the present Government assumed office, the programme for export interstate and overseas had been determined by the preceding Government up to the 30th June, 1947. But there was more to it than that because, in the case of trade both overseas and interstate, merchants make their contracts for supplies and for freight, as well as other arrangements, many months ahead, and on the policy which had been followed by preceding Governments and which had been the basis of the timber industry in this State, merchants and sawmillers had made their arrangements to a certain extent for the financial year 1947-48.

It was not possible or desirable that any attempt should be made to force merchants to break contracts and commit a breach of faith with buyers and consumers in other countries and other States, who were depending upon receiving the supplies expected from us. Subject to these commitments and to the established practice, which, as I have said, had to a large degree an application in the financial year 1947-48, the Government took steps with a view to retaining a larger proportion of timber in this State to meet the expanding needs of our building programme, particularly housing.

Mr. Hoar: What about the overseas market? When are those contracts made?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Overseas contracts are commonly made a considerable time beforehand. When the financial year 1948-49 was approaching and some influence could be exercised in relation to supplies to be exported, the matter was taken up with the sawmillers and, in a series of conferences dealing with the needs of the State, the sawmillers, co-operating in a way for which they deserve a measure of credit, shaded down their exports overseas and interstate in the interests of a larger proportion of the production being retained for the State's needs.

The way in which that policy, followed by the present Government, had its effects will be shown in figures which I propose to read to the House and which were supplied to me by Mr. Gregson, who has been referred to in this debate, formerly of the Forests Department but now statistical officer of the Sawmillers' Association, a man who I think has an unrivalled knowledge of the industry. Other figures which I obtained from Forests Department sources are slightly different, but I think that, in view of Mr. Gregson's intimate knowledge of the trade, his figures are the ones I should give to the House.

For the five pre-war years up to June, 1939, the average production per month kept in the State for our own needs was 8,869 loads. During the six war years up to June, 1945, the average production per month kept in the State was 7,608 loads. From those war years the quantity retained in the State has increased on a monthly average to 11,240 loads, which is the estimated figure for the financial year ending the 30th of this month.

Mr. Hoar: Are you comparing post-war years with the war years?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No, I am comparing the six-year period up to June, 1945.

Mr. Hoar: That was the war period.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Let me refer to the financial year 1945-46, when the loads per month retained in the State totalled 7,697.

Mr. Hoar: We had only just got over the war then.

Mr. Reynolds: We had not got over the war then.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Not quite. Then we pass on to the succeeding year, 1946-47, when the monthly average was 9,067 loads and 1947-48 when the figure was 9,892 loads. In the current financial year just about to end the total has sprung to 11,240 loads. For the financial year commencing on the 1st of next month, the estimated proportion of production that will be retained in the State exceeds 12,000 loads per month. Thus we find that the quantity retained in the State for local use rose from 7,697 loads a month in 1945-46 to something over 12,000 loads estimated for the year about to commence.

Mr. Reynolds: How many homes shall we build in that period?

Hon. A. H. Panton: How much was really produced?

Mr. Hoar: How does the figure of 12,000 loads compare with the local consumption in 1937-38?

The Premier: This is not question time.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not mind answering the hon. member. The average local consumption during the five years preceding the war, that is, to June, 1939, per month was 8,869 loads. The quantity which it is proposed to retain during the financial year about to start will be between 12,000 and 13,000 loads per month.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Will you be tabling that schedule?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: With pleasure.

Hon. A. H. Panton: No wonder it is said that figures will prove anything!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Subject to the commitments involved by the settled policy of the timber industry, as endorsed by preceding Governments—I am not raising any question, Mr. Speaker; I say reasonably endorsed—the present Government took up with the industry the matter of retaining more timber in the State, less being sent overseas and to the other States. I might refer to the figures. The average for the five pre-war years was 60.7 per cent. retained in the State in sawn timber—I am excluding sleepers. For the current financial year, the year just about to end, that 60.7 per cent. has risen to 77.5 per cent.; and, under special arrangements made with the sawmillers for the three months ending

the 30th September, being a period during which we think there will be a certain stringency for the reasons I have mentioned, the quantity retained in the State will be 80.9 per cent. of the timber produced.

Mr. Reynolds: You have forgotten to mention that before the war production was over 54 per cent. more than it was last year, which makes all the difference.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: What I am quoting is the number of loads which have been retained in the State for local consumption. Pre-war, 23.2 per cent. of the production of sawn timber was sent overseas. During the war that percentage fell to 9 per cent., a much larger quantity being sent intra-State during the war years than pre-war.

Mr. Hoar: I should like to have a look at those figures.

Mr. Reynolds: So should I.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I shall be very pleased to let members see them.

Mr. Hoar: They prove Mr. Mattiske to be wrong.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: These figures are from Mr. Gregson, of the Sawmillers' Association. The average of our production of sawn timber sent overseas during the five years preceding the war was 23.2 per cent.; during the war it fell to 9 per cent.; in 1945-46 it fell to 6.5 per cent. and then it rose to 11.8 per cent. The figure for the current year, which is about to expire, is 5.4 per cent. In one year, from 1947-48 to 1948-49, the percentage of sawn timber sent overseas has been cut by more than half. That is what I wish to say, in order that we may get a true perspective of this matter of timber exports. The figures supplied to me by Mr. Gregson show that during the current year the percentage of sawn timber exported overseas is 5.4 per cent.

Mr. Hoar: Those are entirely different figures from what you gave me the other night.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No, they are entirely the same, as I shall show.

Mr. Hoar: There has only been a reduction of 3,000 loads, according to your own figures.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: When we come to talk about a class of timber—and as the hon. member knows there are two main classes, sleepers and sawn timber, and both are exported—the oversea exports of sleepers and sawn timber during the five pre-war years were 32.8 per cent. This figure fell during 1945-46 to 7.7 per cent.; it rose in 1947-48 to 14.7 per cent., and the estimated total export oversea of sleepers and sawn timber for the current financial year, which is about to end, is 10.4 per cent.

Mr. Hoar: It just shows what figures can do!

Mr. Reynolds: That is the point, what they can be made to do!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I take it very hard that the member for Forrest is talking about what figures can do, because I have supplied him today with three tables of figures; and in respect of one table, it took the Assistant Conservator of Forests the whole day to prepare the answers to the hon. member's questions.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It depends on the shape of them.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I venture to say that when the hon. member addresses himself again to the House on a motion which he has on the notice paper, I shall be very surprised if there is a complete absence of figures.

Mr. Reynolds: There will not be.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Do not talk to me about figures! What I desire to say is that, whereas pre-war 54 per cent. of our production was kept inside the State, that figure rose to 70.7 per cent. for the financial year ending on the 30th of this month. In its two years of office, this Government has paid attention to the expanding need of timber for the State's requirements, and the proportion kept inside our State has been substantially increased, with a corresponding reduction of the amount going oversea and interstate. I am not going to deal in more detail with this matter of exports of timber because I do not want to say now what I shall need to say on a subsequent motion.

Mr. Hoar: There is one thing I would like to know. Are you satisfied with the quantity of timber exported oversea today?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: For reasons which I need not advance here, because I will be dealing with them on a later occasion, there are strong grounds for some percentage of export oversea to retain markets which this State has held for many decades and which may be needed again. When the time comes to discuss this matter on the motion which is on the notice paper I will give members some information as to the situation regarding our possible need for exports in the future which, so far as I am concerned, I have not felt myself able to ignore so far. I think that, when the matter is discussed, members may also feel that the export markets built up for this State over so many years—through the whole history of the industry—are not going to be wiped off the slate without some very careful consideration if we are to have an industry with the amount of vitality and maintaining in it that employment of which it should be capable in future years.

Mr. Marshall: Do you not think our hardwoods are indispensable to the buyers?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No.

Mr. Marshall: I do.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: At the present time imported oregon, I am informed, is entering South Australia at a price competitive with our karri exports to South Australia. That is factual; I have not invented it.

Mr. Marshall: It may only be on account of the great demand at the present time.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Mr. Beasley, the High Commissioner for Australia in England, passed through this State only two or three weeks ago, and, according to the Press, told the Australian people that world markets are daily becoming more competitive and advised them to get out after their markets, telling them that they would need propaganda and advertisement if they were to retain and extend markets outside of Australia.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: We will have no hard timber to sell after 30 years.

Mr. Reynolds: Less than that.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No. The forestry plans as laid down under the 1919 Act, are based upon a cutting equal to re-growth. The hon. member knows, from his experience in the Ministry, that that is the basis of the forestry programme

of our State: that there shall be a permanent crop in which the annual cutting regulated to a certain figure is equated by the extent of re-growth. That is the whole basis of forestry policy in this State, and at present the amount of timber being cut is not equal to the cut permitted under the forestry programme.

Mr. Hoar: You do not have to worry about competition. You can sell all the timber in Australia.

Mr. Graham: For the next 20 years.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: We may.

Mr. Hoar: You can.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not want to argue this point now for the reasons I have mentioned, but would prefer the House to allow me to await the specific motion on the notice paper as to stopping all exports oversea and cutting interstate exports by half, because that is the direct issue. I would like to say, however, that I approach this matter with no bias at all. I do approach it, as I am sure other members will, with a full sense of responsibility in the matter of reversing the policy, thus overthrowing the foundations of the industry, which has obtained since it first started. I think the first export from Western Australia was our hardwood timber—the very first export—and when the matter comes before them on the motion on the notice paper, members will form their own opinions. I respectfully ask, however, that judgment might be reserved until I tell them, from such information as I have, what will be the consequences of a complete cessation of exports and whether those consequences will be in the true interests of the economy of the State.

I want to say a word or two more about timber, because it is a matter of great importance. A certain amount of timber goes interstate by way of export. That cannot be stopped. Under Section 92 of the Constitution, trade and commerce between the States are free and neither the Commonwealth Government nor the State Government has any constitutional power to forbid such interstate trade. Although the major sawmills, which are members of the Sawmillers' Association, are responsible for something like 77 per cent. of the total production of timber in our State—and

they are the people, being organised, with whom departments and Governments may hold conversations and with whom programmes may be arranged—the other 23 per cent. of the production comes from some 300 odd small mills. That is something the policing of which would be very difficult. A considerable quantity of the timber that goes interstate is cut on private land over which, as the member for Nelson knows, the Forests Department has no jurisdiction.

Until recently there was at Port Kembla in New South Wales, 3,900 tons of steel which had been earmarked for this State. Part of that was galvanised iron and piping and other commodities very greatly needed in this State. Owing to the industrial troubles which have recently occurred through shipping being dislocated, that steel was not taken and has now been dispersed to meet the needs of the people of New South Wales. It will no doubt be represented to the Broken Hill Proprietary Company and other firms and to the Government of New South Wales that a certain proportion of the output of New South Wales should be sent to Western Australia to meet our urgent requirements. But if we are to adopt that policy in regard to New South Wales it is not altogether easy for us to say to South Australia, which has no hardwoods and is desperately in need of timber, "We propose to retain all our timber for ourselves and are not prepared to help you." If there is to be a policy of self-determination between the States and each says, "We shall keep all our production for ourselves, regardless of the others' wants," then this State, because steel is the basis of production, would come off worst of all.

I invite members to consider how some degree of reciprocity, where we can help even with some difficulty, may be something not only desirable in relations between States, but something which is likely to be of greater protection to us than to some of the other States. I said just now that there had been reasons for the stringency in the supplies of building materials which had occurred in the first six months of the year, but had not been apparent to anything like the same extent prior to that. I said also, I think, that I was informed that the stringency should be eased. It

may not be wise to take precipitate measures, in respect to a condition which may soon be solved substantially in the ordinary way. I am advised by the Assistant Conservator of Forests, Mr. Shedley, that inside the next six months, six new saw-mills, including one mill which was burnt by fire and is being re-established, should come into production.

Mr. Hoar: Where do you propose to get the men?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: About a fortnight ago, 900 displaced persons arrived in this State.

Mr. Hoar: They have never seen a saw-mill.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Of that number, a considerable proportion is going into the timber industry. The number of displaced persons to arrive in Western Australia in the current financial year, 1949, will be roughly 6,000, and they will be continually coming. While these men, as the member for Nelson would rightly say, lack experience, I think they will represent to a large extent the reserve of manpower needed for these mills.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I think they are going to call them "New Australians" and not "displaced persons."

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I think that is right, and that it is a much better term.

Hon. A. H. Panton: So do I.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: In addition, a new mill will be coming into production this week or next week at Wundowie. With the aid of additional forest territory, which is being made available for that mill, the production, which is now between 30 and 50 loads a week, will be stepped up to 125 loads a week straight away. I am informed by Mr. Shedley—I refer to him because I must to a large extent accept the assurances of my departmental heads—that by the end of this year the timber position should be very substantially improved.

In addition, the Government has already requested Mr. Shedley to act as Co-ordinator of Timber Supplies, and he has entered on that task. His duties include means of expanding production. He is at present examining the various avenues into which

timber supplies go, with a view to eliminating any uses which are not essential; and generally, his duties will be to ensure as far as possible that increased supplies will be available, and more readily available for industry. What I desire to say finally on the timber question is that fairly effective steps have been taken to reduce exports, to increase home consumption figures, to expand production, and to ensure that the stringency which has obtained will, I hope, in a few months be no longer of the degree of urgency that it was, for the reasons I have mentioned, earlier this year.

I turn now to the matter of bricks. I will deal with the broad question of control at the end of my remarks. I want to say that in March we were, as I have said, producing 102 per cent. in bricks compared with pre-war production. The number of brickyards had increased from one brickyard in wartime, working half time, to 23 brickyards. While there has been a diminution of a serious nature in the output of bricks in the first half of this year—

Mr. Marshall: And the quality.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: And the quality, due to power supplies being interrupted, the brick production is now getting back to its normal figures. The Government established last year a sub-department or division of the Department of Industrial Development, under the Assistant Director, Mr. Temby, charged with the duty of expanding the production of building materials. The sub-department has been doing good work in the brick industry. Some six brickyards have been assisted financially and many have received technical advice. Brickyards are now being helped with mechanisation in order to improve their output. While it will take time for new brickyards to get into operation under existing conditions, certain of the present brickyards should be able to expand their production to an appreciable degree in the next few months. As to the State brickyards, I regret that their condition did not receive attention long ago. For years it has been known that the State brickyards installation was obsolete, and its life a matter of a very few years. But nothing was done until

the present Government, in its first year, authorised a new installation to take the place of that which was falling to pieces. Without going into details, I would say that certain machinery has already been ordered.

I told the House that unfortunately the manager of the brickyards, Mr. Kitching, who was sent to England at the end of 1947 to get new machinery, died while abroad. We had to get a new man, and we obtained one from England. No charge can be made against the present Government of any lack of energy or enterprise in doing something that should have been done years before. Last month the State Housing Commission instructed some of its inspectors to make a survey of bricks in the metropolitan area, with the idea of discovering the extent to which bricks might be going to unessential uses or accumulating to an undesirable extent. The result of that survey, as reported to the Commission, was that there was no such accumulation or misuse of bricks as could be regarded as abnormal or calling for any special measures.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: How many men were engaged on the task, and for how long?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not know how many men were engaged, but I think the time occupied by the survey was about two weeks. However, I cannot commit myself in that regard.

Mr. May: How many brick companies went out of production in the last 12 months?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The brick industry is not attractive and is not a money-making industry.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It is very hard work.

Mr. May: That does not answer my question.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Some brickyards—especially country yards—that ceased operations for a while have been brought back into production. They were brought into operation again in some, if not in all, cases through the efforts of the Building Materials Division of the Department of Industrial Development. The Coolgardie brickyard stopped work and is about

to recommence, if it has not already done so, and other yards have come or are coming back into production.

Mr. May: What about Busselton?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The Busselton brickyard has stopped work.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What has the member for Sussex to say about it?

Mr. Reynolds: Can the Minister tell us why pressed bricks from the State Brickworks are costing £6 per thousand while wire-cut bricks, which are inferior, cost £7 per thousand?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Bricks are like many other things; if you have a well mechanised organisation with a mass output, you have lower costs. The two low-cost brickworks in the State are the State Brickworks, producing pressed bricks, and the Metropolitan Brickworks, at Maylands, producing wire-cut bricks. The metropolitan works can produce bricks as cheaply as can anyone else in the State because it is an organised and long-established yard, with a large output. The small producer, turning out perhaps 50,000 bricks per month, largely by manual means, finds the cost factor a serious difficulty.

Mr. Styants: Did you say the State Brickworks were turning bricks out cheaply?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes.

Mr. Styants: I thought you said the State Brickworks were obsolete and falling to pieces.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is on its last legs. The machinery is turning out bricks satisfactorily, but will not last much longer. I was told it will last another two years, though it may last a bit longer than that.

Mr. Reynolds: Was not brick production stepped up considerably last month at Byford?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Our cement supply is also a matter of some difficulty. I told the House of steps that are being taken by the Swan Portland Cement Co. to increase production, and of the extent to which imports have been arranged from overseas, and I do not propose to recapitulate all that. I took up with officials of the State Housing Commission—and through them with the cement people—the

question of the use of cement in kerbing. I raised that matter also with officers of the Main Roads Board, who in some cases have put cement into kerbing. The assurance I received was that the quantity of cement used in that way was such an infinitesimal fraction of the total volume involved that it was not worth while taking special measures on that account. Whether we have controls or not, we cannot well escape some degree of use of cement for purposes that are not strictly essential. We have to weigh that against the advantages or disadvantages of control, and I will come to that matter later.

We are dependent on New South Wales for steel products and the industrial troubles that have occurred as an almost chronic feature of the coalfields—which are the basis of steel production—have for years past brought about a condition of extreme stringency in our supplies of steel, including galvanized iron and piping and other necessary commodities. I am advised, and think I should tell the House, that the present industrial troubles are going to bring this State into a position of great difficulty as regards supplies of steel products. The two chief firms at Newcastle, Stewarts and Lloyds and Lysaght's, had to cease production some time ago. I do not know how long it will be before the blast furnaces at Broken Hill can get into production again, but I believe that process takes about three months under normal conditions. Anyone's guess is as good a mine as to how long it will be before the fabricators of galvanized iron and piping are able to obtain supplies with which to resume production for this State. These conditions have had a severely limiting effect on the housing and building programme of Western Australia generally, of late, and the effect will be accentuated—whatever happens—for some months to come.

Mr. Reynolds: Thank goodness for Wundowie, and the pig-iron industry!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I think Wundowie is making a contribution of great importance.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It's wonderful to see how people learn!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: To meet this position, the Government is importing steel at considerable cost. We cannot weigh cost against the requirements

of the State at present. Steel products are controlled and their distribution will continue to be controlled. With steel—unlike timber—I cannot foresee any substantial easement of the position within a comparatively short time. We have to realise, and I know members do realise, that the housing programme of this State has shown a very great expansion. Whether that is anybody's fault, or to somebody's credit, I am not going to argue. However, as against a normal output of some 2,000 houses pre-war in this financial year about to end, we should complete, in this State, not less than 3,200 homes. That is 60 per cent. above the pre-war rate. As compared with pre-war days the population of our State has increased by only 12 per cent. and there has been no great increase in the number of our building operatives or people engaged in our building industries. With a population increase of 12 per cent. and a housing increase of 60 per cent. for the current financial year, it is no small achievement.

Mr. Styants: Cold comfort for those who are living under very poor circumstances.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Admittedly, but as one member said just now, and very truly, there was a diminution of house building during the war. Members have taken some time when speaking on this subject and I trust that I may be forgiven for taking some little time myself in replying, but the magnitude of the housing problem, emphasised by the Commonwealth Government's migration policy, is something which should be borne in mind.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I do not think anyone doubts that.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The Commonwealth Government, headed by Mr. Curtin, appointed a Housing Commission to inquire into housing in the Commonwealth. This Commission made its report at the end of 1944 and reported that by January, 1945, there would be, in its opinion, a shortage of not less than 300,000 houses in Australia, including the replacement of substandard and slum dwellings. On that figure, on a population basis, there would be a shortage of 20,000

houses in Western Australia. Those figures do not take into account the migration programme. The Royal Commission of 1944 went on to say that by the end of 1955, in order to meet arrears of housing during the war years, as well as replacements for slums and substandard houses, at least 700,000 dwelling units would be required for Australia. That is up to the end of 1955 and on a population proportion it would mean that some 46,000 dwelling units will be needed in Western Australia. That includes, of course, replacements to substandard dwellings and things of that nature and would give people good housing accommodation. From those figures it will be realised that the housing problem, for all States, is one of no small magnitude.

The fact remains that in the year about to end, in this State, we have met our normal annual requirements and reduced our arrears by from 1,200 to 1,400 houses. Whether the list of applications is doubled or trebled, the fact remains that we have reduced by more than 1,000 the arrears of homes that confronted this State at the end of the war years.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I cannot follow that point. The figures do not add up.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The Economic Research Officer of the Treasury estimated last year that the normal annual requirements of the State would be 1,800 homes a year.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: What is the good of talking about normal annual requirements in an abnormal period?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The normal annual requirements are arrived at after consideration of relative marriages, births, deaths and other factors which statisticians, by experience, have found to be relevant when one considers the normal housing requirements of a community. Last year Mr. Lancaster considered that about 1,800 dwellings would be, for the time being, the normal requirements of Western Australia. I would put that a little higher especially as we have migrants coming into the State. If we take a programme of completed houses for the current financial year just about to end of about 3,200 homes, and we deduct

from that what we may take to be our normal annual requirements, the balance leaves the extent to which we are overtaking our arrears.

The member for East Perth has asked some questions about the number of applications now before the Commission and I have pleasure in giving him some answers. When the war ended it was known that a responsibility rested on the State to meet the needs of those who were in the greatest distress with their housing problems. Many people did not apply for a permit to build or for a rental home because they knew that they did not have any chance of being successful. However, as time has gone on and they have seen the number of homes springing up all round the place—as can be seen by anybody with eyes—they have decided that it is time to come in for their turn and they are doing so in increasing numbers. People are applying now for permits to build even though they are not unreasonably housed, but they have wished to build a house of their own for many years and perhaps on blocks that they bought years ago. They feel that the time has come when they might just as well put in their applications for permits to build, and in the course of time they may realise their ambitions to build houses of their own and to designs of their own.

Mr. Graham: If all the people in that category applied there would not be a waiting list of 21,000 but a waiting list of nearer 50,000.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I think that the hon. member has some measure of truth on his side, and there are still many people who have not applied because they feel that their chances are not too good for some time to come.

Mr. Styants: I think the cost is deterring a good many, too.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The remark of the member for Kalgoorlie brings me to an important aspect, and again I may be pardoned if I refer, as briefly as I can, to the implications of a very great social experiment in Australia in the Commonwealth-State rental housing scheme, a measure of housing which has not been adopted on quite the same lines, I believe, in any other country. The Commonwealth-State rental house has one or two remark-

able features under the agreement which this Parliament ratified in 1945. Firstly, the houses, although small, aim to give a standard of comfort in keeping with the aspirations of an advanced community. Secondly, any tenant who pays his rent and is a reasonably good tenant, has security of tenure to a very large degree, nearly comparable with that of an owner. Thirdly—and this is most important—he is not compelled to pay in rent at any time more than one-fifth of the family income coming into the home. That family income is not the total income inasmuch as it is a certain percentage of the incomes of inmates other than the head of the house. If his family income falls he can remain there on a rental as low as eight shillings a week although his house may have cost £1,500 without the land.

As the member for Kalgoorlie said, with rising costs—as to which I will say a word later—in this State we have built 50 per cent. more rental homes in proportion to population than any other State. In Western Australia people have become what I might call rental-house minded and sooner than build themselves, at costs which have been rising, they are now saying to themselves increasingly, “I am putting in for a rental home”, with practically all the advantages of ownership, in fact, with even more advantages because the purchasing owner has to pay his fixed instalment, whereas the rental tenant still has the protection of the family income provision. So it is not something to be surprised at if it is found that more and more people are turning from any idea of building themselves to the idea of taking one of those attractive rental homes which they see being built all over the place. And, bearing in mind the figures I quoted from the report of the Commonwealth Royal Commissioner on Housing as to the housing needs of the different States, including our own State, and that people are increasingly anxious to leave substandard houses to get into better houses and, bearing in mind that we have a migrant population now coming into the field to ask for the same rights as other Australians have, that is, to get houses, there is nothing to surprise one that the number of people seeking new houses has grown steadily and will continue to grow steadily.

But what has also to be borne in mind is that a considerable proportion of these applicants would be not unreasonably housed now. I would like to tell the House that last year the Economic Research Officer, in a report to the Housing Commission, then estimated that the number of people who were in need of houses in this State because they were unsatisfactorily or badly housed, was 8,000. That was the figure he put down as the target at that time to take into better conditions those who could be said to be badly or unsatisfactorily housed. I have arranged with Mr. Lancaster to make a further investigation to try to arrive at a determination, under existing conditions, as to what the real need is today in this State to re-house those who are badly housed.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That would be a guess rather than an estimate.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: What is done is this: It is familiar with economists and statisticians. They take a test sample. They send out inspectors to take a sample of, say, five per cent. in different areas, by inspection, and if they take a fairly good cross-section, like any Gallup poll—

Hon. A. H. Panton: I hope it will be better than the poll on the election of the American President.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That was not so bad, but they have been better. Like any Gallup poll—

Mr. Styants: What percentage do they regard to be in need of homes?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I looked that up once but I am not going to rely now on my recollection. However, the statisticians take into account marriages and, of course, deaths. Certain other factors are also considered and from those the statisticians have a formula, tested out over many years, which they consider gives them a fairly good measure of a community's annual needs for normal housing.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Why, there would be more than 8,000 substandard houses for a start; very much substandard, too.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I would not say that in this State at all.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It is true.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I know that in this State we are not so badly placed as in some other States and, though I agree with the hon. member that they may not be satisfactory, yet from the point of view of accommodation, health and some degree of comfort, they are habitably housed.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: A tent could be healthy, if that is the only consideration.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: A tent can be healthy, but we are getting beyond the tent days when our pioneers arrived here. I said just now that the annual building rate had increased from 2,120 in 1946-47 to 4,020 to the last quarter of last year, which was a peak figure too high to be maintained, and the building rate for the first quarter of this year was 2,300.

Mr. Graham: Do you think that is very satisfying to those who are in dire need of houses?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: If I were in need of a house nothing would satisfy me more than to know that the building rate was proceeding to meet normal requirements and overtaking arrears.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: And to be told that you are 9,260 on the priority list and your application would be dealt with in two or three years' time.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Is not that the test of a good programme; that current requirements are being met and arrears are being overtaken?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: But you are not meeting those requirements; you are falling behind to the extent of about 40 a month.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Not at all.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is the answer you gave me.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There is bound to be an increase in rental homes because people who were previously seeking building permits are now seeking rental homes. Bearing in mind the annual requirements as nearly as we can estimate them, and bearing in mind that the total number of houses in this State is approximately 130,000—not 100,000,000—the inescapable fact is that on the best advice we can get and upon obvious commonsense, we are meeting annual requirements and at the present time are reducing our arrears by something exceeding 1,000 houses a year.

Mr. Graham: Tommy rot!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is the sort of remark the hon. member would make. Those figures are not challengeable.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Surely you will agree that, if the number of applications coming forward where hardship is admitted is exceeding the number of houses being provided, the department must be falling behind, not getting ahead! That is commonsense.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not agree. I think that, as time goes on and houses become older, more people will establish hardship, but if it is accepted, as it must be, that we have an annual normal requirement which, pre-war, was 2,000 houses a year or thereabouts and we are now building 3,000 or more a year, we are building in excess of annual normal requirements and reducing arrears.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That will not bear analysis.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I shall not say that that is one of my strong points, because all my points are strong. The Government has achieved all that any Government could have achieved in housing. Last year, on a survey being made for the Housing Commission, the estimate was that the labour force in this State was capable of building 2,700 houses a year.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Then how has it built 3,200?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I shall come to that.

Hon. A. H. Panton: By working 40 hours a week.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The number of houses that can be built is conditioned by a number of factors, one of which is the number of tradesmen in the industry. There are ratios that are quite well understood as to how many houses can be normally obtained from a given number of tradesmen. Amongst other factors is the supply of the necessary building materials. The survey made for the Housing Commission last year indicated that the then body of building tradesmen represented a building rate of about 2,700 houses a year. Prior to the present Government's taking office, only one class of house was built, namely, the two or three-bedroom house. Otherwise people received a permit

—if they could get one—with only one limitation, namely, that they could not build other than the sort of house suited for a normal family either in size, or cost.

At the beginning of last year it was realised by the Commission and the Government that, with the limitations of the building force and, material supplies, some imagination would be needed if we were going to expand the building rate. From the beginning of last year, and even before that, there commenced the variations of technique with which members are familiar. These included the duplex house, which saves material and about £50 per dwelling-unit in cost. For the current year the Commission authorised the erection of structures by private builders to accommodate up to 100 flats for families of smaller type, in addition to which it is building a couple of flats of its own. Further, the Commission developed the idea of the expansible house because, obviously, a great many people with two, three or even four in a family could occupy a small house for the time being to which additions could be made later.

If we can get five small houses for the expenditure of the same material and labour as for three of the other class, we get an addition to our building programme. Then there was developed the self-help scheme, because it was decided that there should be mobilised the latent and dynamic forces of the people. Under the self-help or owner-builder scheme, people were encouraged to get a permit for a small house, to which they could make their own contribution in building and labour. In many instances they had facilities for getting material by reason of the proximity of a spot mill in the country or from some other source.

Following the development of that technique, which I had found obtained in Queensland to the extent of 30 per cent. of its total dwellings being erected, owner-builders here in the fourth quarter of last year were building at a rate of 926 houses a year, whereas, two years before, they were building at the rate of 167 houses a year. I say with all the emphasis at my command that, by the exercise of some imagination by the Commission, in consultation with the Government, in spite of the limitations of manpower, which last year was capable of building only 2,700 houses a year, and by the use of various techniques, our building rate has been stepped up, and for the cur-

rent year about to end, we should build 3,200 houses, and this with no addition to our building force or population anywhere comparable with the increase in the production of houses.

Reference has been made to homes for two-unit families. Unfortunately I cannot deal with every point that has been raised by various members. When this Government took office, two-unit families had very nearly been written off. They had no chance of getting a permit to build.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They are written off now.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The only provision was that there could be an allowance of 10 permits per month for old or retired couples. I took out the statistics when I became Minister for Housing as to the proportion in the population of two- and three-unit families compared with four and more unit families; and after a consultation with the Commission last year, it decided in the way of permits to issue 50 per cent. to two and three-unit families, the remaining 50 per cent. to be issued to families of four and more units. Under that system many hundreds of people in the two- and three-unit category have, during the past 12 months, or less, received permits to build.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They can get the permits, but are they getting the materials to build?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: They are building, too. These younger couples, following the popularisation of the smaller house, are content to build a small house and they are doing so.

Hon. A. H. Panton: There is a couple living next door to me on a back verandah who have had an application in for 18 months to build one of those houses you are talking about, not an expansible house, but one they can build themselves.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The fact remains that that is the ratio directed. That the two and three-unit families between them shall get 50 per cent of the permits to build.

Mr. Marshall: All bachelors with their own homes should be obliged to take in a young couple.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I think the member for Murchison has a very nice flat in Malcolm-street.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He has the decency to blush now!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I pass now to a little talk about controls. I said last year, standing in this place, when I spoke about certain controls of distribution which had been removed, that I had in contemplation, or the Commission had in consultation with me, the removal of the control from timber. I also said that neither the Commission nor the Government would hesitate to reimpose controls if the public interest made it necessary. And I repeat that. The reason why controls were taken off certain materials, such as bricks, cement, paint and so on, was that advice had been obtained from all the people concerned in the building industry, or a number of them, and it was found that the trouble, time and vexation involved in going down to the Housing Commission and obtaining a permit for this lot of bricks for this house, this lot of cement for this job, and this lot of timber for this job—on the part of contractors in particular and, of course, owner-builders—were slowing down the building rate of the State. Contractors were so fed up that they were threatening to leave the industry because they could not spend their time trying to unravel so much red tape.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Is this an argument in favour of the Bill?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is as relevant to the Bill as the arguments to which I am replying.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Is it an argument in favour of or against the Bill?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: In favour of passing the Bill. The result was that after full consideration the Commission decided, having consulted the Government and myself, to remove these controls, with the reservation always that if the removal of the controls should be shown to be undesirable, they could at any time be reimposed.

Mr. Graham: Has not that shown itself?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The removal of controls has been a tremendous aid to those engaged in the building industry. Contractors and builders

have been saved an immense amount of time, worry and vexation, and have been able to get on with the job. I venture to say that while the absence of control can have some disadvantages, the removal of unnecessary and vexatious regulations and restrictions, which the Leader of the Opposition said made people bitter—and I think he said frustrated—is highly desirable. What is more, the people want it. They are getting tired of controls and I venture the opinion that the removal of the controls that were affected played not an unimportant part in the expansion of the building rate in this State.

I desire to add one more word about controls. I said just now that the Commission had set out to encourage people to supplement professional building labour by using their own labour to build modest homes in town and country under the self-help or owner-builder scheme. Those little houses are being erected in the territory of the member for Swan, in the South-West, in small towns and in outer suburbs, where a man with a caravan can be seen making his cement bricks to start building a home. I have discussed with the Commission and with other people the reimposition of controls of timber, cement, bricks and so on. These controls may still be reimposed, but so far I have hesitated, because if the small man who is prepared to build a home for himself has to go into town to get a permit for cement, for bricks, for timber, for nails and paint, and exhibit his permits to his supplier, he will be completely discouraged. Today the small men are building hundreds of homes a year.

Mr. Graham: Hundreds of brick fences and cement footpaths, too.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It comes to a matter of weighing up the pros and cons. I wish to see hundreds of people, under a permit, building their little homes themselves, with the help of their friends, making their cement bricks, and getting timber from a spot mill. I wish to encourage them to do so by the absence of red tape. I would rather do this than pick out half a dozen brick fences somewhere in the metropolitan area. But allow me to say that I am not dogmatic and this is under consideration by me and

the Commission. The Commission and I will be prepared to reimpose any control if, on the whole balance, we think that reimposition will better serve the public interest.

Mr. Hegney: The applicants for self-help homes have to get a permit from the Housing Commission.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes, and they are granted comparatively freely. They are encouraged to build the small type of house and are doing very good work.

Mr. Hegney: Some of them have to receive an eviction order before they can get a permit.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I am not going to start on eviction orders; that is a matter on which I may say something later. I have had a lot of questions about the prices of houses rising. Of course, the prices have risen and for three reasons, which represent almost the whole reason—the unpegging of wages, which did not take place until the present Government took over office, the 40-hour week, as to which the same remark applies, and the withdrawal of subsidies, particularly shipping freights and other subsidies which reflected themselves in the basic wage declaration last year.

Mr. Graham: And the "No" vote on the referendum.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: These are matters over which the State Government had no control.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Minister has left out the main reason—lost time.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The lost time is not of great materiality compared to those other factors.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You talk to the builders and see whether it is not!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Under conditions as they are and must be for some time, there is some loss of time in the building industry, in the parliamentary industry and every other industry.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Some builders have told me there are men working only half time in many instances.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Normally the builder has his permits arranged in front of him and he orders his materials two or three, or four or five, months before a job starts.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Yes, but he does not get the order.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: And he gets it.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Minister is showing that he does not know what the trouble is.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes, I know. I have had deputations from the building trades executive and will tell the hon. member that there is some time lost. I agree about that.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Now we are getting somewhere; that is a step forward.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I agree there is lost time, but I do not regard it as a feature of great consequence; nor do I regard it as something that can be very well avoided in a period when the building requirements must be pressing all the time on building material supplies. That is a condition that will continue, while the present migrant programme obtains, for some considerable time to come. Between 1939 and March, 1947, prices rose. A brick and tile house in 1939 cost approximately £56 a square, and in March, 1947, it cost £94 a square, a rise of something like 67 per cent. That rise has been going on since 1939. It has not been peculiar to the last two years, but it has been accentuated in the last two years by the unpegging of wages which occurred in wartime, by the Commonwealth regulations and by the other factors I have named.

The member for South Fremantle raised one case—the first one specifically mentioned—and I promised I would inquire into it. So many were raised later that I could not undertake to look into them; nor would I have had the time. But in view of the fact that I made the member for South Fremantle a promise that in my reply I would deal with the case he brought forward, I called for the file.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The member for South Fremantle is not here. He buried his sister today.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The last letter on the file from the person concerned—a lady—is dated the 15th May. It was written to the State Housing Commission secretary and reads as follows:—

Dear Sir,—Today Mr. Fox, M.L.A., called to see me about my application for a McNess home. I was very surprised as, following a suggestion by Mrs. Eichorn—

That is an inspectress of the Commission—

when she visited me some weeks ago, my parents have divided their house into two flats so that I now have a separate flat entirely to myself and three children. Knowing the long list of applications you have, I immediately cancelled my application, and now Mr. Fox's visit has made me doubt if my letter reached you. If such be the case, I would like to repeat my appreciation of the kindness, consideration and understanding I received from all I met in the department.

So that case seems to be one where the situation is all right. I would like to say one word before I conclude about conditions in those happy days of full control.

Mr. Reynolds: When will those days return?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: In 1943 there was a general election, and an advertisement by the then Leader of the Party now in Opposition, appearing in the "Westralian Worker," said—

The Post-war Housing Committee has recommended the building of 4,000 houses in each of the five years immediately after the war. The Government will operate a vigorous policy in connection with housing.

I think that would convey the possibility of building 4,000 houses a year immediately after the war. Those who read that advertisement would not have been very satisfied with the performances that did in fact follow the war. The building of 4,000 houses a year commencing immediately after the war is something that could not have been achieved by any Government in this State.

Mr. Nalder: That is where the cobwebs started.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is where there was too much cobweb.

Mr. Reynolds: There are still plenty of cobwebs.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The cobwebs have disappeared from housing. I turn now to the days of full control. Those were the days when paint and nails—except heavy nails—and bricks, cement, glass, steel

and timber were controlled. And here is a normal monthly report on materials to the Housing Commission in February, 1947. I am referring to the articles that have been particularly mentioned—

Bricks: Position most acute.

Cement: Production restricted during the whole of the month. Only one kiln in operation, and this also had to be restricted.

Galvanised iron: Position very acute in both plain and corrugated for housing.

Water piping: Still acute for all sizes.

Tiles, clay: Production still lagging behind demand. No immediate prospect of meeting full housing programme.

Tiles, cement: Demand in excess of production.

Timber: Flooring and joinery still in short supply. Scantling easy although deliveries restricted by insufficient rail transport.

Insufficient rail transport still obtains. Let me turn to the dilemma in which I refuse to be placed by some of the views expressed in this debate. The Housing Commission and the Government are charged with having ill-advisedly removed controls of certain building materials and with having failed to reimpose those controls, and we are criticised because there is too little control. Simultaneously—and I quote from "The West Australian" of the 18th January last; and the same views have been expressed repeatedly since in this State—the Federal Minister for Works and Housing, Mr. Lemmon, is reported as follows:—

The Minister for Works and Housing (Mr. Lemmon) said at Bridgetown today that he thought the time was ripe for housing permits to be abolished in country areas, particularly in the South-West. There were many young married men with initiative who could get their own timber and roofing materials, the latter in the form of cement tiles, and who could construct homes that would meet their requirements. This would serve to relieve the housing position and help decentralisation through the greater construction of homes in country districts.

The Minister said that he had been a strong advocate for permits in the immediate post-war years but he felt now that it was time that Western Australia came into line with the Eastern States in abolishing permits up to and around 11 squares, which would permit the construction of many two and three bedroom homes.

Now it is said there is not enough control. The Federal Minister for Works and Housing, who represents this State in the Commonwealth Parliament, said to the State Government, "Too much control." So, where

are we? What appeared there has appeared repeatedly in the Press in this State, and the last I heard was at a meeting of representatives of country municipal districts—a special conference—and I never heard one word from those who have spoken about the reimposing of controls in this House; not a whimper.

If I am compelled to choose between the different advice I receive, I think there is one man who is able to look at the overall position of the building programme throughout Australia and speak of it with some authority, and that is the Federal Minister for Works and Housing. He has told us that we are the only State, speaking broadly, that does not allow perfectly free building, without permits of any kind, up to 11 or 12 squares. A slightly different position obtains in South Australia. I am somewhat amazed that the member of the Labour Party most qualified to speak on housing in this State has advised the State Government to relax its controls, yet his colleagues in this House criticise the State Government for not putting on more controls.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: If you believe that, why bring in this Bill for a continuance?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Because the State Housing Commission and I, as Minister for Housing, feel that we must assume the responsibility, while paying due regard to the advice tendered by anyone whose advice is worth having, of making up our own minds.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You agree there is merit in some controls?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: We have followed a balanced programme of tapering-off controls when it could safely be done. We have maintained controls where we thought they should be maintained, and we have relaxed them where we thought we could safely do so for the time being. We have been tapering them off, particularly in self-help homes in country and suburban districts, in line with what has been suggested by the Federal Minister for Works and Housing, Mr. Lemmon, with whom personally, and with whose department, the Housing Commission in this State has been working with the utmost co-operation. In view of the advice tendered by that hon. gentleman, any criticism of the merit of the balanced policy of this Government,

in connection with controls, seems to me to have a very hollow sound. That Minister was good enough, according to a news notice sent to me by the A.B.C., to say over the air in this State on the 26th April last—about two months ago—the following:—

The Federal Minister for Works and Housing, Mr. Nelson Lemmon, said in Perth tonight that the effort of the State Housing Commission in Western Australia, in relation to population, was the best in the Commonwealth. Mr. Lemmon was speaking at a reception given by the State Executive of the Returned Servicemen's League.

The Housing Commission has sufficient confidence in its judgment—and I share that confidence because of my consultations with it—to form its own opinion as to what should be done. It is following a balanced programme in which it is to be stampeded neither by the right nor the left; nor by controllers or lack of controllers. I conclude by paying this tribute to the Commission, and I feel that the Government might legitimately be permitted to share in it, that during the last two years it has gained a very solid record of achievement in the expansion of the building programme in this State.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

DISCHARGE OF ORDER.

On motion by the Premier, the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia and Disposal of Public Documents Bill was discharged from the notice paper.

BILL—MENTAL INSTITUTION BENEFITS (COMMONWEALTH AND STATE AGREEMENT).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st June.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville) [9.20]: The purpose of this Bill is to ratify an agreement, between the Commonwealth Government and the State Government, in respect of the inmates of mental homes. It is proposed that the Commonwealth shall refund to the State Government a

sum of about £15,000 per annum or—from what I can gather from reading the Bill and what the Minister has said—about eightpence per patient per day. Of the two Governments one has agreed to give and the other to accept eightpence per head per day for the upkeep of persons committed to mental institutions, conditional on the means test being abolished with regard to such public institutions. Claremont is the biggest such establishment in this State and the other is Whitby, where I know there used to be about 30 elderly men. Claremont has the larger number of inmates and is the institution in respect of which the means test is to be abolished. I understand from the Minister that the total cost of these institutions is £190,000 odd per year, and we are to get a refund of £15,000. At present any estate of a person committed to Claremont is taken over and administered by the Public Trustee. Out of any such estate certain sums are provided—according to the size of the estate, I presume—for the upkeep of the person concerned while he or she is an inmate. The fact that the upkeep of these places is £190,000 per annum and that the State is to get a refund of only £15,000 shows that there are not a great number of inmates in a position to pay anything for their upkeep. As I have said, on condition that the State Government abolishes the means test in this regard, the Commonwealth Government is prepared to reimburse to the State the sum of £15,000.

Although the means test may be abolished, I think such estates will still be administered by the Public Trustee. If the estate is sufficiently big the money might be invested and earn interest, and in that way the total sum would be built up and the person committed to the institution would get nothing out of it whatever, while receiving free board at the cost of eightpence per day. In the end that person might die there and some relative—if any—who had paid nothing in the meantime and had probably done little for the inmate, would reap the benefit. I have no doubt that the inmates of these institutions are indeed a lost legion, but I do not see any great argument in favour of a relative inheriting such an estate in the circumstances.

During the eight years that I was Minister for Health, I do not think I came out of any institution sadder than I was each time I came out of the Claremont mental hospital. It is a terrible experience to go there and see the unfortunates, from babies to elderly men and women of all classes and conditions. The time has long gone by when Parliament and the whole people of Western Australia should have made a united effort to have the mentally sick treated the same as the physically sick, with regard to our social services. I would rather have seen the Minister bring down a Bill enabling the £15,000—small as the sum is—to be spent to provide amenities for these unfortunates. If a man goes into Sunset or a woman goes into the home for elderly women, they are able to draw the invalid or old age pension, and so much is deducted for their keep.

At Sunset an old man has about 15s. per week left out of his pension and, if he wishes, can buy any small comforts he desires either in the canteen or in town. Those who are unable to do that are looked after by the Superintendent, who purchases such things for them at the canteen. I do not think there should be any differentiation between the mentally sick person and the physically sick pensioner. Speaking on behalf of members of my Party, I say we would give the Minister all the assistance possible in an endeavour to get the Commonwealth Government to give the mentally sick the same recognition as is afforded to invalid pensioners. I think that is the method we should adopt, but I will not oppose the Bill, the purpose of which is to ratify the agreement. I have received a letter asking that the legislation be made retrospective to the date of the passing of the Act by the Commonwealth Government. I understood from reading the Minister's speech, that he received the agreement last March.

The Minister for Health: A draft.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The Bill was passed in the Commonwealth Parliament in November last, and I appreciate the fact that the Minister could not get his Bill here any more quickly than he has done, but it is rather strange that the Minister did not correct statements that have been made in other places, because that leads people astray. On occasions I have seen where-

questions have been asked in the Commonwealth Parliament by a Western Australian representative—I do not know exactly who it was at the moment—in regard to this matter.

The Commonwealth Minister, in reply, stated that the abolition of the means test would take place immediately the State Governments introduced and passed the legislation and intimated that it could have been done earlier. However, I have since found out that the legislation came into force federally only in November and that the Minister did not receive the draft of the agreement until March, and now we have the Bill before us. In that case the answers of the Commonwealth Minister were not as correct as they might have been.

I regret that the Bill does not aim at doing something better for the patients themselves. It will abolish the means test and in doing so relieve the estates of these people, and those estates will eventually be distributed or divided among people who have never given twopence worth of assistance towards the people in these institutions. I do not know how the Minister will do this, but I will leave him to work it out. If this State is to be relieved to the extent of £15,000 by the Commonwealth Government then some inquiry should be made through the Public Trustee, who has the money, as to just where the money is and who owns it, in order to try to have it utilised by way of amenities for the patients who after all really own the money.

These inmates undoubtedly belong to the lost legion and any man who goes through the building comes out with a broken heart. I support the second reading of the Bill but I trust that the Minister will take notice of the facts I have placed before him, and advise the House whether there is any possibility of the measure being made retrospective from the date that the Commonwealth Parliament passed the measure. However, that would mean that the Commonwealth Government would also have to agree to it.

MR. BOVELL (Sussex) [9.33]: I do not want to delay the progress of the Bill, but I join with the member for Leederville in saying that any person who has been through the institution he referred to realises the duty that the people of this State

owe to the mentally sick. Last year, in company with the member for Beverley and the member for Middle Swan, I visited this institution. I feel that it is the duty of every member of Parliament to see for himself those establishments that are helping not only the physically ill, but also the mentally sick.

We went there without notice and, due to the courtesy of Dr. Prendergast, we were escorted through the building. I should like to pay a tribute to the work of all concerned down at that institution. I emphasise that no notice was given of our visit, and I think both members who were with me will agree with my remarks. The place was clean and tidy and we conversed with a number of the inmates. With the member for Leederville I urge the need for amenities for the inmates of the Claremont Hospital for the Insane, and anything that I can do to further their cause will be done.

I consider that the Minister should take up with the Commonwealth Government—and here again I agree with the member for Leederville that that Government's responsibility is even greater than is indicated in this Bill—the need for some concerted effort to assist the poor unfortunates who are not in a position to help themselves. I do not intend to speak at length on the Bill, but as one who has visited the institution, and left it with a feeling of remorse, I think that I should say something on the question now that I have the opportunity. In my opinion the assistance given by the Commonwealth Government is not sufficiently far-reaching, and the Government of this State, with the Governments of other States, should seek further financial assistance to help these people.

HON. E. NULSEN (Kanowna) [9.36]: I am very disappointed with the Bill because, when I heard the Minister introduce it, I thought it would confer some benefits upon the inmates. After his explanation I realised that it would not be of any benefit to them, but only to the beneficiaries and those who are in affluent positions and are able to contribute something towards the institution. The Bill aims at abolishing the means test, but the Commonwealth Government's contribution towards the institution will not make any difference at all to the amount of money that is being

spent by the Government at present. As pointed out by the member for Leederville, the amount being spent down there at the moment is approximately £192,000 a year. That is not a contribution because it is only making good what the affluent friends and relatives of patients would have contributed towards the institution, and this I think is a little below eightpence per head per day. It will be sufficient, however, to make up the £15,251 mentioned by the Minister as being contributed by the relatives and friends of these unfortunate people.

I think there are approximately 1,330 inmates and of that number about 25 per cent. are visited by friends. That means that out of a total of 1,330 there are 1,000 friendless persons. They have not a friend to visit them, and they have not a penny to satisfy their needs in any way at all. It must be remembered that although these people are mentally sick, in about 90 per cent. of cases the sickness is only intermittent. If a layman were to go there and speak to the inmates, he would not know whether they were mentally sick or not. He might think that some of them were eccentric at times.

When Minister for Health I took a keen interest in that institution and visited it on many occasions. I had talks with quite a number of the inmates. Many of them would not be there at all if they had relatives or friends who would take an interest in them or if they could secure accommodation outside. The fact of their being in the institution debars them from any benefits under social service, which I think is wrong.

I agree with the member for Sussex that the inmates are deserving of something, and there should not be that differentiation between a person mentally sick and a person physically sick from the social service point of view. If a mentally sick person does not enter that institution he is entitled to the invalid pension, but as soon as he is declared insane and placed in that institution his pension ceases. However, if he were to enter Sunset suffering from a mental disease, a reasonable amount would be deducted for his upkeep and he would be allowed to retain 15s. a week to spend as he so desired on perhaps a few clothes or food other than that provided by the home. I do not want the House to think

that the inmates in the Claremont Asylum are badly treated, because they are not. In fact, they are well treated, as the member for Sussex says. However, as stated by the member for East Perth, it is badly overcrowded, but, in the circumstances, I know that the hon. member realises that the position is such because it cannot be helped.

I hope the Minister will get in touch with the Commonwealth authorities to see whether something cannot be done. Even if these people can only be put on the same basis as a man or woman physically sick, or a person who is mentally sick but can stay in his own or a relative's home, it would entitle them to the compensation they deserve. Unfortunately, because they are placed in an institution they are dead to the outside world but still alive to their surroundings. Some of them are very much alive according to their mentality at different periods. I have attended their Christmas festivals and it was quite delightful to see some of them enjoying what they cannot obtain in the institution. Such festivals are only made available to them by outside organisations and here I would like to compliment and commend them for their charitableness. I know that the Minister is sympathetic and will, if possible, do something for them in that regard.

This Bill only recoups the Government the amount it receives from those persons who can afford to contribute to the maintenance of the inmates of the institution. It makes no difference to the finances of the State, but makes a great deal of difference to the beneficiaries. I cannot see why that burden should be lifted from their shoulders and the amount of £15,000 odd contributed by the Commonwealth should not be paid to the inmates. Even if they only get eightpence a day it would be a great help. I have been told by members of the medical profession that if those people could have a few pence to spend every day it would probably assist them in their recovery and they could perhaps leave the institution. At present they have to wear clothes that do not fit them; they have no friends; nobody sees them and nobody takes any notice of them. What can one expect? If a person was physically sick under similar circumstances I do not think he would get well; let alone being mentally sick.

I do not know whether the State Government can do anything, but I do know that if I were Minister I would make an attempt to impress very definitely upon the Commonwealth Government that it has a duty to perform through the Department of Social Services, and that the whole State should make a contribution. So, in the main I am rather concerned and disappointed about the Bill. When we think that only 25 per cent. of the persons in the State institution are visited and of those some are visited only occasionally, it is time something was done to assist them. In that place there are 1,000 men and women who are, as it were, in a forgotten world and now we have a Bill that is to relieve the beneficiaries of a considerable amount—£15,000—and those people are to go scot free and the inmates are to receive no benefit from it. I feel very sorry for them and I hope that something will be done to relieve their position.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [9.47]: I have not much to add to the remarks made by members except to say that I agree to the second reading of the Bill. I would, however, like to have seen something more far-reaching than that which it contains. I have always held the view that those unfortunate citizens who are suffering from mental disabilities have not been treated as they should have been. In saying that I am not reflecting on the local institution that cares for the mentally sick. I believe they receive every care there and everything possible is done for their comfort. What I do mean is that the Commonwealth authorities have not taken up the case of the mentally deficient as I think they should have done. There is no reason why those who are suffering from the worst of all diseases should not be treated in a similar way to the invalid and old age pensioners. I could never understand why they were not included in the legislation dealing with the latter persons.

Many of the men and women who are in the institution in this State, and similar institutions in other States, have done their share towards building up this Commonwealth. As they have grown older they have been stricken with the disease and are rendered helpless. Why should

they not be treated as are the invalid pensioners in Sunset or the women who find themselves in an old women's home, and be permitted a pension from which the cost of their maintenance is deducted, leaving a small sum to be spent for their personal comfort? I read the circular which each member received from Claremont recently, and it brought this question very vividly to mind, particularly as it concerned the position of these unfortunate people. It has been suggested that the Minister should bring this matter before the Commonwealth Government, pointing out the necessity for some action being taken. I agree with that. I would add that there is another way in which the subject could be brought before the notice of the Federal authorities. Other States are interested in this problem equally with Western Australia.

I suggest that at the next conference of Ministers for Health this item be placed on the agenda, so that the whole subject may be thoroughly discussed and a recommendation made to the Commonwealth Government to amend the Invalid and Old-Age Pensions Act in order to improve the position of the people we are so anxious to help. It might mean a little more added to the pensions bill, but that is a very trivial matter when compared with the necessity to promote the comfort of people suffering from mental trouble. As pointed out in the circular members received, those inmates have their lucid moments when they realise the lack of friendly assistance to them. They appreciate during their periods of lucidity, however brief they may be, how they are not treated like other people, and I think that position is unfair. I am sure the Minister and every member will agree with me in that respect. I certainly suggest that the Minister take this matter up for consideration at the next conference of Health Ministers.

MR. GRAYDEN (Middle Swan) [9.53]: I join with other members in emphasising that the Bill does not go nearly far enough in rendering assistance to the inmates of asylums in this State, and I express the hope that the Government will continue to make representations to the Commonwealth Government to amend the Invalid and Old-

Age Pensions Act in the interests of the inmates of mental hospitals. As indicated by the member for Sussex, late last year two or three of us took the opportunity to visit the Claremont Hospital for the Insane. We came away both impressed and depressed. We were extremely impressed by the splendid work of the staff but we were depressed by the conditions provided for the inmates. The hospital was scrupulously clean but in the mornings the unfortunate patients are sent out into what can only be described as yards. They are nothing more or less than gravelled yards, surrounded by high concrete walls. There may be 100 or 150 of these unfortunates grouped in the yards, with absolutely no amenities for them at all. The people either pace to and fro across the yard, throw stones or contrive in other ways to do something to amuse themselves.

Throughout the length and breadth of the institution we saw absolutely no amenities at all. We were extremely impressed with the institution itself and the parks and gardens surrounding the buildings would be a credit to any institution. If half the money spent on those parks and gardens had been used for providing amenities for the inmates, the latter would be far better off. Suggestions have been advanced that the Government should make strong representations to the Federal authorities that the inmates should receive the invalid pension. That is the only possible solution. In that regard, the Minister has already stated that the Government has made those representations, but without success. In addition, I would point out that recently—I think this is relevant to the Bill—the Claremont Mental Hospital Welfare Association was formed, with the object of assisting the unfortunate patients. Members of that organisation have been most active in their efforts to obtain the invalid pension for the mentally afflicted and, on the 7th April last, wrote to Senator McKenna, the Commonwealth Minister for Social Services, regarding the matter. I shall read the letter because it sums up the position.

Mr. Styants: We have all had copies of it.

Mr. GRAYDEN: Nevertheless, I shall read it, because some members may not have seen it, and it sums up the position very well. The letter to Senator McKenna runs as follows:—

This Association is a Citizens' Organisation formed to promote the welfare and to care for the interests of the mental patients. We desire to draw your attention to the disabilities suffered by these patients in the administration of invalid pensions. Certified permanent mental disability is accepted as qualification for invalid pension. There are many such pensioners cared for privately, and in institutions for the aged, such as "Sunset." In all cases the person concerned receives the benefit of the pension, or, if in an institution, an allowance for pocket money.

In the Claremont Mental Hospital are 1,330 patients, about 1,000 of whom have no friends or relatives, who never have any visitors, whose maintenance is not contributed to in any way, and who are completely dependent, down to the last detail, upon what the Mental Hospital provides. These patients have not a penny piece; they cannot buy or obtain any variant from the institutional diet; they cannot supplement institutional clothing. They have nothing beyond what can be supplied to everyone in a large institution, by the State Department concerned. Having no means and no friends it is inevitable that life, in these circumstances, is a continually drab affair, and must have a depressing effect upon the patients so situated. One might easily consider these patients buried although not dead. Compare their plight with the position of a pensioner who lives at "Sunset" (the Old Men's Home), who receives a personal allowance of 15s. per week for pocket money. With this he can do much to brighten his otherwise drab life, but it is not so with patients in the mental hospitals, many of whom are very similar to senile cases in "Sunset."

Could you say, Sir, why these mental patients should be deprived of even the smallest benefit under our otherwise admirable pension scheme? Surely their case is most deserving and warrants some help. It is strongly urged that the usual pension arrangement by which a pocket money allowance is made available, apply to these cases, especially seeing that these allowances are now paid from the Social Service Fund, to which all taxpayers contribute. Moreover, medical opinion is that probably many patients would benefit mentally from the possibility of gratifying personal tastes and desires; they would be able to feel that someone cared—that they were not entirely forgotten. Attached you will find a memorandum which sets out the position in greater detail.

This Association feels that probably your attention has never been drawn to this serious position, and that you will take early action, which will have the effect of alleviating the lot of these unfortunate people. The Association will be very glad to hear from you in due course.

That letter was sent to Senator McKenna on the 7th of April. So far no reply has been received. The association has made efforts to get assistance from the State

Government and has formed the impression, rightly I think, that the Government resents intrusion into what is considered to be a State Government sphere. I take this opportunity to ask the Government not to discourage such organisations, but to give them all possible assistance.

Mr. Graham: Who is discouraging them?

Mr. GRAYDEN: I understand that the Health Department has been approached and has not been given the assistance that should be given.

The Minister for Health: That is not correct.

Mr. GRAYDEN: Then I take it that the association will receive all possible assistance in the future.

Hon. E. Nulsen: The patients are well treated by the institution.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I am not complaining of their treatment. The staff is doing an excellent job. Every member of it deserves a gold medal for staying there for weeks, let alone months or years, as many of them have done, but there are no amenities of any kind, and there is no possible chance of the mental condition of any patient ever improving. I stress the point that the association has been formed to assist these people and should receive all possible help from the Government in its effort to obtain this pension for the patients.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [10.2]: There is an aspect of this proposed agreement with which I am not at all satisfied. It seems to be a case of the Commonwealth once more escaping from the whole of its liability in connection with an urgently needed social service by offering the States something that will cost it only a portion of the actual expenditure required. The proposal is attractive to the States because it offers something in the nature of certain payments instead of problematical payments.

My mind reverts to the Hospital Benefits Agreement. I argued then, as I do now, that an agreement of the sort is based on entirely wrong ground. Then, as now, the basis of collections was taken as the basis of Commonwealth contributions. I argued that the basis on which the Commonwealth should contribute should be in accordance with the needs or the costs, not the collection. If 8d.

per day is the expected contribution by those who can pay it has very small relationship to the actual cost, and the State will still be saddled with the task of finding the difference between that amount and the actual cost of running the institution.

I think the member for Leederville pointed out that all this agreement will do will be to absolve certain people, from whom the State hoped to collect, from any responsibility whatever. The Commonwealth says, "Let that problematical payment go and we will give you a definite payment." The same thing applied to the hospital agreement. I think the member for Leederville negotiated that agreement. It was then that the State collection amounted to 5s. 2d. and the Commonwealth offered 6s. per patient a day.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That amount has been increased to 8s. per day.

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, but our costs and collections are different. At the time the agreement came into operation, our collection rate was more than 6s. In spite of that, we were still left with the cost of maintaining our hospitals, and all we received from the Commonwealth was the equivalent of what we could reasonably expect to collect. If we ran the institutions on that basis, we should have very poor ones. If the Commonwealth, by adopting this attitude to its responsibilities for social services, believes it is carrying out its duty, it has a poor conception of its duty, being both parsimonious and niggardly. Of course this agreement appears attractive from the point of view of the State. I can appreciate the Minister reasoning, "I might get £3,000 without the agreement but, with the agreement, I shall get it with certainty from the Commonwealth." The Minister should adopt this attitude to the Commonwealth: "This is a service which is necessary and which must be given, and your contribution towards it must be a grant in accordance with our needs."

Unfortunately I cannot vote against the agreement because the Minister evidently believes that it is a better proposition than the arrangement under which we have been working, and he has the responsibility of administering the department, but I hope he will not rest content with the present agreement and that, when it comes to a conference of the Commonwealth and the States, he will point out how the Commonwealth

is dodging its responsibility by paying out a few pounds and shillings only, and this through basing its contributions upon entirely wrong premises. If the State has been negligent or not as assiduous as it should have been in collecting these payments, we must suffer.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You cannot collect from people what they have not got.

Mr. LESLIE: I agree, but it might have been possible to collect more, especially from beneficiaries. The hospital agreement is tied up with this proposal.

Hon. A. H. Panton: No, they are entirely different things.

Mr. LESLIE: Both provide for payments from the Commonwealth based on estimated collections instead of upon the State's costs. That is altogether wrong. I should like the Minister, when replying, to explain the portion of the agreement at page 2 which states—

The State shall ensure that, except with the concurrence of the Commonwealth, no charge is made to or in respect of qualified persons for services or comforts for which it was not customary, to make a charge as at the first day of November, 1948.

To my mind, that means just nothing. The agreement should provide either that no charge may be made or that a charge may be made. I do not like that set-up for the reason that I am rather fearful that, should we find that the Commonwealth contribution is insufficient, or not up to what we might reasonably expect it to be, we might be told that there are other ways by which we can raise the money. Therefore, we may be told by the Commonwealth that we can get out of our difficulties by imposing charges in other directions and consequently others will be called upon to suffer. It should be a straight-out case: either the charge should be levied or should not be levied. I hope the Minister will be able to tell us something on this particular aspect.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [10.12]: I am prompted to say a few words on this measure because of the remarks made by the member for Mt. Marshall.* There seems to be a tendency on the part of some members to take advantage of every opportunity to say some unkind words about the Commonwealth Government, instead of expressing appreciation for what it has done. We

have had Commonwealth Governments for close on half a century. Previous Commonwealth Governments have not done anything in this connection; at least this Commonwealth Government has done something.

Mr. Leslie: It has had millions of pounds in taxation.

Mr. GRAHAM: Previous Governments of the political complexion of the member for Mt. Marshall had not the fortitude to impose taxation to do things that required to be done. As I suggested by interjection, it was never the intention of the Commonwealth Government that it should give assistance to the State Government in this matter. This Bill is designed to relieve the patients and their relatives of financial responsibility.

Mr. Leslie: No compensation is given to the State for that relief.

Mr. GRAHAM: No. As I said, it was never intended to do that. Social services are designed to assist the people of the country directly.

The Minister for Health: Do you not classify the inmate as a person?

Mr. GRAHAM: Exactly.

The Minister for Health: Do you not think they might have some assistance?

Mr. GRAHAM: There is nothing whatever to prevent the State Government from rendering some assistance. I will come to that point in a moment. Admittedly, the persons who will gain are those who will be the beneficiaries of the inmate on his death, but other people are bearing burdens at the present time. I know a person whose wife for many years has been an inmate of the Claremont asylum, and during all that time he has suffered the mental strain and domestic inconvenience arising from that fact. In addition, he has had to pay a certain amount to the Medical Department for the maintenance of his wife. The Commonwealth Government feels that a person in those unfortunate circumstances should not be called upon to make a financial contribution; so he has been relieved of it. That is the purport and intent of this measure.

Mr. Leslie: What about the Commonwealth Government's providing the service as well?

Mr. GRAHAM: Perhaps the member for Mt. Marshall, if he feels so disposed and really means what he says, will both advo-

cate and vote "Yes" at successive referendums; but when it is suggested that the Commonwealth Government should be given a little additional power to do more for the people than it is doing, we find the Conservatives on the other side of the House voting in opposition to such proposal.

Mr. Leslie: The Commonwealth Government got the social service power.

Mr. GRAHAM: That is so, and it is giving social services to people who previously had to bear financial burdens which were proving too heavy for them. Henceforth such people will not be called upon to make those payments. It is several years since I paid a visit to the Claremont asylum and therefore certain matters which I discussed with Dr. Thompson, who is in charge of the asylum, have become a little vague. I did understand, however, that the inmates of that institution received, in certain instances, some cash or other consideration. Some of the patients were performing duties of a very humble nature and some of them would not know what to do with money. Others would appreciate having a little spending silver, or a canteen or other amenities whereby they could enjoy additional comforts. I suggest there is nothing to prevent our Government from instituting such a scheme.

I know it will be said that the Commonwealth has all the money and that the State has to battle hard to make both ends meet, but I say in reply that there is nothing which the Government has been asked to do that it has been unable to do owing to lack of money. Every member is aware of that fact. Every approach has been met. What is there to prevent some small allowance being made to the patients to provide them with comforts and amenities? God knows, they need them! In common with other members I realise that the staff of the institution is doing an excellent job, notwithstanding the limitations imposed by the inadequacy of the building and its overcrowded state. If that institution reminded me of anything at all, it reminded me of a prison. Some improvement should be effected in the food supply. It may be good, plain healthy food but to me it appears most uninviting. One might say that the patients receive one meal per day and have to scratch for the others.

We must bear in mind, as was pointed out by previous speakers, that some of these mentally afflicted patients suffer only a few days every month or so at some particular period. What a blow it is to their pride to be treated in the way I have pointed out! It tends to deteriorate their condition. There is much room for improvement in many respects. I often wonder whether, perhaps, members of Parliament are not culpable in this matter, whether they are not somewhat callous towards the unfortunate inmates of the institution because of the fact that they have no vote and also because of the fact that it is impossible for them to organise and to place their point of view before us. I do not know whether all members have paid a visit to the institution. I myself made a most intensive inspection of it, and also of Heathcote on another occasion. I also viewed, from the outside, the farm which is situated a few miles towards the south-west.

But I feel there is something wrong with regard to those establishments. However, that is something beyond the compass of this Bill, though I did feel it essential to emphasise that the intention of the Government was to relieve the sufferer and the relatives and other persons responsible for anybody who happened to be spending a period in any of the mental institutions. That is what the Bill sets out to do and what it will in fact do when given effect to in this State. Like the member for Leederville, I hope and trust, though I have my doubts as to his success, that the Minister will make some approaches to the Commonwealth with a view to having the starting point back-dated so that the provisions do not operate only from the time the Bill is agreed to.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—North Perth—in reply) [10.21]: I entirely agree with those members who have put forward the suggestion that no distinction should be made between those who have a mental infirmity and are therefore obliged to remain in a mental hospital such as Claremont, and those who suffer from other complaints. I can assure members that that has been very forcibly put before the Commonwealth Government. The suggestion of the member for Perth has already been put into operation so long ago as June of last year, because it was

stressed not only by myself, representing this State, but by each of the Ministers for Health of the other States, that the Commonwealth Bill was not a reasonable suggestion and that something better should be done by the Commonwealth Government. Senator McKenna, representing the Commonwealth, presided at that meeting. But not satisfied with that, the Premier himself wrote to Mr. Chifley and again stressed the point of view of this State—and I agree that all members have the same point of view—that invalid pensions should be paid to those who are mentally afflicted. In his reply, under date the 20th December, 1948, Mr. Chifley wrote—

The adoption of your suggestion for the payment of age and invalid pensions for patients in mental hospitals as is the case with age and invalid pensioners in homes for the aged and infirm would mean a substantial new grant to the State revenue by the Commonwealth.

Later in the same letter he wrote—

In these circumstances I am unable to accept your suggestion and I should be glad if you would reconsider the whole matter on the basis of the Commonwealth's proposals in my letter of the 4th May, 1948, and the Mental Institutions Benefit Act, a copy of which was forwarded to you on the 1st December, 1948.

There is no doubt that this State has stressed with all the power at its command the point of view that members have put forward tonight. The member for East Perth made some comment about the food he saw on one occasion some time ago. I can assure him his suggestion is not correct. Admittedly the food is that of an institution where there are 1,000 people to be fed. I, too, would wish that it was possible for a more inviting diet to be supplied.

Mr. Graham: It is nothing like the food at the Royal Perth Hospital, is it?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: But the visitors who are appointed under the Act make frequent reports to me and on all occasions their report has been that the meals are good. The member for Leederville suggested that those mental patients who had property belonging to them should now have some of their estate expended in giving them amenities. I see no reason at present why that should not be so. I shall certainly make inquiries from the Public Trustee as to whether he is giving this matter his attention, more particularly as the estates, after this agreement is implemented,

will be relieved of the upkeep of the patients, and there seems to be no reason therefore why their estates should not be utilised in giving them more amenities than they have had in the past.

The member for Mt. Marshall raised a question about paragraph 4 of the agreement in the schedule. That is merely to ensure that the abolition of the means test and the payment by the Commonwealth in lieu of the patients will not deprive them of any comforts they previously enjoyed. That is all the paragraph means. I might say that the Government does appreciate the efforts that various persons in the community are making to see whether the lot of these unfortunate people can be improved, and the Government will fully support and assist in any way it can any of those persons.

It has, I think, acknowledged the excellent work Mrs. Casson did for many years as a visitor, and in other ways, for patients of these hospitals. It will be remembered that His Majesty recognised her good work in this and other hospitals by including her in the last list of honours issued by him. We are fully in agreement with the suggestion that invalid pensions should be granted to these people, and will continue on every possible occasion to press for that and will avail ourselves of every chance to better the lot of inmates of mental institutions.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Health in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to execute agreement:

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I would like to know from the Minister what alternative he has in regard to entering into the agreement. This clause, in the first line, uses the word "may." Following the passing of the Bill, would it not be a definite obligation on the part of the Minister to enter into an agreement with the Commonwealth in accordance with the schedule; or is it that the Minister or the Government may not then enter into the agreement? The measure will be quite worthless if the clause stands as printed. I move an amendment—

That in line 1 the word "may" be struck out and the word "shall" inserted in lieu.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The Bill has been drafted in the form usually adopted by the Parliamentary Draftsman when drawing measures authorising the Government to complete negotiations with the Commonwealth Government. I have no great objection to the amendment of the Leader of the Opposition, but it departs from the form that has invariably been adopted by himself when introducing similar Bills. There is no great object in using the word "may" except this, that there may be cause for some slight alteration to be made to the agreement, or some reason why it should not be signed. In the circumstances, I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition withdraw his amendment.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am quite unsatisfied with the explanation. The Minister's suggestion means that it would be undesirable to amend any Bill that comes before the Committee. That is the natural attitude of a Minister in charge of a Bill.

The Minister for Health: Not at all. It is the usual practice in connection with such measures.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Apart from that, has the Minister any objection to what I have proposed?

The Minister for Health: I have no serious objection.

Mr. LESLIE: I refer members to the Hospital Benefits Agreement Act of 1945 which was passed when the Leader of the Opposition was on this side of the House. The agreement there is a permissive one and somewhat similar to what is before us now. The relevant section in that Act is Section 2, and it left the Government quite free to go on with the agreement, or not. I presume that the permissive clause here is to allow the Government, in the event of any major alteration, to be free to go on with the proposal or to leave it alone. If the word "shall" goes in, it is mandatory on the Government to go on with the agreement, no matter what circumstances might arise between now and when the agreement is completed. In this case I would like to follow the original attitude adopted by the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: If you keep on following the Leader of the Opposition you will not go far wrong.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Will the Minister give the Committee the assurance that there is little or no doubt that the Government will, on the passing of this measure, if not amended by another place, ratify the agreement and continue to carry out the obligations under the Act, as if it were obligatory and not permissive?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes, I give that assurance. The Government has approved of the Bill and of the agreement, and I give the assurance that unless some contingency, which I cannot imagine, arises, it will go on.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 to 5—agreed to.

Schedule:

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I want to know the Minister's view in regard to what appear to be necessary amendments to the schedule to give effect to the points raised by members on both sides of the Chamber, particularly in regard to the retrospectivity of the date on which the agreement was signed. Clause 6 of the schedule provides that the agreement shall not have force or effect until it is approved by the Parliament of the State, and Clause 7 provides for the commencing date of the agreement. Before moving in connection with this matter I want to know what is in the Minister's mind and the mind of the Government in regard to the commencing date, which is not specified in Clause 7.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I entirely agree with the suggestion put forward by members that the agreement should be made retrospective to as early a date as possible. I will make the necessary representations to the Commonwealth before the final date is inserted in the agreement, but will have to accept the ruling of the Commonwealth in the matter.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I think the Committee should assist the Minister and support his views regarding retrospectivity. I move an amendment—

That after the word "the" in line 1 of paragraph 7 of the Schedule the word "first" be inserted.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I ask the Leader of the Opposition not to press this amendment as I have given the assurance that the Government will make every effort to have the agreement back-dated as far as possible. The Commonwealth has stipulated that the agreement must have the sanction of Parliament. If the Commonwealth would not agree to the 1st January, 1949, its law officers might say the agreement was not substantially in the form sanctioned by this Parliament, and might refuse to put the arrangement into effect. With the assistance of Commonwealth Government representatives of this State, such as Senator Cook, I have no doubt the Commonwealth will give some recognition to our request.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Would you agree to tell the Commonwealth that the majority of this Parliament had asked for the agreement to be ante-dated and that you pleaded with them not to do that?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What a contrast between the attitude of the Minister on this Bill and the attitude of the Government regarding the wheat stabilisation legislation!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Is the Minister prepared to do that?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes, at least to the 1st January, but I suggest that it should be when the Commonwealth legislation becomes law and not later than the 1st January.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I am quite happy about that.

Amendment put and negatived.

Schedule put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington): I move—

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

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.48 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 29th June, 1949.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION.

FREMANTLE HARBOUR.

As to Copies of Tydeman Report.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Referring to Mr. F. W. E. Tydeman's report on the Port of Fremantle, will the Minister make available to the Fremantle City Council the second and third volumes to enable the council to complete its town planning report?

(2) If the answer to Number (1) is "Yes," will this report be made available to the council immediately?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) The second and third volumes are now in course of being printed.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

CHAIRMAN (TEMPORARY) OF COMMITTEES.

The PRESIDENT: I desire to announce that I have appointed Hon. A. L. Loton to act as a temporary Chairman of Committees during the current session.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Plant Diseases Act Amendment (No. 1).
 - 2, Marketing of Eggs Act Amendment.
 - 3, Wheat Pool Act Amendment (No. 3).
- Introduced by the Honorary Minister for Agriculture.