

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 23rd June, 1949.

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

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

(a) *As to Outstanding Applications.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) What is the grand total of outstanding applications for houses and all other types of buildings as at—

(a) 1st January, 1947;

(b) 1st January, 1948;

(c) 1st January, 1949;

(d) the present time?

(2) What is the number under each of the various headings at the present time?

The MINISTER replied:

As the reply is rather lengthy, I ask leave to hand it to the hon. member.

Mr. GRAHAM: In view of the important and revealing nature of the answers submitted by the Minister, will you, Mr. Speaker, be good enough to arrange for the replies to be printed in "Hansard" in lieu of their appearing in the Votes and Proceedings only?

Mr. SPEAKER: They will appear in "Hansard."

(1) Total outstanding applications:—

Date.	New Dwellings.						All Other Types of Buildings.
	State Housing.	McNess.	War Service Homes	Tenancy.	Permits.	Grand Total.	
1-1-47	1,022	Not available	1,987	4,458	1,178	18,843	635
1-1-48	1,001	600	3,339	6,903	2,038	13,781	974
1-1-49	1,044	669	4,247	10,787	2,893	19,550	1,485
Present Time							
31-5-49	1,063	586	4,406	11,381	4,218	21,644	1,863

* Including 2,449 Small Unit. † Including 2,921 Small Unit. ‡ Excluding McNess Homes.

(2) Details of outstanding permit applications as at 31/5/49:—

Dwellings—Alterations, additions, repairs	798
Flats	30
Conversion to Flats	34
Hotels and Guest Houses	83
Shops and Shops with Dwellings	169
Offices and Banks	33
Warehouses	15
Stores	20
Factories	208
Public Garages	20
Churches	11
Schools and Orphanages	34
Halls, Theatres and Clubs	42
Hospitals	14
Rural Industrial	159
Outbuildings	74
Sewerage	51
Private Garages	15
All other—including railway buildings, bus depots and airport facilities	53
	<hr/> 3,863 <hr/>

Because many applicants apply in two or more housing sections, the number of applications held by the Commission cannot be accepted as representing the number of applicants still to be dealt with. Multiple applications have been increasing, and currently the number of applicants is estimated to be equivalent to approximately 90 per cent. of the total number of applications.

The grand total of 21,644 now outstanding includes 2,921 small unit tenancy applications lodged since January, 1948, and it is estimated that of the 2,180 applications for private permits received during the same period, approximately 1,500 applications are from small unit families.

It is considered that a large number of applicants are now applying who desire a new home, either rental or to be built privately, but who are reasonably housed in their present accommodation.

(b) *As to Day Labour and Contract Costs.*

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

(1) What did the examination of the costs of homes built under the day labour system since 1945 disclose in regard to total costs per square?

(2) What was the cost per square of contract-built homes completed during similar periods?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) An inquiry into the comparative costs of the construction of a brick house by day labour and by contract was made by an officer of the Audit Department last year. He reported that as between houses of similar types (let alone one type and another) costs are subject to variation by any (or a combination of any) of a number of influences which he detailed. The officer stated that under the circumstances it was felt that there were too many disturbing factors to enable a figure to be quoted which, for comparison purposes could be called the average cost of building a brick house.

(2) The costs per square of contract-built Commonwealth-State rental houses of the 7A and 56B types which are determined according to the base price system used by the Commission are as follows:—

Base Type Brick House 7A—2 Bedroom.

Rate per square at 1/1/46, £87 16s. 3d.

Rate per square at 1/1/47, £88 19s. 3d.

Rate per square at 1/1/48, £111 0s. 3d.

Rate per square at 1/1/49, £120 4s. 0d.

Base Type Brick House 56B—3 Bedroom.

Rate per square at 1/1/46, £82 1s. 6d.

Rate per square at 1/1/47, £83 2s. 9d.

Rate per square at 1/1/48, £103 16s. 6d.

Rate per square at 1/1/49, £112 8s. 3d.

(c) *As to Representation of Commission at Derby.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Housing:

Has the State Housing Commission any agent or representative in the town of Derby?

The MINISTER replied:

The Housing Commission does not maintain any agent or representative in country towns. It operates mainly through its inspectors and with the aid of local authorities.

(d) As to Reports on Day Labour Costs.

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

Will the Minister lay on the Table of the House reports made by the officers of the Audit Branch in connection with the cost of construction of day labour houses and the reports of officers of other departments in that connection?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, any information I have bearing on the matter.

(e) As to Spec. Builders and Specifications.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

Will the State Housing Commission have any legal power to enforce upon spec. builders the specifications contained in the contracts to be let to them to build that type of house, or will it be left to the honesty or otherwise of the contractors to carry out those specifications?

The MINISTER replied:

The State Housing Commission will be in this situation, that the allocation of permits to build ready-made houses, in the case of each builder, will be comparatively few in number—up to five—and if the construction should be the subject of any complaints or representations as to being inadequate, then the Commission could refuse any further permits to that person.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That would mean the purchaser would be left to carry the baby.

RAILWAYS.

(a) As to Locomotive Spark Arresters and Circulating Valves.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) How many "Cyclone" spark arresters were manufactured and/or purchased by the Railway Department?

(2) What was the cost of each?

(3) How many locomotives were fitted with this type of spark arrester?

(4) How many of these appliances are still in use?

(5) What were the total costs involved—

(a) in removing other types of spark arresters;

(b) in fitting the "Cyclone" spark arresters;

(c) in removing the "Cyclone" spark arresters;

(d) in removing other types of spark arresters;

(e) in loss of revenue due to the time that each locomotive was "off traffic"?

(6) How many locomotives had the circulating valve removed?

(7) How many locomotives have had this appliance replaced?

(8) What was the total cost of—

(a) removing the circulating valves;

(b) replacing them;

(c) the time that engines were "off traffic" for this work to be done;

(d) the partial inefficiency of the locomotives while operating without these valves?

(9) Was the experiment of removing the circulating valves considered to be a success?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) One hundred and ninety-eight sets of equipment.

(2) Average workshop cost—£74 per loco. (includes fitting and royalty).

(3) One hundred and ninety locomotives.

(4) Sixty-one locomotives.

(5) (a), (b), (c) and (d)—Information not available, as cost of this work was booked to general or maintenance orders.

(e) Not known, as fitting was carried out in conjunction with other repairs.

(6) One hundred and seventy-eight locomotives.

(7) Five A.S.G. oil-burners—at the request of the A.S.G. Industrial Board.

(8) (a) and (b)—Costs not available, as work was booked to general maintenance orders. (c) Modification carried out during overhaul. (d) No loss of efficiency.

(9) Yes.

(b) As to Kalgoorlie Employees, Amenities and Working Hours.

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is he aware that serious discontent exists amongst workers employed at the Kalgoorlie locomotive sheds owing to the Government's non-fulfilment of its promise

to provide suitable amenities at that centre, amenities such as suitable change room, bath room, hot and cold water, and lunch room facilities being urgently required?

(2) Will he take immediate steps to have the above facilities provided?

(3) Will he take the necessary action to countermand a recent order that workers employed at the Kalgoorlie locomotive sheds are required to work a 45-hour week as from the 1st June, 1949, as the workers concerned do not desire to work five hours' overtime on a continuous basis unless some serious unforeseen emergency arises?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) The desirability of providing improved amenities is fully realised, and this is intended to be done as soon as the staff and material position will allow.

(3) The condition of the locomotive stock necessitates the working of overtime, and all such work is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the relative awards.

(c) *As to "Australind" Express and Connecting Trains.*

Mr. McCULLOCH (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

Will the Minister give consideration to an alteration of the railway time-table in connection with the arrival and departure times of the "Australind" express so as to permit train travellers from the country and the Eastern Goldfields areas who are due to arrive in Perth at 10.30 a.m. daily, to connect on arrival at Perth with the "Australind" express to Bunbury; and also an alteration which would permit a through return journey to the Eastern Goldfields, which would remove the necessity of Goldfields passengers having to stay overnight in Perth?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, I will give consideration to any re-arrangement which might be desirable.

TIMBER.

(a) *As to Production for Home Building.*

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

Is he of the opinion that the timber millers and sawmill owners are pursuing a

policy of retarding production of scantling and home-building timber generally, with a view to—

(a) future export markets;

(b) keeping prices of home-building timber at the highest point; and

(c) keeping prices up with an eye to prices being increased?

The MINISTER replied:

No.

(b) *As to Hakea and Shannon River Mills.*

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) When is it proposed to close Hakea mill?

(2) When is the Shannon River mill expected to come into full production?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) It is estimated that Hakea mill will cease production in about two years' time.

(2) It is estimated that the Shannon River mill should come into production in 18 months to two years' time.

PRICES CONTROL.

(a) *As to Advisory Committee and its Recommendations.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Attorney General:

(1) What are the names of the members of the advisory committee appointed under the price-fixing legislation last year?

(2) How many meetings have been held since the Act was passed?

(3) On how many occasions were the recommendations of the committee adopted by him or the Price Fixing Commissioner?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) Chairman—Mr. C. W. M. Court; Members—Messrs. S. F. Schnaars and J. G. Brocmhall.

(2) Meetings are convened by the chairman as and when necessary. Minutes are only kept of formal meetings held for the purpose of finalising and adopting reports. There have been ten such formal meetings.

In addition, consultations between the chairman and members, and also with the Prices Control Commissioner, take place from time to time, and there have been numerous such consultations.

(3) All recommendations by the committee have been adopted by me or the Prices Control Commissioner.

(b) As to Dismissal of Staff.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Attorney General:

(1) Why did he answer in the negative the following question which I submitted without notice on the 15th June:—"If that is the position, will he explain to the House why 30 officers of the State Prices Branch were dismissed shortly after the Prices Referendum?"

(2) Did his answer "No" mean that he refused to explain to the House, or did it mean that 30 officers were not dismissed?

(3) In view of the fact that I have since supplied him with the names of 32 officers, who were dismissed from State Prices Branch on the 15th September, 1948, does he still refuse to explain to the House, or deny that these officers were dismissed?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) To the three questions that were asked without notice by the hon. member on the 15th June last, the answers shown in "Hansard" are:—

(1) Yes.

(2) and (3) No.

It was my intention to answer in the following manner:—

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) Of the officers in the employment of the Commonwealth in the Prices Branch in Western Australia immediately preceding 15th September, 1948, 30 were not asked nor did they then join the State service.

Two of the 30 were later employed by the Prices Branch.

(c) As to Prices of Subsidised Goods.

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

Since he has expressed himself as satisfied with his control of price fixing, will he prepare a statement for tabling in the House at the next sitting, showing the price in Western Australia of all subsidised goods at the date of the State taking over and as at 1st June, 1949?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:
Yes.

(d) As to Displaying Meat Price-lists.

Mr. HEGNEY (without notice) asked the Attorney General:

(1) Under the regulations governing price fixing when the Commonwealth had control of it, was it necessary for butchers to display prominently in their shops the retail prices of meat?

(2) If so, does he know whether it is incumbent on retail butchers to do so today?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) and (2) I, of course, cannot be sure, but from information I now have in my possession, I think they have to display the prices in the retail shops.

COAL.

(a) As to Shortage of Mine Requisites.

Mr. MAY asked the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping:

(1) Is she aware of the serious shortage of light rails for underground use in the Collie coal mines, also rail dogs, sizes 2½in. x 5/6in. and 3in. x 3/8in.?

(2) Will she take such action as is necessary, to endeavour to obtain supplies of such materials, as such shortage is seriously affecting coal output?

The PREMIER (for the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping) replied:

(1) With regard to rails—no; dog spikes—yes.

(2) Yes. As regards dog spikes, action was taken in April, and two tons of 3in. x 3/8in. are coming on the "Koomilya." Steel for 2½in. x 5/16in. spikes was to be rolled this month, and when the spikes are made they will be despatched by the manufacturers.

(b) As to Error in Question.

Mr. MAY (without notice) asked the Premier:

I draw the Premier's attention to my question on the notice paper wherein is contained a printer's error inasmuch as "5/6in." should be "5/16in." It will make a considerable difference in the size of the rail dogs if not rectified.

The PREMIER replied:

I note the correction suggested by the hon. member.

(c) *As to Wallsend Open-Cut Overburden.*

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

What action, if any, does the State Government propose to take to ensure that Amalgamated Collieries of W.A. Ltd., replace all overburden taken from the Wallsend open-cut site, which, if allowed to remain in its present state, constitutes a real danger to the general public and a blot on the landscape of Collie?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

An amount of sixpence per ton has been collected on all coal produced from the Wallsend open-cut within the townsite, as security for the restoration of the surface.

Because of the necessity since of concentrating all plant on coal production operations, restoration by the company has been delayed, but will be proceeded with as soon as circumstances permit.

(d) *As to Black Diamond Open-Cut Costs.*

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

According to figures supplied by the Railway Department, overburden from the Black Diamond open-cut to the 31st December, 1948, amounted to 134,655 tons and cost of removal amounted to £17,817 2s. 4d. Will he advise as to the source of payment from which this expenditure was met?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

Railways Department, £11,060 4s. 4d.; State Electricity Commission, £6,756 18s. (Proportions being assessed according to coal purchased.)

(e) *As to Output per Man from Open-Cuts.*

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

(1) What is the output per man per day from the Black Diamond open-cut for the period January to May, 1949, inclusive, calculation to be made on actual days worked?

(2) What is the output per man per day from Stockton 2nd open-cut for the period January to May, 1949, inclusive, calculation to be made on actual days worked?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) 4.42 tons.

(2) 11.64 tons.

These figures cannot be utilised for comparative purposes, as recent major operations on the Black Diamond have been to remove overburden and provide an area of coal for removal during the wet months.

At Stockton, recent major operations have been removal of coal, the overburden having been previously cleared for this purpose.

(f) *As to Preserving and Developing Wilga Reservation.*

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

(1) In view of the fact that approximately 16,000 acres, comprising the Wilga coal basin has been alienated, partly under the Land and Mining Acts and the balance reserved from occupation, is it the Government's considered policy not to allow further settlement of this area, nor extensions of existing settlements, nor the granting of grazing leases?

(2) Has the Government any plans for the development of coalmining on this area which would justify the holding up of this country for other purposes?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The Wilga coalfield is regarded at present as second in importance in the State to the Collie coalfield, and as coal is such a tremendous factor in any State's economy, it is most necessary to safeguard valuable deposits, thus ensuring continuity of future supply.

BUILDING SUPPLIES.

(a) *As to New Road Board Offices, Mundijong.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Housing:

In view of the acute shortage of building materials for housing purposes, by what means was it possible for new road board offices to be erected at Mundijong?

The MINISTER replied:

The road board office was built under permit authorised by the Housing Commission

after an inspection of the old office which, according to inspector's report, consisted of a very old dilapidated and white-ant-eaten one-room building 18ft. x 13ft., obviously inadequate for the purpose and which did not warrant any expenditure for repairs.

It was replaced by a very modest two-roomed office.

(b) *As to Items Decontrolled.*

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Housing:

When were controls relaxed on bricks, timber, nails, paint and cement?

The MINISTER replied:

Bricks, 1st September, 1948; Timber, 1st October, 1948; Nails, heavy gauge, 1st December, 1948; light gauge, 1st December, 1948; Paint, 1st April, 1948; Cement, 21st June, 1948.

(c) *As to Reciprocal Trade with Eastern States.*

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Is there any reciprocal trade agreement between Western Australia and the Eastern States that we should supply timber in return for steel and hardware?

(2) If so, what is the basis of agreement?

(3) Would he lay the file on the Table?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No. But the Commonwealth Government, in order to ensure an equitable distribution of materials in short supply in the interests of the whole of Australia, exercises a certain degree of influence and control to that end.

(2) and (3) Answered by No. 1.

(d) *As to Shortage of Asbestos Fibre.*

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

Did he say there is a shortage of asbestos fibre for building requirements in Western Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

I understand that there is a shortage of fibre due to some difficulty in getting imports which I think previously came from South Africa. Experiments have been made in the use of local plants, and there have been representations for the purpose of securing fibre from the blue asbestos deposits at Roebourne.

(e) *As to Embargo on Asbestos Exports.*

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

Is the Government unable to place an embargo on the export of asbestos when so much is needed in Western Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

Under Section 92 of the Constitution, trade and commerce between the States is absolutely free, and neither the Commonwealth Government nor the State Government could, I think, place an embargo on exports from one State to another.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It would have to be done by agreement with the company.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I think it can be said, and hoped, that in the case of a responsible company, as I believe this is, any representations as to the requirements of Western Australia would receive due consideration.

. TRAM AND BUS SERVICES.

(a) *As to Employment of Daimler Diesels.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) How long have the six Daimler diesel buses been lying idle in this State?

(2) Why have they not yet been put into service?

(3) When is it anticipated that they will be operating?

(4) Is this type of bus in use elsewhere in Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Approximately eight weeks.

(2) and (3) As the chassis frames have been lengthened by the manufacturer's agent in New South Wales, the local licensing authority declines to issue a license until in receipt of a letter from the manufacturers of the chassis that they approve of such extension. Such approval has been sought, and, when obtained, the buses will be put into operation.

(4) Yes. In Queensland.

(b) *As to Restoration of West Leederville Tram.*

Hon. A. H. PANTON asked the Minister for Transport:

Owing to the large number of elderly people living in and adjacent to Woolwich-

street, West Leederville, will he give full consideration to replacing the tram in that area during the winter?

The MINISTER replied:

It would be economically unsound to re-introduce a tramway service in Woolwich-street. The omnibus service supplanted trams and, in compliance with a petition from residents of the district, the bus route was amended by routing buses through an area closer to Lake Monger than hitherto.

Woolwich-street is equally distant from the new omnibus route and the Cambridge-street trolley bus.

EDUCATION.

(a) *As to Primary School Site, Northam.*

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

(1) Has a site been chosen for an additional primary school at Northam?

(2) If not, when is a decision likely to be made?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Not yet.

(2) A decision will be made when the School Sites Committee has had an opportunity of examining proposals—the subject of present inquiries.

(b) *As to School Site, Baker's Hill.*

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

Has a site for the proposed new school at Baker's Hill been finally chosen?

The MINISTER replied:

A site for the proposed new school at Baker's Hill has been chosen. It is anticipated that its reservation will be favourably recommended by the School Sites Committee at its meeting next week.

(c) *As to Expenditure on Visual Instruction.*

Mr. HILL asked the Minister for Education:

What was the expenditure on visual education—

(a) in the year before the present Government came to power;

(b) in the last financial year?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) £278.

(b) 1947-48 £7,857
1948-49 (11 months) ... £16,522

(d) *As to School Accommodation, Carnarvon.*

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

Is the Minister in a position to answer my written request in regard to the addition of sufficient accommodation at the school being built at Carnarvon? Has he been able to arrange for such accommodation to be built while the contractor is still working to enable the school to cater for all the children available at the time of its opening?

The MINISTER replied:

Steps are being taken which are believed to be satisfactory, and I will give the hon. member particulars of them as early as I can.

HOSPITALS.

As to x-ray Plant for Cunderdin.

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

Has the new x-ray plant for the Cunderdin District Hospital been installed?

The MINISTER replied:

The agent assures that it will be installed early next week.

LAND SALES CONTROL.

(a) *As to Prosecution.*

Mr. FOX asked the Attorney General:

(1) Did he refuse permission to the solicitor acting for Mrs. Mioceviech to take proceedings against Ivan Jelcich for a breach of the Land Sales Control Act, 1948?

(2) Was the alleged overcharge, in the transaction for which permission to prosecute was requested, upwards of £3,000?

(3) Will he state his reasons for refusing the necessary permission?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) (a) Dr. J. S. Marian, solicitor for Mrs. Mioceviech (widow of the deceased purchaser) requested the Controller of

Land Sales to hold an inquiry under s. 20 of the Land Sales Control Act, 1948, with the view to obtaining evidence upon which a prosecution under the Act could be launched.

(b) At the inquiry Dr. Marian appeared and called five witnesses, and a transcript of the evidence was examined by the Crown Prosecutor.

(c) The Crown Prosecutor reported that "in my opinion there is no evidence to support Dr. Marian's allegations."

(d) Permission was refused on the recommendation of the Crown Prosecutor supported by the recommendation of the Solicitor General and in accordance with the views of the Controller of Land Sales. If there had been sufficient evidence, the Crown would have prosecuted. Dr. Marian's client still can take such civil action as she may be advised without the Attorney General's permission.

(b) As to Tabling Papers.

Mr. FOX (without notice) asked the Attorney General:

Is he prepared to lay on the table of the House all the papers in connection with his refusal to grant permission to the solicitor acting for Mrs. Miocevic to take proceedings against a certain individual in regard to an overcharge of about £3,000?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

I have not seen what confidential information is on the file, but if the hon. member cares to see it, it will be available to him at the Crown Law Department.

MEAT.

As to Glenroy Station Stock and Transport Subsidy.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Can he supply the average weights of carcass beef treated by Air Beef Company at Glenroy?

(2) What price is paid to the producer for cattle supplied to these works?

(3) What is the subsidy rate paid by the Government to MacRobertson-Millar Aviation Co. for carrying beef from Broome to the metropolitan area, if any?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The average weight of all carcass beef treated at Glenroy is not available. The last lot killed averaged 656 lb. Figures available indicate material average increase in weight by killing at Glenroy Abattoirs as compared with previous year's droving to Wyndham Meatworks;

(2) The information asked for is not available to the Government.

(3) A refund of all freight to the extent of 1½d. to 2d. per lb. is paid to the Broome Meatworks for beef transported by air from Broome to the metropolitan area.

NATIVE ADMINISTRATION.

(a) As to Udialla Station.

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

(1) Has any application for the lease or sale of Udialla Native Settlement been made to the Department?

(2) In view of the unsatisfactory sale of stock from this settlement will he give an assurance that no such methods will be repeated in any intended lease or sale?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) One inquiry has recently been received as to whether Udialla is for sale.

(2) No unsatisfactory sale of sheep was made. The manager has reported that Udialla was mostly eaten out and that on mustering a deficiency of 165 sheep was, in his opinion, due to the dry season and the lack of grass.

(b) As to Rations and Stock at Udialla.

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

(1) What was the total number of natives receiving rations at Udialla Native Settlement on the 7th October, 1948?

(2) What was the total number of unmarked lambs handed over to the purchaser of the Udialla sheep?

(3) What is the anticipated number of stragglers that will now be collected?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 101, including children, and including natives who had left employment on stations to go to live at Udialla.

(2) The report of the manager on mustering the sheep prior to sale showed that there had been 216 lambs.

(3) The report of the manager showed that there had been a very complete muster, the country being covered as far as 24 miles to the south and 8 miles to the north of Udialla, and that there would be few, if any, stragglers.

(c) *As to Tabling Departmental Report.*

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

Can he advise the House at what date he proposes to table the annual report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs?

The MINISTER replied:

The next annual report will be made as soon as practicable. It is expected that the report will be tabled this Session.

RABBIT PEST.

As to Virus for Eradication.

Mr. LESLIE asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Were the results of the experiments conducted by the C.S.I.R. into the use of the rabbit virus for the eradication of rabbits of such a nature as to provide definite and conclusive evidence of the practicability of the use of this method in combating the rabbit pest in Western Australia?

(2) If the results were not sufficiently definite and conclusive, are experiments still being continued?

(3) Will he arrange for the use of this method under practical conditions in Western Australia?

(4) If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) No. Representations have been made to the C.S. & I.R.O. with a view to reopening the experiment.

(3) Not until advice has been received from the C.S. & I.R.O.

(4) Answered by No. 3.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

As to Special Grants.

Mr. HILL asked the Premier:

What was the total of special grants made to the University of Western Australia—

(a) in the year before the present Government came to power;

(b) in the last financial year?

The PREMIER replied:

Year 1946/1947.

	£
Special Acts ..	46,845
Additional Grant	12,812
Faculty of Dental Science ..	4,000
	<hr/>
Year 1947/1948.	£63,657

	£
Special Acts ..	46,845
Additional Grant	41,456
Faculty of Dental Science ..	4,000
	<hr/>
	£92,301

MILK.

(a) *As to Price and Cost of Production.*

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

(1) Was the Royal Commissioner's finding in connection with the price of milk based on the cost of production on the farm?

(2) Has there been any appreciable increase in the cost of production since the price of milk was last fixed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Royal Commissioner's report indicates how he arrived at his findings.

(2) A slight increase due to basic wage rise.

(b) *As to Bottled Supplies and Treatment Plants.*

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

(1) Is it the intention of the Milk Board to require that all milk supplied to the public be contained in bottles?

(2) When is it expected to enforce this requirement?

(3) How many holders of milk treatment licenses are at present equipped to supply bottled milk exclusively?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, to householders.

(2) As soon as practicable after September next.

(3) One.

FEEDING STUFFS.

As to Mash Analyses and Prosecutions.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) How many tests have been made by officers of the Agricultural Department of prepared mashes registered under the Feeding Stuffs Act since the 1st January, 1949?

(2) Have any samples been found to be below the analysis registered with the department?

(3) Have prosecutions been launched against such manufacturers infringing the regulations, and what was the result thereof?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Forty-six samples have been taken, but analysis of all samples has not yet been completed.

(2) All results to date have been satisfactory.

(3) Answered by No. 2.

STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION.

As to Tabling Reports and Balance Sheets.

Hon. E. NULSEN (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

Will he inform the House why the State Electricity Commission has never complied with the Act and laid on the Table of the House its annual report and balance sheet for the years ended the 30th June, 1946-47 and the 30th June, 1947-48?

The MINISTER replied:

Certain items in the balance sheets have been the subject of review by the Auditor General and the Grants Commission. These matters have been cleared up and amended balance sheets are now being prepared.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS.

As to Time Limit for Lodgment and Synchronisation of Clocks.

Mr. STYANTS (without notice) asked the Speaker:

Yesterday, at two minutes to five by the clock over your head, Mr. Speaker, I sent a number of questions to the officials of the Assembly, to be placed on the notice paper for today. The Assistant Clerk of the Assembly was good enough to send me back word that as it was then after five o'clock,

the questions would not appear until Tuesday's notice paper. The position was brought about by a discrepancy in the times of the clock over your head and the one immediately in front of you. If members have a look at the two clocks now, they will see the same position obtains today. So as to prevent a repetition of this occurrence, and because of the exactitude of the Standing Orders and their rigid application by the officials of the Assembly, I would like to ask whether you will take action to see that the clocks are synchronised before the commencement of each sitting of the House?

The SPEAKER replied:

The Standing Orders provide that notices of questions may be handed in at any time during the day up to 30 minutes after the House assembles. These questions have then to be typed to be sent to Ministers. Owing to the volume received since the session resumed, the House typists have been engaged long after their usual time for ceasing duty; hence the need to observe the Standing Orders carefully. The clock facing me is the only clock that can be seen by the Clerks, by "Hansard" and by myself, and it keeps accurate time. The other clock, put into the Chamber of recent years, is unfortunately not such a good time-keeper, but efforts will be made to synchronise the clocks. I would advise members to use the clock that can be seen by the officers of the House and myself.

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

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st June.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [5.11]:

The purpose of this Bill is to continue control over building materials. I, like almost all members of this House, regret that it is necessary still to control certain essential commodities. Controls of any kind are unpopular, mainly because they are irksome to a people who have not had much experience of them. The thought that our freedom is to be restricted is objectionable, and controls of any kind produce anomalies and injustices in their administration. That cannot be helped. No matter what the political

colour of the Government in power, there will be those who are able to get round the controls or put up convincing stories and submit circumstances that, on investigation, will convince the keenest observer.

A couple of years ago the member for East Perth drew the attention of the House to injustices and anomalies that existed in regard to the granting of building permits. I am sure it was not his intention at that time to suggest that those anomalies should be laid at the door of the Minister concerned or other members of Cabinet, or for that matter at the door of members on either side of the House. It is not logical for members of the Opposition, therefore—because there are loopholes by means of which some people are able to obtain an unjust share of those goods that are in short supply—to try to sheet that home as the direct responsibility of the present Government. Criticism should at all times be helpful.

When dealing with controls generally, it must be remembered that the purpose of controlling goods that are in short supply and for which the demand is great, is not to see that all deserving cases are satisfied—because if that were possible there would be no need for control. It is rather so to arrange the distribution of the goods that the most deserving cases will have their requirements met first. Of course we would like to see the needs of all such cases met. It is no use members of the Opposition drawing the attention of the House to individual instances, and saying that there is something wrong with the administration of the controls or that the Government is at fault. Those whose duty it is to implement the controls are doing their duty according to the spirit and intention of the control legislation, and are making sure that the worst cases are being met.

Mr. Graham: That has been argued.

Mr. LESLIE: Members have in the past—and I believe will in future—brought individual cases or hardship to the notice of the House.

Mr. Read: Hundreds of them.

Mr. LESLIE: I agree that they exist, at the purpose of control is to meet the most deserving cases. If it can be shown that that is where control has broken down, there is justification for criticism, in order that the situation may be investigated. Unfortunately many cases where injustice has

been done have not been brought to the notice of the authorities and in such circumstances suitable action cannot be taken to deter others from deceiving the officers who administer this unpopular control under our present set-up. When the Government assumed office it was faced with an unsatisfactory position throughout the State.

Mr. May: It is still unsatisfactory.

Mr. LESLIE: It will always be unsatisfactory.

Mr. Fox: You have said that three years too late.

Mr. LESLIE: I hope the day never arrives when I will be able to say I am satisfied with conditions in the world, because that would be knuckling down to complacency. The position will never be satisfactory to me.

Mr. May: Do you mean that you want this state of affairs to continue?

Mr. LESLIE: The position was acutely unsatisfactory when the present Government took office. The previous Government was exercising, to the best of its ability, a stringent control over materials that were in short supply. It was doing that with the best intentions—with the same intentions as we have today—to see that the most deserving cases received their just deserts. The present Government was concerned with removing those controls. We were not satisfied to sit down and say, "There is a shortage of materials and we want everyone to get a fair spin, so we will maintain controls." We will not have controls if we can possibly get away from them. This Government therefore set itself the task of removing the controls in the only possible way—by obtaining an increased supply of goods. We could have sat here, quite satisfied that in our opinion everyone was receiving justice as far as was possible under the controls that existed, but we were not satisfied to do that, and we told the people so.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You told them a lot of other things, also.

Mr. LESLIE: We said we would remove controls as soon as possible, and the only way to do that was by stimulating production. If it is suggested that during the past two, or nearly three years, that this Government has been in office production has not greatly increased in building materials

and in other directions, then I say that members on the Opposition side, purely for political purposes, are blinding themselves to circumstances. I would like to tell a story.

Mr. Hegney: It wouldn't be the first time!

Hon. A. H. Panton: A bedtime story?

Mr. LESLIE: It is a factual story and concerns an event that occurred at the closing stages of the recent war. On one of my visits to my electorate, I took with me an English sailor from one of the ships then in Fremantle harbour. The idea, of course, was to let him see some of the outback areas of Western Australia, and he displayed a keen interest. This event occurred at the time of the year when our wheat crops were just at the ripening stage, and it was a thrill to me to show him wheat in ear which would probably be turned into bread and which the people of England would be eating. We reached a point in my electorate where there is a very high hill which commands a view of a wide expanse of country.

Mr. Hegney: It would not be Mukinbudin would it?

Mr. LESLIE: We stood on the hill, and I pointed out to him the remarkable development that could be seen. There were patches of virgin bush but generally we saw fallowed fields, a couple of farm houses, a few sheep and ample green and gold grain. I said to him, "What do you think of this? Isn't this a marvellous bit of work; waste country turned into production?" He then said to me, "Yes, it is sure good."

Mr. Hegney: He must have been a Yank.

Mr. LESLIE: Those were his words. He then said, "The thing that surprises me, as you stand and look, is the miles and miles of nothing at all." If the ground could have swallowed me at that stage, I could not have received a greater surprise. I suggest that that is exactly what Opposition members are doing in regard to material supplies for building purposes. They look around and see evidence of the improvements in supplies, but it just does not mean anything to them; they see nothing at all.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Where is the analogy?

Mr. LESLIE: In this morning's paper—

Mr. May: When do we laugh?

Mr. LESLIE: If members of the Opposition cannot see the point of the analogy in the story, then they are far more lacking in perception than the story itself suggests. In this morning's paper, Mr. Mattiske, who is the organising director of the Building Industry Congress—

Mr. Graham: He got as much space as all the members of this House put together.

Mr. LESLIE: He may have done, but one has to use one's influence on the gentlemen upstairs in that direction.

Mr. Graham: You sure do.

Mr. LESLIE: This man is the organising director of a very representative body which, so far as I know, includes representatives of the contractors, or employers, and the working people engaged in the building industry. They are all connected with the building industry. So I assume that he is speaking the truth, and if he is not then his statements will be refuted by somebody in tomorrow's paper.

Mr. Graham: You can bet that it is not the truth.

Mr. LESLIE: I know enough of the facts from other sources to realise that Mr. Mattiske's statements are founded on actual facts and a knowledge of the circumstances. In his statement, he tells of the improvement that has taken place in the supply of building materials.

Mr. Styants: He does not have to run around and try to get materials to build a home.

Mr. LESLIE: In his statement, Mr. Mattiske says that, taking 1938-39 as the base year at 100 per cent., the supply of asbestos sheeting increased in 1948 to 275 per cent. That is an increase of 175 per cent. over the base year. Bricks, unfortunately, show a decrease from 100 per cent. to 89 per cent. on the base year, while cement has increased to 103 per cent. as against 100 per cent. Fibrous plaster sheeting is now 154 per cent., as against the 100 per cent. in 1938-39.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It speaks volumes for the 40-hour week.

Mr. LESLIE: The production of tiles has increased from 100 per cent. in the base

year to 178 per cent. in 1948, and timber, for local consumption, has increased to 106 per cent.

Mr. Hoar: That is not true.

Mr. LESLIE: I have not worked out the percentages, but in 1938—

Mr. Hoar: You have not read it correctly.

Mr. LESLIE: —the production of timber was 123,853,000 superficial feet, but in 1947-48 it was 130,795,000 superficial feet. The production of cement in 1947-48 was on a par with the cement production in 1938-39, but it showed a considerable increase over the production in the year prior to this Government's taking office, and that has occurred with all types of materials. If we were to compare the production in 1946 with present-day production of all materials, we would see an astonishing increase. But we wish to be fair, and we say that in 1946 circumstances were such, or may have been such, as to limit the production rate. There may have been circumstances over which the Government, or any Government that might have been in office, had no control.

So we go back to the base year of 1938-39, and compare the production figures as against that year, and we find an increase in the cement supply, as well as on other items. Difficulties have arisen during the last two or three years, or at least we have found them, which have definitely limited the efforts of this Government to increase or stimulate production; difficulties, I remind members, which were previously unknown, and one of them was the East Perth power house. It is possible that we on this side of the House may have sounded a note of warning to the people of this State in 1946 in connection with power had it not been for the fact that information regarding the actual position of the power house was withheld from the people.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Who withheld it?

Mr. LESLIE: It was withheld and not made known until this Government took office.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You knew about it.

Mr. LESLIE: The people of this State did not know of the dire straits of the power position in Western Australia until this Government took office and gave a true picture of the situation.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is not true. You are telling untruths.

Mr. LESLIE: We were aware of the difficulties, but not for a moment were we aware of the true position. We knew there were difficulties, and we also knew that things were not as good as they might be. When the Royal Commissioner was appointed to inquire into the railways, he virtually told us in his report that at any moment our railway system might break down entirely.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You do not need a Royal Commissioner to tell you that.

Mr. LESLIE: We knew they were bad and we have endeavoured, since then, to right the wrongs made by the previous Government.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You are not practising on us for your election speech for the Commonwealth Parliament, are you?

Mr. LESLIE: The record of the Government up to now is such that the criticism levelled against it is not justified.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must keep to the objects of the Bill.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. member knows more than you do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LESLIE: The member for Murchison might extend to other members on the floor of the House the same courtesy that is shown to him.

Mr. Marshall: I demand it, but I do not make such a fool of myself as you do.

Mr. LESLIE: Unfortunately, we do not like to see the continuance of controls and we have made every effort to lift them. Where they have been lifted it is as a result of stimulation of production which this Government has effected. The other evening I listened to this Government being criticised for the importation of cement. What were we to do? Were we to do the same as the previous Government, that is, say that there was a shortage of cement and impose controls to ration it? The object of this Government was to go out and get it and that is what it did. We will ensure that all the cement we can produce will be made available to those who urgently require it. Large volumes of material have been imported into the State so that shortages of supplies can be overcome and so that controls which we are deciding to continue can be lifted as speedily as possible. As to the criticism regarding extra cost that, of course, must follow.

Are we to say that people are to be denied those materials because of the additional cost resulting from their importation? We have also been criticised as to our exports of timber. One member said it was similar to a family taking supplies from its own larder to give to someone else and letting its own family members go without. Surely Opposition members can take an object lesson from Great Britain where the people are denied the use of a great many items so that these can be exported to other countries. What would happen if we said to other States in the Commonwealth which require some of our timber, "You cannot have it." Would they not be justified in replying, "Very well, you cannot have our steel products or the baths and sinks that you require."

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Do we have to give them more than we are keeping for ourselves?

Mr. LESLIE: What would the hon. member give them?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: We are supplying them with more than we are keeping for ourselves for house building.

Mr. LESLIE: I am not prepared to argue with hon. members because I do not know what the position is, but I do know that the question of the export of timber generally has been raised.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Are you satisfied with the export position?

Mr. LESLIE: I am satisfied that we have to export in the same way as do other States. I do not know whether Victoria and New South Wales are exporting to us more baths and steel sinks than they retain for themselves. They could possibly let us have a lot more, but in order to meet our requirements members know that they are supplying us with materials which they could well use themselves.

Mr. Hoar: Are you referring to oversea exports?

Mr. LESLIE: I am referring to exports anywhere. It is an entirely foolish argument to say that we should not export some of our timber. I would not be at all surprised if the Labour Government in New South Wales is subject to criticism similar to that which this Government has had from members of the Opposition.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It is possibly worse. We are gentlemen compared with those in New South Wales.

Mr. LESLIE: Earlier in the session I asked some questions regarding the construction of ready-made homes. I want to draw the Minister's attention to one particular aspect which concerned me. I agree that this plan for ready-made homes will mean a speeding up of the building programme for which a supply of controlled and decontrolled materials will be made available. I have gone to some trouble to make inquiries since the Government announced its intention in this regard and I find that that is so. But there is one aspect regarding the materials that are used for this house building. It is possible that an applicant for a war service home may decide to withdraw his application in order to obtain one of these ready-made homes.

But, unless an exceptionally rigid standard is set in relation to the construction of these places, some of the applicants who eventually desire their homes to be taken over by the War Service Homes Commission will find that it cannot be done, because they will not comply with the standard set by it. The use of the controlled and decontrolled materials that are to be put into these ready-made homes—although the plans and specifications may not be in accordance with those laid down by the War Service Homes Commission—should be of a standard high enough to be acceptable to the Commission when it is asked to take them over.

Mr. Hoar: Who forces them to do that?

Mr. LESLIE: The hon. member knows there are building regulations everywhere. I think I have succeeded in showing that this criticism over the building materials is far from justified. We hear quite a lot about co-operation in this Chamber and particularly from Opposition members.

Hon. A. H. Panton: More is heard about it from the two Parties on the Government side of the House.

Mr. LESLIE: I am glad to hear that. I have in mind the co-operation shown during the war period. Regardless of what Government was in power, I was one among those who went into the industrial establishments and factories to urge workers to increase their production. The problems that we are facing throughout Australia today, regardless of what Government is in power, are

sufficient to justify practical co-operation by deed rather than by word to increase production and make available essential supplies of material to eliminate controls. So I suggest that Labour members would do a far greater service for those they seek to assist if they would personally and publicly urge the workers engaged in industry to do all they possibly can to increase their efforts to ensure sufficient supplies of essential materials. As much as I regret it, I support the second reading of the Bill.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [5.40]: My regret is that the Government has found it necessary to bring the Bill before the House. As I have stated on many occasions, I dislike any form of control. In view of our experience during the war period and since with regard to local controls, I am firmly of the opinion that they do not give satisfaction. Even if not exactly to the extreme extent implied by a person who, in expressing his dissatisfaction, said that all controls developed into ramps, I am certain that system does not give satisfaction to the people. I had expected, bearing in mind the anticipations of the Minister last year, when speaking on a similar measure, a considerable improvement in the supply position. Evidently he and his colleagues in the Ministry are having difficulty with the cobwebs and are finding them so dense that they have to struggle to extricate themselves.

Last session, when introducing similar legislation, the Minister said he anticipated the supply would meet the demand by this time in 1949. Of course, it would be idle and extremely fatuous to say that the position is satisfactory today. It is quite true, as pointed out by the Minister, the member for Mt. Marshall, and Mr. Mattiske, that production has increased. That was only to be expected. It would be amazing if that were not the position because of the personnel released from war service and the hundreds of able-bodied migrants who, during the last 12 months, have been brought to this country and have gone into the timber and other industries that cater for building requirements. Of course, supplies have increased to a considerable extent. On the other hand, from the point of view of the person who requires but cannot secure materials for his home, it is quite useless to say merely that the supplies of materials have increased.

The position is unsatisfactory because the demand has increased beyond the capacity of the materials available to satisfy it. Not until supply meets demand will the position be satisfactory and until that point is reached it is futile to suggest that the situation is other than unsatisfactory. I believe that it is more unsatisfactory today than when operations were directly under the control of the State Housing Commission. The Minister was warned last year what would happen, and unfortunately our greatest fears with regard to the abuses likely to arise have materialised. I would like the Minister or Mr. Mattiske to go round with others on a visit to the various firms catering for the supply of building materials and see what a hopeless, discouraging task it is to procure the necessities for the erection of a house. Under the control exercised by the State Housing Commission, as revealed by a Royal Commission that investigated the position, certain abuses did take place.

I believe control by the State Housing Commission was much more successful than has been control by the trade. It is of no use to say that building materials have been decontrolled, because they have not been decontrolled at all. They are still controlled by virtue of the fact that an intending builder has to secure a permit from the State Housing Commission before there is any possibility of his securing materials for the erection of a house. In my opinion, the trade has not done the job expected of it by the Minister when he decided to decontrol various materials. He is experiencing difficulties now, because of certain influences, in his desire again to place the control of certain materials under the jurisdiction of the State Housing Commission.

To the person who is endeavouring unsuccessfully to secure the release of materials, it is little comfort for the Minister or anyone else to make a comparison with what is taking place in the Eastern States. I was over there for a couple of months during the year and, in my opinion, based on what I saw, there is no greater demand for homes per head of the population in the East than there is in Western Australia. When we consider that in Western Australia, with a population of slightly over 500,000, we have 15,000 unfulfilled applications for homes and comparing that position with the situation in New South Wales,

which has a population of over 2,000,000, we find that the unfulfilled demand for homes there is no greater per head of the population than it is here.

I was interested in the references by the Minister to rents charged for Commonwealth-State homes in New South Wales. When moving the second reading of the Bill the other night, he said that in that State tenants were being charged up to 45s. per week for such homes compared with rentals of from 32s. 6d. to 35s. per week in this State. What is not clear to me is how that rental could be charged in New South Wales under the provisions set out in the agreement between the Commonwealth and the States.

The Minister for Housing: The comparison relates to economic rentals.

Mr. STYANTS: I appreciate the fact that the economic rent may not be the rent that is being paid. If the Minister would make a mental calculation he would see that before a man could be required to pay 45s. per week for a Commonwealth-State home, he would have to be in receipt of a salary of £11 or £12 a week. I was informed that in New South Wales the same system operates as applies here—those in greatest need and unable to obtain homes themselves secure preference. I had an opportunity to inspect some of the large groups of homes that are being built in New South Wales and to discuss the position with a number of tenants there. From what I was told, I ascertained that it would be in very rare instances only that a rental of 45s. would be paid, because of the fact that the tenant would have to be in receipt of a salary of about £12 a week before he could be called upon to pay such a sum.

I was also interested in the figures supplied by the Minister relative to the cost of houses. He stated that the Commonwealth-State homes being built by the Government, which I concede are a very good job, are today costing for a five-roomed house—that is, the three-bedroom type—£1,545. That might be the cost of such homes in this State—Commonwealth-State homes—but I guarantee that if the Minister got a contractor to build one for him privately, he would not get it for less than £1,900.

The Minister for Housing: I do not think I could get one at all because I could not get a permit.

Mr. STYANTS: Therefore it is misleading to say that the average cost of a five-roomed brick house in this State is £1,545 because, owing to certain arrangements having been entered into and to the employment of mass-production methods, Commonwealth-State houses are being built at a lower figure than any private contractor would quote.

The Minister for Housing: I gave those figures for the Commonwealth. I did not claim that private contractors would build for that.

Mr. STYANTS: To quote percentages at any time can be very deceptive. I have an instance that will clearly illustrate my point. A man took up a mixed farm and claimed on the census twelve months later that his herd had increased by 100 per cent. The percentage was quite correct, but the facts are that, when he started, he had one cow and during the year the cow had a calf, so that he had actually increased his herd 100 per cent., although the increase was only one unit. The fact that the supplies of asbestos sheets have increased from a base of 100 to 245 per cent. is not an indication that there is sufficient of this material being manufactured for the requirements of building today. The supply is insufficient. The use of asbestos sheets in 1939—the base year quoted by the Minister—was not nearly as extensive as it is today, and I again point out that the position would not be satisfactory, even had the increase been 500 per cent., if the supply was not equal to the demand. That is the acid test. The position will not be satisfactory until building requirements can be satisfied.

On the inquiries I have made, I believe that there is definitely a shortage of bricks. I know of a self-help house that a man was erecting—and it could not be more than a modest dwelling—having been held up for two-and-a-half months for tiles. I agree with the member for North-East Fremantle that certain types of timber are in very short supply. A contractor reaches a certain stage with his building and then is held up for a particular class of timber, and he has to move his men to another job, provided he has another job at the stage where they can proceed with the work.

I asked questions last week about the supply of galvanised iron guttering, and the Minister replied that the advice he had received from his officers was that building was not being seriously retarded because of the shortage of this iron. I do not know what they meant by the term "not being seriously retarded," but for the last three weeks, with perhaps the exception of the last few days, no galvanised iron has been available in this State to make guttering for even one house.

I was interested in endeavouring to get some guttering for a returned soldier whose home had been carried to the wall-plate stage and, according to the contractor, was being held up for lack of guttering, which had to be fixed before the roof was tiled. I approached officials of the Housing Commission to see whether they could do anything. They were very co-operative and tried to get some flat iron, which could be sent to a plumbing firm for making up, but my advice was that there was not a bit in the State. I understand that since then a small quantity has arrived by one of the boats.

The Minister for Housing: Eight thousand tons are awaiting shipment in New South Wales at the present time.

Mr. STYANTS: New South Wales is a long way distant and it would take a long time to get shipping space allotted and to deliver the iron to the plumbers here. Definitely there is a shortage of these materials. The ideal would have been for the Commission to exercise control of all building materials and strictly police the issue of permits. Then, before issuing a permit, the Commission could have assured itself that the requisite materials were available for the job. If this system had been adopted, on a £1,800 house—I have this on the authority of a contractor friend of mine—it would be possible to save an amount of £300 to the prospective owner. My friend informed me that with the uncertainty of material supplies, on a £1,800 or £1,900 job, contractors would allow at least £300 for loss of time incurred by the staff in waiting for materials.

Even when the Commission did have control of the materials, it was not 100 per cent. efficient. The policy it adopted was that a builder, after having established his

needs, was issued with a permit to build, and the Commission then washed its hands of the matter of his obtaining supplies. It was left to the individual or the contractor to get supplies as best he could. At one stage the Commission had issued permits for building that entailed six months' supply of bricks in advance, and had to cancel for almost that period the issuing of any further permits that involved the use of bricks. Had the Commission adopted the course I have indicated and strictly co-ordinated the issuing of permits with the material available, intending builders would have been assured that when a permit had been granted, the contractor could obtain his requirements, and he in turn would have been sure of not having to incur long periods of idle time for his men awaiting the procurement of material.

I believe too much timber is being exported, not as building material but as sleepers and large dimension timber. The timber so exported constitutes a great deal of the produce of our mills. I quite believe what the Minister told the House the other night as to the visit of the Premier of South Australia to this State and his desire to get more Western Australian timber for use in South Australia; but I also believe that the Premier of South Australia had no chance of attaining his objective even had he interviewed the Minister, which the Minister assured us he did not. It was rather unfortunate that on the day after the Minister made that statement a report appeared in the newspaper of a record shipment from Busselton. I made inquiries in shipping circles and found that not only had that record been established at Busselton, but also that a large quantity of timber had been shipped from Bunbury as well.

While I realise the expediency of exporting a certain quantity of our timber, I think we are sending too much at present overseas and to the Eastern States. When I was in Port Adelaide some time ago, a man interested in the building trade showed me a vacant space which he said was, before the war, filled with jarrah. There was then not a stick of timber in that space and therefore I am quite sure that South Australia's jarrah requirements are not being met. I consider it would be an advantage to the State if for a period of at least two years the greater part of our forest products was retained for local building purposes. We

shall not overcome the timber shortage until we take action along those lines. I was surprised and perturbed to observe a building of two storeys that was being erected at Mt. Lawley for a doctor and his wife, who happened to be a nurse.

The Minister for Housing: A dentist.

Mr. STYANTS: That is right. There are consulting rooms in the house for both the doctor and his wife and other elaborate accommodation. What particularly struck me was the size of the garage. The explanation given by the State Housing Commission was that somebody had inadvertently altered the permit for the garage when certain other alterations were made to the plans. It is exceedingly distasteful to me that a garage big enough to house two cars should be provided for a doctor. The explanation was that he should have a garage for his car, because he was likely to be called out at all hours of the night. I would advise any person who wants to test the truth of the old story that the doctor is on duty 24 hours per day to endeavour to get one about 3 a.m. and see how successful he would be. I telephoned a doctor asking him to attend a returned soldier who was suffering from an acute attack of malaria. The doctor lived only four doors away, but he recommended the man's wife to take him to the Hollywood Hospital. I know that there are doctors who will turn out to attend urgent cases; but it is not as easy, as the old bed-time story would indicate, to find a doctor who will come on any pretext at any time of the night he is called.

But what made the garage so distasteful to me is this: The Minister will recollect that I endeavoured to get him to agree to the erection of a garage for a returned soldier whose health had been impaired, as a consequence of his service overseas, in the Middle East and to the north of Australia, as well as in Australia, to such an extent that he was discharged from the Army. His health was not good enough to permit of his doing heavy manual labour and so he purchased a car to assist him in earning his livelihood. While he was having a war service home built, I endeavoured to get the Minister to agree to the building of a garage to house the car, which, as I said, was required for his livelihood. Despite my negotiations with the Minister and his with the Housing Commission, the request was refused. In the course of the negotiations

the Minister said he thought a case might successfully be put up for a taxi driver or a doctor.

I ask members, particularly those who are returned soldiers and are sitting on the back benches, whether they would approve of a taxi driver getting a permit for a garage while a returned soldier, whose health was impaired while defending his country, could not get a permit for a garage to house a car necessary for him to earn his livelihood. I find that this doctor not only gets a garage for his car but he gets one which in dimension is almost as big as, or perhaps bigger than, the amount of square feet of floor space allowed to many people who are building self-help homes. That is the sort of thing that is nauseating to members and does not reflect much credit on those supposed to be controlling building materials in this State. I now want to deal with the newspaper report referred to by the member for Mt. Marshall, and the statement made by Mr. Mattiske.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You can leave him to me, if you like.

Mr. STYANTS: I forget what position he holds in the organisation which produces building materials, but I know it is quite a responsible one. I do not know the gentleman myself, but I do not think his statements would be very convincing if they were analysed to any extent. To begin with, he endeavours to show that all the increase in the cost of building has been brought about by the increase in wages. He quotes the wage of a building tradesman in 1945-46 as being £6 19s. 7d., and in 1949, £9 11s. 6d. He claims that there is a percentage rise—here is this percentage business again, which can be made to mean almost anything!—of 57.9 in wages when it is taken into consideration that there has been a reduction of working hours from 44 to 40 per week, and that the building tradesmen now have a fortnight's annual holiday.

I will leave it to members to make a calculation and see whether they can confirm Mr. Mattiske's conclusions. I have tried. I have made a liberal allowance for the reduction from 44 hours to 40 hours per week, and also discarded the idea that building employees might have had any holidays in 1945-46, and given them the full fortnight's holiday now, and I still cannot make anything approaching an increase of nearly 55

per cent. Mr. Mattiske's statement, when read by the casual observer, would suggest that everything in the garden is lovely and everyone requiring building materials can get them without any great delay; but it will be found on closer scrutiny of the statement that he makes quite a number of half admissions that the position is not as he would like it to appear on the surface.

He admits that the production of asbestos sheeting is limited because of the inability of the trade to get the white fibre necessary, and that an endeavour is being made to obtain some from South Africa. So he concedes that the position in that connection is not quite satisfactory. He also admits that the timber industry has suffered a particularly severe setback on account of the power restrictions. Then he says that supplies of iron and steel products from overseas are being sought until the position is relieved in this State, which is an admission that there is a shortage of those things here. That was the basis of the contention of the Leader of the Opposition the other night when speaking on this measure, a contention that was so much criticised by Mr. Mattiske. He also said that there were specified quantities of timber to be exported to the Eastern States under instructions from the Commonwealth timber controller. I suppose Mr. Mattiske knows as well as I do that that would not stand a test in any court of law in Australia—a direction from the Commonwealth timber controller that a certain amount of timber has to be sent from this State to the Eastern States.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: This officer is a South Australian gentleman. He has a partiality for South Australia.

Mr. STYANTS: I suggest that if it did not suit Mr. Mattiske and his association to send this quantity to the Eastern States, they would very quickly take the same action as was taken in Queensland recently when interested people opposed to the control and rationing of petrol had an obscure individual charged with the possession of 119 petrol coupons, and then paid his expenses in a case before the High Court of Australia. If Mr. Mattiske and his organisation were not satisfied with the direction from the Commonwealth timber controller, they would very quickly test it

in the law courts of Australia and would find that that direction did not have the force of law to back it up.

Dealing with the observations of the member for North-East Fremantle, Mr. Mattiske said that if there was any lost time on the job—and he did not refute the statement of the member for North-East Fremantle that there was a certain amount of time lost, though he did say there was not the amount claimed by the member for North-East Fremantle—such time was lost in shifting workmen from one job to another, or for some other reason, and that loss was borne by the builder himself. That is a very naive explanation. He knows quite well, as we do, that the builder adds £300 to his contract price on every 5-roomed house to cover those particular losses, which are not borne by the builder at all, but by the prospective owner.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. STYANTS: Prior to the tea suspension I had said practically all I wished to say on this matter. I was dealing with a Press statement by a gentleman by the name of Mattiske. I want to say in conclusion that we can understand Mr. Mattiske, as an official of this organisation, being satisfied with the present state of affairs, because there is a ready and anxious market for everything that can be produced by his organisation. I feel, however, without any personal knowledge of this gentleman, that if he were placed in the position of those unfortunate individuals who have tried by a dozen different means and over a long period to get the materials necessary for the erection of their homes, he would probably not be in such a self-satisfied frame of mind. I hope the Minister will not get into a state of complacency because he finds that the pre-war production of building materials has been exceeded in some cases, and almost approached in others.

The Minister for Housing: There is no fear of that.

Mr. STYANTS: I am pleased to hear the Minister's remark, because pre-war production is not sufficient in a post-war boom when there is, I should say, an unprecedented demand for all types of buildings. I regret it is necessary to continue these controls, but I realise the absolute necessity for doing so. The great objection I have is to the

form of control by the trade. I would much rather see an amendment to provide that the control should go back to the State Housing Commission. I realise that if the controls are not continued there will be a rush to build hotels, picture palaces, buildings at pleasure resorts and so on, so that the man with limited financial resources would not be in the hunt as far as getting building materials, to construct a home for himself and his family, is concerned. In deciding to support the Bill for a continuance of these controls, I do so with a certain amount of reluctance. I hope that by next year the supply of all types of building materials will be such that the demand can be met, and I will then have great pleasure in voting for any measure to release all materials from control.

MR. REYNOLDS (Forrest) [7.35]: I regret the Minister for Housing was unable to give me replies to my questions. I feel that I have been somewhat stymied.

The Minister for Housing: They involve a tremendous amount of research.

Mr. REYNOLDS: However, I realise that the Minister and his department have been bombarded with questions in the last four or five days, and no doubt they are experiencing great difficulty in answering them, or in obtaining the necessary information. If the Minister has had a harrowing, or tough and trying time since he has been administering this department, what a trying time must the previous Minister have had, when he had to launch the scheme and commence almost from a standing start! When the present Minister took over he had a flying start. I am convinced that the progress which could have been made has not been achieved.

The Minister for Housing, when speaking on the Bill last Thursday, did his utmost to paint a rosy and glorious picture of house building under his control. To my way of thinking he has been wearing rose tinted glasses, pulling his own leg and allowing others to pull it for him. His speech was most contradictory and illogical, and contained some truths, some half-truths and some untruths. I cannot understand a responsible Minister of the Crown making so many misstatements and miscalculations, and hoping to get away with them in an attempt to bolster up the house building muddle.

Unfortunately we are getting deeper and deeper into the mire. In the course of his speech the Minister said that in the case of timber, the production unlike other materials, was below the pre-war average, and that the chief reason for the failure of the timber industry was lack of labour, especially skilled labour, as well as lack of plant and materials. I am of the opinion that the shortage of labour, not so much the lack of plant and materials, has been the limiting factor.

The Minister for Housing: I do not think you know much about it.

Mr. REYNOLDS: I will just prove to the Minister that I know a little more than he does. In 1928 the production was over 19 million cubic feet. In 1938—the year before the war—the production was over 14.3 million cubic feet, and in 1948 it was 10.5 million cubic feet. So, in the intervening years there was a decrease of 3.8 million cubic feet. I admit that several mills went out of production during the war period. The mill at Marrinup ceased production and the North Dandalup mill shifted to Serpentine. The Argyle mill went out of production and the Nanga Brook mill was decreased in size. All in all, however, the same number of mills was in production, but during that period we saw a decrease in production of 3.8 million cubic feet. Had the mills been able to obtain the necessary labour the pre-war output could have been reached and maintained.

I have on a number of occasions visited the mills in the Forrest electorate. Some of them have had to cease production for 12 or 24 hours owing to lack of logs or shortage of navvies, but I maintain that we could have reached pre-war production had we been able to secure the necessary labour. I notice that "The West Australian" had this to say about the Minister's speech—that timber production was larger than ever. Of course, that was not what the Minister said, but I notice that he did not attempt to have that corrected. Later on he made these startling revelations:

The internal position, I am advised, should be easier by the end of the year as six new mills are coming into production before the end of the year. Some are coming into production straight away and the advice I have received from my department is that with the

aid of these mills the timber position should be reasonably in hand by the end of the present year.

Let us investigate these six new mills. I will deal first with the new Shannon mill. Yesterday I questioned the Minister, who told me that the Shannon River mill would be coming into production within the next 18 to 24 months, and that the Hakea mill would be going out of production. I know this to be a fact, because some three or four months ago, when down that way, I met one of the foremen, who told me that before the Shannon mill came into production the Hakea mill would go out of production, as they wanted its plant and machinery for the Shannon. That means that we are going to lose a good old jarrah mill and gain a karri mill. Moreover, the homes at Hakea will have to be shifted to the Shannon mill. During that transitional period there will be a loss of production and of time, and it will be at least two years before the Shannon mill can come into production.

The Kauri Timber & Trading Company, another of the new mills, will not come into production until 12 or 15 months hence, and it will then replace the old Nannup mill which is to be reduced considerably in size and in regard to the number of men employed. The Dinninup mill is nearly ready to commence operations but it will be two or three months yet before it makes a start. That is the only really new mill that I know of that will come into production before the end of the year. There will be difficulty in finding staff for that mill and I think they will be able to secure only a skeleton staff. I believe they will have trouble in finding men experienced on the engineering side. Tone River, Bunning Bros., will be at least another 12 or 14 months before it comes into production and there again staff, including engineering staff, will present a problem. The Donnelly River mill at Yornup will replace the old Yornup mill. It will have the same crew and they will probably travel by truck to the new mill, which will not be in operation for another 12 months. Jardee is another mill that will come into production in about 18 months' time.

The Minister for Housing: That is the old mill that was burned down last year. It will be in production again in another four weeks' time.

Mr. REYNOLDS: I heard it would be another 18 months before it got going. I believe there are about 170 Balts working in the timber industry, but the Minister cannot count on them remaining in that occupation. I have spoken with a number of them and I understand that when their two year contract of service is up they will leave the timber industry. I believe there are several hundred more of them available for this work, but it takes years for timber men to become experienced. These factors were apparently forgotten or overlooked by the Minister when forming his rosy visions of increased production by the end of the year.

I think the Minister, when touching on the subject, has, in this respect, totally misled the House and the people of the State with regard to the six supposedly new mills. It must not be forgotten that when these new mills do come into production they will be in karri country. I warn the Minister that within five or six years private interests will control the jarrah output of this State and also the selling price of jarrah. The Minister should not attempt to deceive members or the public. Perhaps he forgot, inadvertently, that he was addressing members, or else he thought we were a lot of dills, dopes and dupes who would be unable to check up on the information he gave. Perhaps he imagined he was addressing students at a Liberal Party rally, gathered together for schooling in election procedure and propaganda. As a matter of sober fact, all these so-called new mills were envisaged or under construction before the present Government took office.

The Attorney General: Who wrote your speech for you?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You are not the one who should talk about having speeches written.

Mr. REYNOLDS: The previous Government planned these mills and the present Government and Ministers should be honest and give credit where it is due, without attempting to fitch it. Touching on rents, the Minister said that those of this State compared favourably with those of the other States. He said the position at the 30th June last was as follows:—

New South Wales: 45s. to 50s. per week.
 Victoria: 40s. to 45s. per week.
 Tasmania: 35s. to 40s. per week.
 Queensland: 35s. to 37s. 6d. per week.
 Western Australia: 32s. to 35s. per week.

The Minister failed to tell the House that when the previous Government was in office, the first rental charge per week was 25s., but today some of the unfortunate workers are paying up to 39s. 6d. per week. Perhaps the Minister did not want to make that news available to the Press.

Mr. Yates: They must be getting a higher rate of income to pay that rent.

Mr. REYNOLDS: When workers are paying these exorbitant rents, how can they rear families, educate them, clothe them and live honestly and decently? It simply means that something has to go short and no doubt Mum, and Dad and the children suffer. Furthermore the Minister said that bricks found on the sites were there for the purpose of work approved and about to be approved. That unfortunately is one of the curses of the brick shortage. With bricks in abundance at one place and scarce in another it adds considerably to the cost, and unfortunately the worker has to groan, grunt, sweat and be sweated in order to pay.

How often do we hear about the handicaps that tradesmen suffer in handling some of these poor quality materials supplied to them? I have here two wire-cut bricks, both of which came out of the same kiln. I would like the Minister to examine them and see the differences in size, shape and quality. I also have with me another brick that came from the State Brickworks, which is a pressed brick and there is no brick in Australia to compare with it in quality.

Mr. Nimmo: What are you going to do with the bricks when you have finished with them?

Mr. REYNOLDS: Before the war these wire-cut bricks cost 56s. per 1,000 and these State pressed bricks—produced under socialism, if you like—cost 65s. per 1,000; a difference of 9s. Today under private enterprise, these wire-cut bricks are costing £7 per 1,000 and the infinitely superior pressed brick costs only £6 per 1,000. That is the difference between private enterprise and State enterprise.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: They won't admit it.

Mr. REYNOLDS: Some bricklayers and contractors have admitted to me—although they will not admit it to everybody—that

during the past four or five weeks the brick position has eased but of course should we get heavy rains during the next day or two, production will be impeded. Wherever I go bricklayers complain to me about the quality of bricks as well as their shape. They lack uniformity and naturally bricklayers cannot lay the number of bricks they would like.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Have you shown those bricks to the Controller of Material Supplies?

Mr. REYNOLDS: No, I have not, but I would like the Minister to look at them afterwards. Bricklayers have to pick over these bricks and lose hours and hours a week in doing so. I suggest to the Minister—

Mr. Marshall: That adds to the cost.

Mr. REYNOLDS:—that there should be stricter supervision in checking over these bricks before they leave the brick yards.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That will add to the cost too.

Mr. REYNOLDS: Bricklayers also admit that whilst laying bricks on the edge is a saving in space and numbers, it is not saving in time or cement for mortar. More cement has to be used in the mortar and this increases the cost on the homes. I disagree with the Minister that the lifting of controls over bricks, timber, nails, paint and cement has eased the position. On the contrary, it has intensified it and the Minister, though probably not admitting it, knows it to be an honest fact.

The Minister for Housing: It is not.

Mr. REYNOLDS: Many workmen say that while the brick position has eased somewhat, other building materials have become more scarce. Several contractors have told me, with a knowing wink, that they have been able to get supplies and one fellow said to me that his boss knows the "know-how." The Leader of the Opposition, I think it was, said that if someone knows someone who knows something, then you can get what you want, and I think the Minister knows that to be a positive fact.

The Minister for Housing: Do not say what I know. I will say what I know.

Mr. REYNOLDS: The brick supply position has been bungled by the present Government, and I do not think there is any doubt about that.

The Minister for Housing: The Minister does not know that, and it is not correct.

Mr. REYNOLDS: The Minister knows that perfectly well.

The Minister for Housing: Do not say that. Do not tell me what I know. I will tell you what I know.

Mr. REYNOLDS: No attempt has been made by the Liberal Government to build large modern brickworks. Some months ago the Brick Production Committee waited upon the Minister and also advised the Premier that four modern yards were needed in Western Australia, and two of them immediately. Mr. French, who is the secretary of the Brickyard and Pottery Workers' Union, said that little more could be done with the existing yards and, despite their spurred output, the brick shortage was still acute. I know that this committee has, on a number of occasions, waited on the Minister, but it has not made very much progress in establishing big brickworks. We have been told that the Government has laid out certain money to encourage some of the brickworks to increase their production, but the point is that these brickworks are too old, and what we want in this State are large, modern works, able to produce bricks in abundance. The Minister knows, probably as well as I do, that there is a shortage of timber. Almost everywhere I go people complain to me that they are unable to get joinery, quarter-round, nosing, skirting flooring, mantelpieces and so on.

The Minister for Housing: I said so. They always have been.

Mr. REYNOLDS: There has been a shortage of drying kilns, and the Minister hawked around proposals in an attempt to overcome this difficulty, but just recently I believe one firm has decided to instal a kiln.

The Minister for Housing: Last year it decided, you are a year out again.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: During this session.

Mr. REYNOLDS: I am very pleased to hear that that is so. I hear it is proposed by the Minister for Housing to use karri for flooring and weather-boards. I do not know whether that is so, but karri is unsuitable for these purposes and also for joinery.

It shrinks and warps even after seasoning. I am quite prepared to admit that jarrah does shrink both ways, but not to the same extent as karri. Also, karri cannot be economically dressed to a smooth surface and under all circumstances it attracts white ants. I have visited several places where karri has been used for flooring and, although stoppers have been put in, the white ants still get up the chimneys and stairs where no stoppers are placed. I suggest to the Minister that that point be watched. Moreover, carpenters inform me that karri should not be used lower than the roof and that at least 40 per cent. of the timber now being used would not be handled by reputable builders in pre-war days. The same applies to bricks. Bricklayers have assured me that at least 50 per cent. of the bricks would not have been used in pre-war days. One fellow told me that he would not use them for either lavatory or garage construction.

Mr. Yates: That goes for a lot of other products as well. What about shoes?

Mr. REYNOLDS: Speak up! There is a shortage of naturally seasoned timber. Today, all the well seasoned timber is going oversea or to the Eastern States. We are getting the kiln-dried timber in this State which is hard and brittle and the Minister knows that perfectly well.

The Minister for Housing: The hon. member is completely wrong again.

Mr. REYNOLDS: Last week I made a visit to Birdwood Avenue, South Perth, and there, owing to a shortage of flat and angle iron, bricklayers had been put off for eight days and had to go to other places to work.

The Minister for Housing: You will have to go to Newcastle to rectify that.

Mr. REYNOLDS: I realise that, but the Minister said on the hustings some few years ago that if he were given the opportunity he would solve these problems. He certainly has not solved them and is very far from doing so.

Mr. Yates: They cannot be solved without the necessary production.

Mr. REYNOLDS: I know. Now the Minister has had the opportunity and has been in office for two years—

The Premier: Not long enough.

Mr. REYNOLDS:—and the sane and sensible thing for him to do would be to walk out and hand over to the Labour Party to enable it to continue with the progress it made before the Government came into office. There is a shortage of fence pickets. Does the Minister know why? Probably he does not. Some time ago the price of scantling was increased and as a result the saw-millers have not been producing small timber. We hear a lot about what the workmen should do. Unless tradesmen can get the requisite materials, they cannot perform good work and painters have told me that the quality of the paint today is bad, with too little white lead in it and with an obnoxious smell which causes illness. Some men have told me that they have been off duty for days because of unpleasant smelling paint. Also, Mr. Minister,—

The Minister for Housing: You address the Speaker; not me.

Mr. REYNOLDS: I will address the Minister through you, Mr. Speaker. The painters also told me that they experienced great difficulty in breaking down the paint. They did not know its component parts or the substitute oils it contained and therefore, in some instances, they could not do the work they would have liked to do. It is also known that nails are in short supply and some nails are too short for the gauge.

Mr. Marshall: Especially finger nails.

Mr. REYNOLDS: I will leave that to the hon. member; he knows more about finger nails than I do. The nails in use today will not drive; they bend, and there is a heavy wastage. Some of them are too thick for their length and split the timber. Some of them have flat heads and when driven they spread and make large holes. These are some of the things that the Minister should take up because there should be some correction in regard to these matters. On account of the heavy wastage and the lack of nails the prices of homes are increasing. Cement is in short supply and the Government is importing it. I submit this suggestion to the Minister; that the cost of imported cement should be pooled and the price for the local and imported product averaged. That would be only fair and equitable. Instead of the Government buildings, which are using this cement, being in-

flated in value, and instead of the people who will be occupying these homes being charged an excessive price for cement, it should be spread over the whole community. It is said that the shortage of labour is seriously affecting the housing position. I submit there is no lack of skilled operatives in this State. If we had the materials and better control over them, with the required number of operatives, we would be building a further 1,500 homes per year.

I have approached men who are competent to make these estimates. They assured me that if they had these materials they would be able to produce that extra number of homes per year. Also, some of the men in the building industry assure me that if renovations were better controlled, they would be able considerably to increase the number of homes being built. They say that as a result of renovations there is a serious leakage of materials and a good deal of black marketing. There has been great loss of time due to the delivery of uneven bricks and tiles, and labourer have been delayed because of the necessity to pick them over. Bricklayers have also been shifted from job to job owing to the hold-ups that occur with regard to the delivery of bricks. Carpenters have been held up because timber of certain dimensions was not available on the job. On one Government job there was not £5 worth of timber on the site, and in one instance where 200 houses were in course of construction, only £10 worth of timber was on the job.

With regard to private contractors, one man said he had to erect scaffolds four times around buildings, whereas their erection once would have supplied all his requirements. This constant shifting of scaffolding from job to job necessarily increases the cost to be borne by the people who will ultimately occupy the homes. In Geraldton recently the construction of some Commonwealth-State rental homes was held up for 35 weeks awaiting the delivery of flooring. I thought the member for Geraldton would have mentioned that matter in his brief remarks, but it was fairly obvious to me that he did not wish to do so. There are many factors that have caused the shortages of material. We know quite well what they are, and it is not necessary for me to recapitulate. As a matter of fact, industry has never really recovered from the loss of seasoned timber since the last depression.

I realise that the State's building programme has been considerably impeded owing to the shortage of seasoned timber, and our housing requirements at this juncture are deplorably short in that respect. Let me explain why that is so. The marriages in this State represent upwards of 5,400 per year and the lag in home building is approximately 12,000. The Minister admitted that the other night because he said that whereas last year the number of people on the waiting list totalled 7,700 or 7,800, today the number is slightly less than 12,000. The Minister forgot to mention the 4,000 whose names are off the list but who are waiting for homes. Another factor to be remembered is the sub-standard semi-slum homes that should have been condemned long ago, and of these there are many thousands. In Subiaco, there are over 300 such homes, and I believe that in East Perth there are about 400. There are hundreds of such homes in every electorate throughout the metropolitan area, and all of them should be condemned.

There is a very definite shortage of timber, particularly with regard to joinery. I suggest to the Minister that when a house is 80 per cent. completed, it should receive priority enabling it to be finished as quickly as possible. Such a course would be merely sensible. At times, homes are held up on account of the non-delivery of £3, £4 or £5 worth of timber. If the Minister were to adopt that course, it would enable many homes to be occupied more quickly. Then again, many houses will be required for migrants, and this year the State will receive between 14,000 and 16,000 newcomers from overseas. That factor must be taken into consideration in estimating the State's building target. Instead of its being about 4,000, today it should be about 6,000. Even on the latter estimate, it would take at least five years to overcome the housing shortage.

There is great need for a planned scheme of materials production by State enterprise. We should have more modern and adequate brickworks. There should be an expansion of our State Sawmills, replete with all modern facilities, together with joinery shops and drying kilns. We should modernise our railways. I realise that there are difficulties in that regard and the Minister for Railways has had experience in that respect. Nevertheless, he was going to solve this

problem. He said, "Give me six months and I will show you how the railways should be controlled."

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is rather getting away from the Bill.

Mr. REYNOLDS: Our system of transport should be modernised with all expedition, and we should have our own cement works. We should have State steel works. I was very surprised when it was mentioned that £350,000 could not be obtained in order to float a company. It should be obvious to any sensible Government that the establishment of steel works should be undertaken as soon as possible. These are all necessary in order that the housing problem shall be overcome. In recent months I have realised the great necessity to wipe out the shortage of these essential materials because our programme of development and expansion is being hampered by lack of supplies. The only sane and sensible thing for us to do is to establish our own industries so that we shall not be dependent upon the Eastern States or outside sources for our requirements. The State should manufacture all these allied products, for private enterprise has proved totally inadequate. Some time ago, some excellent advice was tendered to the Government by the Carpenters' Union. The spokesman for that organisation said—

When some houses required only one or two small items of material for completion, the Housing Commission would not allow occupation until all work was totally finished. Lack of continuity of supplies caused workers to slow down because of the fear of their job cutting out and losing days seeking work on another building. It also increased construction costs. Sometimes painters had to be brought back three or four times to a house. From £100 to £150 could be saved on houses if there were no interruption in the supply of necessary materials.

I consider that was very sound advice. It was given months ago, and I regret that the Minister failed to reintroduce controls so that there would be a better distribution of material, instead of its going to men with long purses and to those who knew how to obtain pickings. I hope that the suggestions I have submitted will be considered and will be given effect to, especially the one with regard to a house that has reached the stage of 80 per cent. of construction.

MR. HOAR (Nelson) [8.22]: I find myself to some extent in agreement with the first statement made by the member for Mt. Marshall, but that is about the only point on which he and I can agree. Like him, I have no quarrel with any Government that seeks to impose control over any commodity or material that is definitely known to be in short supply, because only by the exercise of some measure of control can a proper distribution be undertaken with fairness and justice to all concerned. Like him I cannot always blame the Government for the anomalies in distribution that sometimes occur in materials under control for no matter how careful the Government or its officials may be, there are always some unscrupulous people who can find a way around any sort of legislation, but I am concerned about the fact that many of the materials that were decontrolled last year by this Government are, in some instances being misapplied. Where we find one anomaly creeping in as a result of back-door methods of securing possession of something under control, we can find at least 10 anomalies in respect of the materials that the Government decontrolled last year.

When we decontrol an article, that does not necessarily make it easier to get. In some cases it is harder to get because, when a material is under control, a permit is required in respect of it and is issued only in accordance with the monthly production of that article. Consequently, a person in need of that article, on receipt of a permit, can be assured of securing it, but once control is lifted and the matter is left in the hands of business men representing manufacturing interests with no desire other than to make a profit, all the weaker elements of human nature are liable to be exhibited in any transaction that takes place. All sorts of people acting in a subordinate capacity for business firms find ways and means of enabling their friends to secure possession of articles manufactured by the firm, these articles thus going to people that are not in direct need of them. Plenty of anomalies are creeping in, following the decontrol of these materials last year by the present Government.

The only people who stand to gain anything at all as a result of the Government's action in decontrolling timber, bricks, cement and tiles are those who manufacture them,

because they have an opportunity, unprecedented since the years of war, of disposing of them to the best advantage, no control being exercised over them by any Government department, regardless of how sincere the Minister may be in a desire to exercise some controlling influence.

Last year the Minister, when introducing the Bill releasing control over the articles to which I have referred, said it was quite safe to do so at that time because production had been stepped up to a considerable extent and that in any case the distribution of those materials would, in effect, be controlled by reason of the fact that a permit was required from the State Housing Commission before materials of any description relating to building could be used. Therefore he and his Government decided to pass the responsibility for distribution to the people who produce the materials and who, I say, are vitally interested in order to make a profit. Following on the transfer of the power of control from the Government to voluntary committees, which in some cases have been appointed and from which it was hoped to receive 100 per cent. of co-operation, as in the case of timber, we find that it is harder today to get some of these materials than it was when they were definitely under control.

According to the figures quoted by the Minister when moving the second reading, bricks were only two per cent. and cement seven per cent. above the pre-war production. The position with regard to tiles, he told us, was somewhat happier, showing a 95 per cent. increase, but timber, one of the most important materials in home-building, has not by any means yet reached its pre-war production. Therefore the Government's eagerness to push this political dynamite on to somebody else has made it harder than ever to get bricks today. A man who came to see me last week told me that he had held a permit for the better part of 12 months, and even though he has most of the materials for the building of his home and a part of it is under construction, he has now to wait a further six months before he can secure a brick for that building.

With regard to cement, I noticed in this morning's "The West Australian," as did the member for Mt. Marshall, a statement by

the organising director of the Building Industry Congress, Mr. Mattiske, reported as follows:—

The building industry was at present receiving its full requirements of cement mainly because the Government was importing large quantities for urgent public works.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is a funny story.

Mr. HOAR: Mr. Mattiske continues—

Local production was at present on a record level and considerable quantities were being made available for mining, agricultural and other urgent purposes.

Mr. Marshall: That is positively untrue.

Mr. HOAR: It is not true. Production may be on a record level, because we were, in March of this year, producing 7 per cent. more than we did in the pre-war years. But one has to consider the urgent public works that have been accumulating over the years, such as the Causeway and the Mundaring Weir, as well as the demand by road boards and by farmers for the building of dairies. When one takes all these demands into consideration, the 7 per cent. will not get us anywhere. The Leader of the Opposition, when speaking to the Bill, mentioned a telephone conversation he had had with some firm. He explained to the House that he had been promised four tons of cement per week if he would buy a cement brickmaking machine; in other words, in consideration of paying 28s. for one of those machines, a person could have delivered into his back-yard every week four tons of cement, to be used for any purpose to which he desired to put it.

If Mr. Mattiske considers that there is a reasonable distribution of cement in this State, he should go to the district where I live. For nine months a trading company at Manjimup has been waiting for a truckload of cement which it had ordered and which was to be used by farmers in that district for building dairies. These farmers have been unable to obtain cement for years and have not yet got it. When the distributing agency in Perth was approached on the matter, it sent an officer to Manjimup who told the company that it could forget the truckload of cement which it had ordered because it could not be supplied. I do not say for a moment that the Minister agrees with Mr. Mattiske.

The Minister for Housing: What he said was that considerable quantities were available.

Mr. HOAR: He said it in a peculiar way. If the Minister believes that what he said is true, then Mr. Mattiske should first go to Manjimup and tell it to the people there and, secondly, tell it to the Marines.

The Minister for Housing: I think it was pretty right.

Mr. HOAR: There is no truth whatever in the statement. As regards timber production, I personally believe that to some extent our timber is being misapplied. If timber for local building purposes is in short supply today, the only convincing explanation of the many put forward is that a disproportionate quantity is being sold—perhaps in small lots—for use on unessential works, to the detriment of home building. In the pre-war years, this State normally produced, on an average, some 150,000,000 super feet of timber, which was distributed as to 48 per cent. locally, as to 14.5 per cent. to the Eastern States and as to 37.5 per cent. to oversea markets. Those figures may have varied a little either way.

The present distribution of our timber supplies, as the Minister explained to the House last year, is as nearly as possible 60 per cent. for local consumption, 15 per cent. for oversea markets and 25 per cent. for the Eastern States. I well remember saying, when speaking to the Bill introduced last year, that it would be impossible for him, or his officers in the Forests Department, to police those percentages, human nature being what it is. Timber was decontrolled towards the end of last year, and either as a result of that decontrol, or as a result of agreement with the Minister, there has been a rapid upward movement in the export of our timber to other countries. I shall quote the answer to a question that I asked the Minister.

The Minister for Housing: I will read the up-to-date figures.

Mr. HOAR: I asked the Minister—

(1) What quantity of West Australian grown timber (super feet) has been exported oversea for the years 1945-46, 1946-47, 1947-48 and what is expected to be the quantity exported for 1948-49?

The Minister replied—

Year.	Exports	Overseas.
1945-46	14,458
1946-47	21,538
1947-48	30,748

In other words, from 1945-46 to 1947-48 our exports of timber had more than doubled. The Minister's estimate for the year 1948-49 was 25,000 loads. So alarmed was he himself at this rapid rise in exports that he explained in a footnote to his answer that conferences had taken place this year with the Sawmillers' Association with a view to further reductions in the quota for overseas exports. I am quite certain that the Minister, in making that explanation, believed that the policy which has been adopted up to date was not a very happy one.

Why these conferences with the Sawmillers' Association, if he is satisfied that the export quota, under agreement made by him with the association, has not been abused? There would be no reason for such conferences unless he were dissatisfied with the quantity of timber being exported to other countries. On that point I should like to refer again for a moment to our friend Mr. Mattiske, who hastens at the commencement of his statement to say to all and sundry that it is entirely non-party and non-political. In fact, I think this man must during the past few nights have had very bad dreams as a result of the constant attacks that the Opposition had justifiably made on the Government in respect to these and other matters. Upon learning the nature of the reply by the Government, I have no doubt at all that yesterday he decided, in order to save the Government's face to some extent, that he had better come to its aid and consequently we see a statement by him in this morning's "West Australian."

Mr. Graham: The Minister prepared it for him.

Mr. HOAR: He referred to the production in 1938-39 and in 1946-48 of asbestos sheeting, bricks, cement, fibrous plaster sheeting, tiles and timber for local consumption. He takes the year 1938-39 and uses the percentage of local consumption as the base figure, which he fixes at 100. From there on to 1946 and 1948

he follows the upward progress and makes comparisons in percentages. Consequently, when we come to timber, which I am discussing at the moment, we find that, taking 1938-39 as a base of 100, in 1946 the production of timber was only 79 per cent., while in 1948 it was 106 per cent. That is timber for local consumption. To show how people can be misled by figures, I want to tell the House that this 100 per cent. local consumption in 1948 represented on the average an annual production of 72,000,000 super feet.

Our annual production in the years before the war approximated 150,000,000 super feet and 48 per cent. of that, which was our local consumption in those days, equalled 72,000,000 super feet. Coming to the year 1948, when we had increased that 100 per cent. to 106 per cent. we find that our local consumption percentage has jumped by six points—in other words, from 48 per cent. to 54 per cent. We all know—the Minister knows for certain; I have no doubt about that—that our present production is not anything like up to pre-war production. As a matter of fact, on the figures in last year's report of the Forests Department, instead of a timber production of 150,000,000 super feet, the production was 125,000,000 super feet.

The Minister for Housing: I said so when introducing the Bill.

Mr. HOAR: That is so. If we take Mr. Mattiske's percentage consumption in this State today—54 per cent. of 125,000,000 super feet—we arrive at a local consumption figure of 67,500,000 super feet. In other words, we are consuming less timber in this State today than in the year 1938—3,500,000 super feet less—in spite of the accumulated works over the war years, the home building problem, and the effects of the migration policy. Concerning this latter, the Premier two or three months ago said he hoped to attain an immigration figure of 100,000 in ten years. In spite of the arrears of public works and post-war construction of school houses and railway repairs and all the other things that go to make up our economy and progress, we are using less timber now than in 1938, and that is on the basis of this man's figures. Notwithstanding that, our exports to other countries have more than doubled. What has the Government to say to that?

Mr. Marshall: Where is that Mt. Marshall fellow?

The Minister for Housing: The exports are now down.

Mr. HOAR: They are down 25,000 loads. That is 11,000 more than in 1945-46.

The Minister for Housing: I will read the figures later.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: What do you mean by later?

The Minister for Housing: When I have a chance of saying something in reply—during the next session of Parliament!

Mr. HOAR: I said, in the first place, that I was not so much concerned with the one or two anomalies that creep in now and again with respect to the items governed by this Act. But I am concerned about the distribution of those materials that have been released from control, and particularly timber.

Mr. Marshall: And the anomalies in black marketing in connection with them.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Timber, cement and bricks!

Mr. HOAR: There is no justification today for the export of timber other than on a load for load basis in exchange for white wood and soft woods that are not produced in this country. Before the war when we were producing 150,000 super feet in this State, we still had to import one-third of our requirements of timber in Australia, and that fraction is considerably higher now because our production today is so much less than before the war. In present circumstances and taking into consideration the future, when we hope to see a population considerably larger than we have at present; in considering the possibilities and the need for timber not only in Western Australia but in the whole of the Commonwealth over the next 20 to 25 years, I do not believe we are justified in sending even token shipments in order to encourage buyers overseas to believe that in the years to come they can expect a permanent trade agreement. It will be impossible for this country to maintain a permanent trade agreement in timber with any country for any appreciable length of time.

We have only to look at what prominent men in the timber industry, like Mr. Lane-Poole, have to say. I propose to read a statement made by Mr. Lane-Poole in 1944 when

the war was still in progress. His job as Commonwealth Inspector General of Forests was such that he had to plan for future years in respect to timber. He was alarmed in every way at the condition into which our forests had drifted over the years and at our lack of national planning. I am not criticising this State's planning, because I will be one with the Minister and with anyone else in saying that we probably have the best Forests Department in the Commonwealth, whose officers are doing a remarkably good job. But taking the country as a whole, there is a great deal of room for improvement. Mr. Lane-Poole had this to say—

The forestry situation was never so serious as it is now, and there is the urgent necessity of building the asset anew.

We have never had anything but a tiny heritage of forest. It seemed large to the pioneers, and the figure became exaggerated in all printed works, for the pioneers were unable to see any limit to the forests. They could not see the forests for the trees.

Western Australia, when I reached it towards the end of the last war, possessed on paper 20,000,000 acres.

When foresters began to study the question and survey the forests, these big figures shrank, and it was found that the whole continent carried only 19,500,000 acres of forest country worth managing as forest for all time. This is a ridiculously small portion of the area of the continent.

This should give us food for serious thought. I do not believe we ought to allow our minds to dwell in the 1938 period. So far as forest policy is concerned, I think that is what this Government is doing. Its mind is back before the war and it has not grasped the problems of the future in any adequate manner.

The Minister for Housing: I think you will find that we have.

Mr. HOAR: Mr. Lane-Poole did not speak alone. We know Mr. Kessell, who used to be Conservator of Forests in Western Australia, and who, during the war, was Commonwealth Controller of Timber. He said—

Pre-war maximum consumption when building was booming and all tradesmen were in employment averaged 1,000,000,000 super feet.

A total requirement of 1,200,000,000 super feet per annum for the Commonwealth is the need at present (250,000,000 for cases and crates).

For many years the Commonwealth found it necessary to import approximately one-third of the timber used.

Australian timber resources were wastefully exploited by settlers and millers for nearly 100 years before controls and a forestry policy developed.

For 20 years now Western Australia has attempted stabilised production and as a result of the work carried out since the passing of the Forests Act of 1918 the theory of the Forests Department, if not the realisation, has been that by rigid controls we will have perpetual forests in Western Australia.

Recently Mr. Kessell said—

At the present time the forests of Australia as a whole are being overcut, and serious depreciation from fire damage is occurring every year. An extensive programme of forest development, production, regeneration and planting is necessary to prevent a collapse in national timber supplies.

That will show how serious this expert, and also Mr. Lane-Poole, consider to be the deterioration of our forests and their exploitation for which we have been responsible over the years. I say definitely that if we are going to look to the future of the State and the Commonwealth, and build this country for the people that we expect to come here, we must retain as much of the real wealth of the country as we can, rather than send it overseas. If we have a surplus of wheat, wool, butter-fat or timber, let other people have it by all means. But I would not go so far as to say, taking the long view of the future—that is a view of 25 or 30 years—that we are justified in finding overseas markets now or encouraging people overseas to believe that those markets will be established in the next few years, in timber. So far as timber is concerned, and the needs of this country, it is definitely being short-supplied by this Government, and to that extent it will be answerable later.

I do not want to sit down without making one further reference to the statement of Mr. Mattiske in his tirade against the Leader of the Opposition and other Opposition speakers who considered they were justified, on behalf of the people they represent, in taking this Government to task in the way they did. Mr. Mattiske says this, with respect to timber—

It was obligatory for this State to export specified quantities to the Eastern States and overseas in accordance with instructions from the Commonwealth Timber Controller.

He is trying to get the people of this State to believe that we are in duty bound, under an agreement with the Commonwealth, to send certain quantities of timber overseas and certain quantities to the Eastern States.

Mr. Graham: The Minister inferred that the other night.

Mr. HOAR: If he did, he is making a mistake because that is not the position at all. I have here the latest copy of Federal "Hansard" in which questions were asked by Mr. Corser, a Country Party member, of the Prime Minister in respect to the export of building materials. After traversing the whole of the items specified, Mr. Chifley comes to the matter of timber, and has this to say—

The export of timber is permitted only when the State concerned has advised that the timber is surplus to essential requirements in that State and the transport position renders difficult its supply to other ports of the Commonwealth.

That is a clear statement, made on the 27th May last by the Prime Minister, yet we find this man, who is allegedly non-political, using arguments of the nature I have described to bolster up this Government as much as he possibly can.

The Minister for Housing: The Commonwealth grants an export license on condition that the millers agree to a certain programme which includes a certain amount of interstate export and a certain amount for home consumption.

Mr. HOAR: The onus is on the States to tell the Prime Minister that they have a certain amount of timber for export purposes. If we say that there is so much work to be done in Western Australia that we require our timber resources for a certain period, the Commonwealth cannot compel us to export our timber in any shape or form, either to the Eastern States or overseas. To that extent, both the Minister and this gentleman who is reported in the paper, are definitely wrong.

The Minister for Housing: The Commonwealth would not endeavour to force any State to export.

Mr. HOAR: I have endeavoured to show my dissatisfaction in connection with the materials that have been decontrolled up to now by this Government. In my opinion

all these statements—propaganda statements mainly—of the Government's progress during the two and a half years it has been in office do not in any way point to an achievement similar to that of its predecessor in the first year after the war.

The Minister for Housing: That is a matter of opinion.

Mr. HOAR: It is a matter of cold fact, We know quite well that during the war years we did not have the opportunity, as this Government has had in the last two and a half years, to do things.

The Minister for Housing: It has made full use of them, too.

Mr. HOAR: The country was at a standstill, and all our carpenters and builders were dispersed in the Armed Forces. There was not a building erected during that time, unless it was for defence purposes. As a result, at the end of the war we had to get our building forces together as quickly as we could. I claim that the Labour Government's record of home building of 800 houses from a standing start in that first 12 months is a better one than that of the present Government when it states that it has a building rate today of 4,000.

The Minister for Housing: We can agree to disagree.

Mr. HOAR: It is a matter of opinion, as the Minister said, and he is entitled to his opinion and I am entitled to mine. Unless this Government is prepared to do more than it is doing, we shall have a home building problem for at least 20 years. I believe that to be the opinion of one of the principal officials of the Housing Commission. I understand, from the answer to a question by the member for East Perth, there are over 21,000 unsatisfied applicants for homes in this State. The building rate does not come into the matter at all. We have to decide how many houses we need to build currently, and the number we shall be responsible for as a result of migration, and then try to set our target accordingly. I do not believe we can reach that target, as far as timber is concerned, so long as we are prepared to send overseas more timber than we did in 1946-47. If we are prepared to do that, we will find ourselves in a hole before very long. I would not feel satisfied, at an opportunity like this, if I

did not tell the Government of my strong resentment at its handling of the Western Australian timber supplies.

MR. READ (Victoria Park) [8.58]: All of us must support this measure. It is a continuation Bill for the control of building material which is vitally necessary, so far as the building of homes is concerned, for those who are poorly housed at the present time. It is a measure which, if we had sufficient material, would not be before the House. We must, therefore, give the department the right to see that those who are distressfully housed shall have the benefit of what little material there is. The housing question for those unfortunate people is a vital one. I say "vital" because it means "life." The way many people in my electorate are housed is disgusting, and mixed up as I am with medicine I know the ill-effects it has on the women and children, particularly. I have listened with interest to the facts and figures put before us by speakers on both sides of the House. I am not very interested in whose fault it is that we have not sufficient material to treat these people decently. I do not mind whether so many million feet of timber are exported, or not, but I do think we should move ourselves in the matter of supplying all that is necessary, at least for our own people.

I have a list of more than 75 persons, in my electorate, who are housed under disgraceful conditions. Through my connection with a local governing body, I know the position is bad in the Victoria Park ward, the East Perth ward and parts of Leederville. On hearing the remarks made by a country member, expressing his satisfaction with what has taken place in the last two years, I felt that I would like to take him into some of these dwellings in my electorate that are not really homes at all, in order that he might get some idea of the distress caused in the metropolitan area by lack of sufficient housing. In 1945, there were already many people living in sub-standard houses, and the return of ex-Servicemen and women, discharged from the Forces, added to the distress. They had all to find accommodation in the houses that already existed. The output of building materials was at that time down to a minimum, and the Government of the day had to get off, in that regard, from a standing

start. The sawmills had to be reconditioned; new machinery had to be bought and new mills opened up. Most of our brickyards had also to be reconditioned and the production of tiles had to be boosted. At present, so many years after the end of the war, our housing conditions are worse than at any other time in the history of the State. Although there are now hundreds more houses than there were two years ago, our population is increasing rapidly, through immigration and through people shifting their residences from the country to the city.

Another factor that is not taken into consideration by many people is the number of children being born in this State. We acquire upwards of 11,000 new citizens each year in that way, and in my area many babies have to be housed under the most deplorable conditions. I will read at random a few of the applications made to me by people to see if I could do something to alleviate their distress. These letters will show what people are putting up with at present in Western Australia. As the officers of the Housing Commission know, I almost live down there, trying—often vainly—to do something for these unfortunate people.

Typical cases are as follows:—There is a man working at Chamberlain's Industries Ltd. The family consists of two adults and two children. He has another child that has been sent to his people in Melbourne so that it can be looked after, and another girl 11 years of age living with friends at Midland Junction. These people are living under degrading conditions and the family has had to be split up into three groups. Another family, at 39 Bishopsgate-street, Carlisle, consists of two adults and two children, with another child expected in about three months' time. A further case is that where there are six children in the family, at 25 Basinghall-street. This woman has received a letter saying—

This is the second extension of your eviction order and you will be evicted on the 5th July. If you get an eviction order, come down and let us know when you are in the street and we will do something for you.

Another family in Sussex-street consists of four units, with another child expected. They are housed on a back verandah. In Rushton-road, there are two adults and one

child nine months old in the family, with another child expected. I asked the doctor about the conditions here, and he gave a certificate that will go on the file. He says—

This is to certify that Mrs. X. is an expectant mother, now in her third month of pregnancy. I have to state that her present home conditions—the whole family on an enclosed verandah—are not satisfactory and will be much less so when the second child arrives.

There is a family at 24 Acton-street, living in poor circumstances. There are two adults and three children, with no bath or wash-house. I suppose it is the duty of the inspectors of the Housing Commission to check up on the statements made by applicants, and I think all they should be required to do is to draw plans of the living accommodation, without making comments. In the last case I have mentioned, the inspector said, "This place is not fit for you to live in. You ought to be on No. 1 priority." That sort of comment only made for more mental stress on the part of the woman concerned. Another inspector told the applicants to see their member of Parliament if nothing came of their application. It is a nice thing for an inspector to send people to their member, who can do nothing for them. The poor old member is drawn into it anyhow. If he gets a house for the poor unfortunate person then that person usually shifts out of his district and the member loses his vote. If he does not get the house for the applicant he does not get his vote either.

Mr. May: The Minister won't be getting too many votes.

Mr. READ: I do not think there is any need to weary members any further but I am giving them these facts to stress the urgency of these cases. What is really going on in our country? It is no use country members giving us a lecture on conditions in the city because they do not know anything about them.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Do not take any notice of Mukinbudin.

Mr. READ: Here is another case. This man is living in a garage. I have about eight or nine families living in garages and they have been ordered out by the health authorities of the Perth City Council. Where will they go? This particular man is living in a garage and I approached the Perth City Council on his behalf. He has

received a letter from them saying that if he makes a start with the conveniences and the laundry etc., they will permit him to stop there. People in my district are living in all kinds of accommodation and I have with me the notice paper of the Perth City Council dated the 20th June, 1949—it is confidential too.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Better put it in "Hansard" where it will not be seen.

Mr. READ: Under the heading of "Health Committee" there appears the following:—

Gallipoli-street, Victoria Park—Canvas tent 16ft. x 16ft. on vacant lot.

No. 27 Miller-street, Victoria Park—Timber framework covered with canvass, 10ft. x 9ft.

A man named John Thomas Butler, Gallipoli-street, Victoria Park—canvas tent approximately 12ft. x 10ft. situated on north boundary of lot at rear of shop and house.

Then there is another one further down the list—

Albany-highway—Caravan with walls of wood and canvas, approximately 16ft. x 9ft., supported on stumps.

Asbestos lean-to room, approximately 15ft. x 14ft. situated at rear of lock-up shop.

No. 15 Cargill-street—Two Beam buses (body only) approximately 28ft. x 7ft. x 7ft. with canvas windows.

And so it goes on. Further on the notice paper states—

Whereas a structure has been erected on the undermentioned land of materials contrary to the provisions of Section 311 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1906-47, recommended that the Council do hereby cause notices to be served upon the undermentioned persons as owner and occupier of the land set out hereunder requiring them to remove such structure within 90 days from the service of the notice.

What I am trying to do is to illustrate the shortage of houses in my district. Where will these people go?

Mr. Graham: To the Mundijong Road Board offices.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Ready-made homes—self-help!

Mr. Styants: Go to Karrakatta.

Hon. A. H. Panton: There are no vacant blocks down there.

Mr. READ: There are all sorts of cases and these people are not getting a fair deal. I can instance the case of a 10 x 12 bedroom where a boy 19 years of age, a

girl 17 years of age and another child all sleep in that one bedroom. That is really disgusting but nothing can be done about it. With the materials we have in this State we are almost self-supporting. We have our own tiles, bricks, timber and cement and the remedy, without going into facts or figures, is simple. We must get down to the production of materials as we should have done years ago, and never mind about running short of anything else or about what money we spend on the production of those materials for house building. We have heard the member for Albany patting somebody on the back because they are spending thousands of pounds on the Albany Harbour development.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Do you know why?

Mr. READ: No, and I do not want to know, but we are all culpable.

Mr. Fox: We have had no say in that.

Mr. READ: That money should have been poured into avenues which would have produced materials for housing. We would have to do that only for a few years and the people already in this State would be housed and they could set about helping those coming into the country. Then we could carry on with the Albany Harbour works and all the rest of these improvements that we need. That would alleviate the suffering of thousands of people and the remedy is in the hands of this Parliament.

If members could only see five or six beds in an undesirable room and people living like pigs! I should not say "living like pigs" because at least pigs have a decent pig sties and they have good, free fresh air coming in. There are 14 and 15 people sleeping, eating and living in four or five-roomed houses. I do not want to labour the point because I know that controls must still be retained on these materials so that needy cases can get first preference, but I am looking forward to the day when we will all wake up, do the decent thing and increase production to alleviate the sufferings of these people.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [9.18]: I am rather surprised—or I should say that I am not surprised—at the member for Victoria Park saying that we should have got down to business years ago. I intend to

tell members some of the reasons why we did not get down to business and some of the reasons will not be very complimentary to the Government either.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. FOX: In fact I think the Government should have had a gramophone record made and perhaps the Premier or the Minister for Housing could have had it nearby so that he could put his foot on it and play a record which said, "Why didn't you do it during the 14 years you were in office?"

The Minister for Housing: We have enough gramophones in this House already.

Mr. FOX: They could then play the record instead of saying it every time we point out some of the deficiencies.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: They would be more likely to put their foot in it.

Mr. FOX: It is well known that when the Labour Party assumed office in 1933 we were in the midst of the greatest depression ever known in the history of Australia. The member for Northam—he was later Minister for Works in the Labour Government—always stressed the necessity of spending the maximum amount of money on wages rather than on materials in order to give the people who were living on the dole an opportunity to keep body and soul together. Consequently, at that particular time we were not in much of a position to do any building or embark on the production of timber and other building materials. When the war broke out in 1939 the whole of the resources of Australia had to be utilised for the war effort, and that continued well into 1945. As a result, we had little more than 12 months in which to lay the foundations for the parties opposite to come in and reap the benefit of Labour's efforts. They had a good start and everything prepared for them. Apart from that, I blame the anti-Labour Governments over the years for the dearth of houses.

We have had reports from commissions in all the Australian capitals which show that housing is in an appalling state throughout Australia. One of the reports showed that thousands of houses within a mile of the Melbourne Town Hall were without proper domestic facilities. But during that time and even before that, many Bills were brought down in this House with

the object of giving the Workers' Homes Board borrowing powers. Thousands of pounds of trust moneys were in Perth that could have been made available for home building, but the representatives of the parties on the opposite side of the House in the Legislative Council threw out those Bills and thus deprived the Labour Party of the opportunity of permitting the Workers' Homes Board to expand its activities.

Some of the homes built by the Board in 1911 are better than many of the homes being built today. This proves the good workmanship that was put into them. There are quite a number of these homes in Fremantle and they are just as serviceable today as the day they were erected. There is another reason for the shortage of homes, which is being kept in the background. In 1937 the then Premier brought down a Bill for the building of homes for letting but this was thrown out also. Those in the Legislative Council would not interfere with private enterprise and they had no concern for the people who were most in need of homes.

The Minister for Housing: There were houses to let all over the place at that time.

Mr. FOX: Good houses were short in those days. There were thousands of substandard houses in East Perth, Fremantle and many other suburbs. The only decent houses were in Dalkeith and Nedlands, and the people in them knew nothing about the housing conditions of the people generally. The member for Victoria Park said that members on the Government side of the House knew nothing about the housing situation in this State with, perhaps, the exception of the member for Bunbury. Bunbury has not had the influx of people that the metropolitan area has had. The member for Bunbury could perhaps tell us something about that. We know what the position is in the metropolitan area, and I can say from experience that in spite of the Minister's claims as to his achievements with housing the position has never been worse than it is today. Members representing the Fremantle district are interviewing people every day of the week in order to assist them to obtain homes. I am not saying that with the object of throwing a brick at the Government but merely because it is true.

People should attend at court when eviction cases are being heard and see the misery imprinted on the faces of the women who appear before it. Quite a number appear every week. The people who are seeking eviction orders are very often in good positions because they have sufficient money with which to pay for a lawyer's services. The people who are being evicted are very often at a disadvantage because they cannot afford the services of a lawyer to plead their cases. I do not know whether the Minister can do anything in that regard. I cannot see the necessity for having half-a-dozen big sturdy men like the Attorney General strolling about the courthouse for the greater part of the day assisting people to evict tenants from homes. Talk about increasing production! Some of them would be better engaged swinging an axe in the timber country. It should be simple for a magistrate hearing these eviction cases to examine both parties and arrive at a decision on the merits of the case and thus eliminate the expense of engaging lawyers. I know of one lady who went to a lawyer for advice and that one visit alone cost her £7 10s. The lawyer was probably ringing up for quite a long time.

The Minister for Housing: It must have been a week's interview.

Mr. FOX: Some of the lawyers are reasonable in their charges.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Mr. Seaton, for instance.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I would point out to the hon. member that mention of lawyers does not appear in the Bill.

Mr. FOX: Lawyers are very much concerned with this Bill. I think they obtain many benefits from it. In the Fremantle court recently a case was heard where seven people were in a dilapidated home and the owner possessed an eviction order which expires next September. Two of those seven people are returned soldiers and there are mothers with sons and daughters. The owner is well-housed and when the eviction order takes place I am reliably informed that he intends to turn the property into flats. Before he can do that he must obtain a permit from the Housing Commission.

I do not think the Commission should give a man a permit when he is turning seven people out of a home that he proposes to

turn into flats for speculative purposes. The people he will be turning out will have no chance of obtaining accommodation and the onus will be on the Housing Commission to find it for them. The landlord has not yet got his eviction order, but it would be wrong if he were to evict these people and apply to the Housing Commission to convert the house into flats and thus obtain a very remunerative income. It would be a good investment for the landlord but a bad one for the tenant, the Minister for Housing and the people of the State in general.

The Minister for Housing: I would like to hear the other man's point of view.

Mr. FOX: There is more than one man in this Chamber tonight who knows the whole facts of the case which I know to be true. I would not state them unless I was well acquainted with them. I have heard other rumours that the house is to be sold to foreigners but my latest information is that plans have been drawn for the house to be converted into flats.

The Minister for Housing: They accommodate many more people much better.

Mr. Graham: And with no children allowed.

Mr. FOX: People in search of homes are frequently told that children are not allowed. Another point is that while materials are in short supply, why were expensive alterations allowed to be made to a hotel at Cottesloe? I am not sure of the name of the hotel, but I have been reliably informed that the accommodation in the dining room before the renovations was capable of providing for 80 persons. Now, at least 100 persons can be seated. Can the Minister inform me how many bricks were used in carrying out that extension? I have been told that the bricks used were more than sufficient for the erection of a fairly large house.

The Minister for Housing: You should apply to the Housing Commission.

Mr. FOX: What was the quantity of timber used, the number of door frames and window frames? How much cement was used? I know that a large quantity of cement was involved, and that commodity is in very short supply. In these days, materials available should be used for the most essential purposes, and that is to house the people, many of whom are living in single

rooms at present. With regard to Army camps, I am pleased that the State Housing Commission adopted a suggestion I made some time ago when I said that priority should be given to people living at camps, such as Melville, for any lengthy period, upwards of 12 months or so. That practice should be extended to other camps as well. I would like to see halls made available at all the Army camps to enable the people residing there to enjoy some amenities. Many of the camps are situated at a considerable distance from large centres of population and the transport facilities are not at all satisfactory.

In the Fremantle district we have two such camps; one at Naval Base and the other at Melville. There is another camp but that is in Fremantle itself. Not only should halls be made available, but kindergartens should be provided. The children at the camps are too far away from those already established, and the Housing Commission could very well supply not only kindergartens but teachers for them. I know that those who undertake kindergarten work have to be specially trained, and I do not suppose it would be possible to get a teacher from among those who reside in a camp, or in any other centre of a similar population.

When the Leader of the Opposition was speaking the other evening, he mentioned two instances of overcrowding, one referring to premises where 11 were living and the other to a place where eight were residing. I interjected at the time that I knew of one substandard home, comprising not more than three or four rooms with very low ceilings, in which 16 persons were living. The house itself is 50 or 60 years old. I approached the Housing Commission with a view to obtaining a camp for the people. I do not blame the officers of the Housing Commission for the situation. We receive every courtesy from them and they do all they possibly can. They say, "We have not a camp available, and unfortunately we cannot do anything for them."

Mr. May: It is a hopeless job.

Mr. FOX: That is what we are told every day of the week, and yet the Minister talks about the Government's glorious achievements in connection with housing. He knows nothing about it. He would not have time to go through all the applications and read

of the deplorable conditions to which so many people have to submit. To gain some knowledge of the situation, one must mix with the people concerned.

Mr. Styants: And not go to the Weld Club.

The Attorney General: Or even to Fremantle.

Mr. FOX: Instances such as I refer to occur as far as Mosman Park, not where the Minister lives. He does not know anything about them. He has been living in comfort all his life; not like people round about Fremantle and other districts who have produced a hundred thousand times more than he ever did.

The Minister for Lands: You are scratching your own back!

Mr. FOX: I am not doing that at all.

-The Minister for Lands: Put up something constructive! Do not scratch your own back like this.

Mr. FOX: I am trying to show that whereas the Minister said his Government has done something constructive, it is not true—and that is not very hard to prove.

The Minister for Housing: You have not done much towards that so far.

Mr. FOX: We had the spectacle of one member on the Government side getting up and apologising for the Government. He tried to explain the position and then turned round and hopped into the members sitting on the Opposition side of the House. The member for Geraldton and the member for Bunbury had something to say, but not the member for Canning, who lives in an aristocratic suburb. Probably he is not allowed to say what he thinks.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: He is not allowed to say what he wants to.

Mr. FOX: Does the Minister know that there are people living in tents erected on our beaches? I spoke to one woman yesterday on whose behalf I have approached the Housing Commission in an endeavour to persuade the officials to make provision for her. She is living in a tent with two children and has reared a family of eight. Just fancy a woman living in a tent, with the rain pouring down in torrents! Just fancy what would happen if the tent were to blow away in a squall! Yet the Minister is quite content with the job he is

doing. If he did not blow his bags out so much, it would not be so bad. If he would only tell the truth—

The Minister for Housing: Do not say that.

Mr. FOX: He may not know about these things, but I am giving him the truth. Then there is the position of people who are living in leaky caravans. I know of one man who was compelled to leave his caravan and he heard of a house that was vacant in Hilton Park. He took possession of it. I do not know whether anyone would agree with that, because if everyone were to do that sort of thing, I do not know where we would get to. In this instance, however, the man thought it was a "better 'ole", and he got into it. The Housing Commission has lodged an application for his eviction and the proceedings have been adjourned for a week. I have seen Mr. Bond, the secretary of the Housing Commission, about the matter and I am hopeful that something will be done for the man.

The Minister for Lands: Could you not find some accommodation for him at Fremantle?

Mr. FOX: The people I am talking about in Fremantle are not those who vote for members on this side of the House; they are in the Minister's corner.

Mr. Marshall: Only the intellectual section of the electors vote for us.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And they are in the minority at the moment.

Mr. FOX: I know of another instance of a mother and three sons, aged 20, 18 and 16 respectively, who are living in four different places. Fancy that! That case is well known to the Housing Commission. Those people have been endeavouring to get a place for the last 12 months, and there is no chance for them.

Another family evicted from their home a short time ago had to go to live with the man's mother in a McNess Home. There was insufficient room for all of them and three girls, aged 19, 17 and 13 respectively, had to be sent to live elsewhere. Fancy having to send three girls of tender years away from home just at a time when they need all the protection and advice their parents can give them! I know of others who were living with in-laws and, because

they did not get along too well, the husband has left to live elsewhere. It is understandable that people getting on in years become irritable when there are young children in the home; squabbles occur over the children and the upshot is that, if they are living with the man's mother-in-law, he packs up and goes elsewhere.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot blame him for that.

Mr. FOX: I know of two cases of that sort in Fremantle, and there is a possibility that a marriage might be broken up on that account. Dozens of young married people are living in one room and refuse to have children because they have no home for them. We cannot blame them for that, but at the same time we are bringing in migrants when a native-born population would be much better for the State. As regards controls, I hope these will not be lifted.

The Minister for Housing: Do not mention that! It is in the Bill.

Mr. FOX: Which Bill?

The Minister for Housing: The one before us.

Mr. FOX: The Minister does not like to be told the truth. He prefers to think that everything connected with housing is well. We are having a repetition of what we have heard from the Federal sphere. Mr. Menzies is going to do what the Minister said he would do and has not done. Mr. Menzies has as much chance of doing it as the Minister had. The Minister was going to give homes to two-unit families. How many such homes have been granted? Not many.

The Minister for Housing: Fifty times more than you granted.

Mr. FOX: We did not grant any that I know of. The member for East Perth said that a permit had been granted to a man and his wife to build a £2,045 home. If that is correct, I shall object as far as I possibly can, even to the extent of kicking up a terrible row. A man I know has had an application lodged for a permit for four years. He has constructed his own furniture, cut his own timber for the building and laid the foundations himself, and now the Commission has told him that he will have to cut down his area to a minimum. That man has as much right to be permitted

to build up to the specifications as has the man mentioned by the member for East Perth. I have put that case to the Housing Commission.

The Minister for Housing: You will get me into trouble over that house next.

Mr. FOX: The Minister will not get into much trouble; he will shy clear of it. I repeat that I hope the controls will be retained. I am aware that some of the masters have spoken and have cracked the whip. One of our leading legal men, a K.C., had a letter in this morning's paper stating that controls must be lifted, and I believe he is prominent in the ranks of the Liberal Party. By the way, is it the Liberal Party or the Liberal-Country Party?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawe: The Liberal camouflage!

Mr. FOX: Also, the president of the Builders' Guild has said that the controls must be lifted. If they are, the big man will get everything, as he is doing at present.

The Minister for Housing: I shall obey you.

Mr. FOX: I have been informed that the big contractors get most of the timber. A man told me recently that he had been to all the timber firms with his permit to build a self-help home. He had been living in a little bit of a box containing a couple of beds like those one sees on a ship—one above the other. The timber companies told him that the contract was too small for them to supply as they wanted the timber for big contracts. I think we can appreciate that that is what would happen.

As to bricks, I asked the Minister, by way of a question, whether he could get me 750 bricks for a man who wanted to build a chimney for a flat he has made in his home for a daughter who had been offered a McNess Home, but was too sick to accept it. The father partitioned off a portion of his home and wanted to build a chimney in the flat but could not get the bricks for it. Today I travelled along Canning Highway and saw thousands of bricks stacked at various places and no sign of a scrap of work being done.

The Minister for Housing: That is good news.

Mr. Graham: Have you seen any brick fences?

Mr. FOX: Yes, any number of them. A man who sold a house for £2,300 immediately after it was constructed built a brick fence in front and had any number of bricks left over. Brick fences are to be seen everywhere. A man in the building industry expressed to me the opinion that it was a sad day when the controls were lifted as the big men were getting everything and the small men nothing.

I am not impressed with the figures that have been quoted. There is one outstanding fact that we must acknowledge and this is that a serious shortage of building material exists in this State. Permits have been issued for buildings six to nine months ahead. From time to time lists are published in the Press of the houses for people wanting homes, but I wonder how many have awakened to the fact that, when a family is shifted out of a camp into a home, that is reckoned as two homes supplied, whereas in reality there was but one.

Mr. Hegney: What are your views on the subject of spec. building?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. FOX: I hope we are not going to have any spec. building. We know what sort of material would be used in the construction unless strict supervision were exercised, and strict supervision cannot be exercised over spec. building. If a permit were granted to a spec. builder to erect a house, I do not know that there would be any right to supervise his work. I do not suppose that spec. builders will be candidates for halos and I do not know whether they would sell at the price approved of by the sub-Treasury. I should not like to say that they would, knowing as I do of various deals that have been made in the metropolitan area during the last couple of years and the sums that have been offered for homes. One man told me that for a home which had cost him £1,500 he was offered £6,000. Homes are being sold at fabulous prices. If controls are removed—and I suppose we have to obey the orders of the master—then those in need of homes will not get them. Personally, I would like the Housing Commission to control the greater portion of the materials for home building and supply homes to the poorer people, who need them more than others do.

MR. MAY (Collie) [9.51]: Many aspects of the building industry have been discussed on this measure and it is not my purpose to cover the ground that has already been traversed by other members. The Bill must be supported, although, with other speakers, I am reluctant to admit the necessity for supporting it. The Bill does not go far enough. My remarks will be entirely from the standpoint of country people: I am content to let the metropolitan viewpoint be dealt with by the metropolitan members. I have had as much to do with the State Housing Commission as has any other member, with the exception of the Minister himself and the member for East Perth, and I have no complaint whatever to make about the treatment I have received at the hands of the staff of the Commission. I realise their position and what they are up against, but I also know the position of many country people who are requiring homes.

I admit that the staff of the Commission is doing an excellent job. It is over two years since I was brought within the ambit of housing and, bad as the position was then, it is more acute now. I am not blaming the Commission, but I cannot allow the Government to go scot free, because I consider some greater effort should have been made during the past two years by the Administration than has been made. I concede that large families have received a certain amount of consideration, although many large families have still to receive consideration. But what of the smaller-unit families, particularly newly-married couples? They should receive far greater consideration at the hands of the Government than they are receiving. The reason is that when young couples get married, many of them have to live with their in-laws and, after a few weeks, there is trouble in the camp.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: Who starts it?

MR. MAY: I do not know, but I know who is responsible for it, and I do not intend to point, either. Once this trouble arises, sooner or later the family is split up. Whether it will come together again afterwards or not depends largely upon whether the Government can find these young people suitable homes.

The Attorney General: The member for Collie should not be speaking.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The Attorney General said you should not be speaking; you have had your share.

MR. MAY: My share of what?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Housing.

MR. MAY: Did the Attorney General say that?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Yes. I heard him.

MR. MAY: Then I shall tell the Attorney General something else. I could take him to another country district where more homes have been erected than at Collie, but I have no quarrel on that account.

The Minister for Housing: I should think not. You have been well treated.

MR. MAY: To a certain extent I agree with the Minister for Housing, but I remind him at the same time that he and the Premier had a special reason for trying to increase the number of houses built at Collie.

The Minister for Housing: We know you have a very important industry.

MR. MAY: Yes.

The Minister for Housing: And we know it at the present time, particularly.

MR. MAY: It will become more important within the next week or two.

The Minister for Housing: I thought you looked cheerful tonight.

MR. MAY: Apart from all that has been said on the Bill, we know that building materials are in short supply. Everyone is aware of that fact, and if the Government and the Commission would devise some scheme whereby available materials would be distributed more equitably than at present there would be greater satisfaction and more homes built. The timber mills should come under the direct supervision of either the Government or the Housing Commission. Many mills are not cutting the class of timber that is required for housing and consequently there should be greater control—if there is any control at present—over the timber they produce.

MR. REYNOLDS: The mills should be nationalised.

MR. MAY: They could be nationalised if it were desired. We are not getting the most suitable timber for building construction from the mills at present. Even such timber as is produced is not equitably

distributed. Unless timber is controlled, it will not be distributed fairly. I myself have tried to get materials for certain jobs and soon found there were many reasons why it was not possible to get them. It has not been suggested during this debate that there should be better supervision by someone in authority over the production of the timber mills. The same thing applies to other decontrolled building materials.

Unless there is some authority to direct the proper distribution of those commodities, we shall not derive the fullest satisfaction from the materials available. I suggest to the Minister that he give urgent attention to the matter in the direction I have indicated. He has referred to the priority that Collie receives at present. I agree there is no trouble to get a permit in Collie, and I know the reason. The reason is that the Government wants to try to enlarge the population with a view to increasing the production of coal.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: How do you get on after you obtain a permit?

Mr. MAY: I am coming to that in a minute. The hon. member will hear the whole story. Over almost the last three years, in spite of the efforts that have been made in regard to improving the housing situation at Collie, not one extra man has been employed in the mining industry. I think the latest return shows that the number employed is less.

The Minister for Housing: Collie has the extra houses, though.

Mr. MAY: I want to tell the Minister this, too: that if he looked for a room in Collie tomorrow he would not be able to find one, and he would have to do the same as other people; namely, pitch a tent on virgin soil and live in that way.

The Minister for Housing: Are the people going farming?

Mr. MAY: Several members have given instances of the conditions under which people are living. I do not want to go through that sordid business so far as Collie is concerned, though there is plenty of that kind of thing there. The member for Victoria Park and the member for South Fremantle have given sufficient illustrations to show what people are going through on account of lack of accommodation. I am not slating the Government so much for the

shortage of houses. Rather do I complain about the method adopted in regard to the distribution and use of the available materials.

The position is not going to be overcome by decontrolling materials; and unless some other method is put into operation to direct them through the proper quarters, there might just as well be control of materials. It is a forlorn hope to expect that people in this State are going to be properly housed unless we retain very tight control over the materials that are available. The Leader of the Opposition interjected just now to ask what happened at Collie after a permit was granted. We have no trouble about securing permits; but after that we are in just the same position as any other part of the State so far as supplies are concerned.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You want to get a No. 1 priority.

Mr. MAY: We do not get any more materials than any other part of the State.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You want to get a No. 1 priority. There will only be 500 ahead of you.

Mr. MAY: What is a No. 1 priority?

Hon. A. H. Panton: I do not know, but everybody gets it.

Mr. MAY: I am not quarrelling about that. I know that Collie is not entitled to any more consideration than any other part of the State; and an effort has been made to improve the position there not for the sake of the people but for the sake of the industry and the coal that this State wants.

The Minister for Housing: For the sake of the people of the State.

Mr. MAY: I will admit that, perhaps, and give the Minister credit for it; because I feel that he is trying to do something at least for the people of Collie. There is a very bad hold-up in the finalisation of house building caused by the unequal distribution of materials. The Commission has let a contract in Collie for the building of a group of 10 war service homes. Six of them are in some stage of completion, but the contractor is almost distracted in his efforts to find work for the extra men he has had to employ, something for them to do while he is waiting for materials to arrive to finish the houses. There again is a very good reason why the supply of materials should still be controlled.

Arrangements have been made—with every good intention, I know, on the part of the Commission—to bring a contractor from England with his own men. Although I appreciate the effort the Government is making to bring this builder-contractor from England with his employees, what is the good of doing that unless they can be kept fully employed?

The Minister for Housing: Orders for materials for him were placed some time ago.

Mr. MAY: If that is so, he will be taking materials that belong to other people.

The Minister for Housing: No; they will come when he comes.

Mr. MAY: If he is granted materials, those materials must come out of the pool and somebody else will go short.

The Minister for Housing: They will become due when he is ready.

Mr. MAY: I understand that three houses are being retained for the men when they arrive.

The Minister for Housing: Yes; for him and for three families, I think.

Mr. MAY: I know the intention is quite good, but we have to look at the other side of the picture. There are contractors in Collie at present who have any number of men but they are not able to employ them full time, because there is no continuous supply of materials. So I do not see how the position will be improved at this stage by bringing in another contractor.

The Minister for Housing: I think Bunbury would like him.

Mr. MAY: If he does get there I will do my utmost to see that he gets materials.

The Minister for Housing: He will get them.

Mr. MAY: I will remember the words of the Minister that he thinks this contractor will get the materials. If I get my back up I will come to the Minister.

Mr. Bovell: Do you not think that industrial stoppages are responsible for the delay in the supplying of materials?

Mr. MAY: When was there a stoppage in Collie?

Mr. Bovell: I am not referring to Collie, but to industrial stoppages all over Australia.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You are referring to the doctors?

Mr. MAY: In regard to timber there has never been any stoppage here yet.

Mr. Bovell: I agree.

Mr. MAY: Why the shortage of timber then? It is not on account of industrial stoppages. I will not allow the hon. member to put that over. So far as the coal industry is concerned there has been no stoppage caused by the men.

Mr. Bovell: What about galvanised iron?

Mr. MAY: We are not responsible for that.

Mr. Bovell: I know. I am taking a broad view.

Opposition members: A very broad view!

Mr. MAY: The hon. member suggested that to a certain extent the hold-up of materials is due to industrial stoppages. I would like to tell the hon. member and any other member in this Chamber that with regard to industrial troubles we have a wonderful lot men in this State, and I do not think anyone can point a finger at them so far as continuity of work is concerned. As to what is done in other States no-one in this Chamber has any say.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping is sick and no ships have come over. That is the trouble.

Mr. Bovell: It all reflects on the progress of the building industry.

Mr. MAY: Possibly it does, but I maintain that nothing but propaganda is being used to smother up the position in relation to these shortages, and there is no substance in it. I for one am not prepared at any time, in view of the record of the workers of this State, to allow anybody to point the finger at them in regard to industrial troubles. Much has been said on this subject tonight, and I could say quite a lot too. The housing position in my electorate has caused me a good deal of worry and work, and had it not been for the support and help I have received from the staff of the Commission, my job would have been a lot harder.

I have endeavoured in a few words to point out to the Minister where I feel that some improvement could be made in spite of the present slow production of materials. If we gave undivided attention to the proper distribution of those materials we would be in a position to build more houses

than at the present time. I am concerned about the younger people. What is going to happen to the young married folk, I do not know. There is an average of two weddings a week in Collie, and the average rate of building—war service homes, private homes and Commonwealth-State rental homes—has just reached one a week.

The Minister for Housing: That is a very good. It is above the ratio.

Mr. MAY: I know it is very good compared with some other parts of the State.

The Premier: It is, compared with other parts of the Commonwealth.

Mr. MAY: We are endeavouring to increase population in Collie for a specific purpose—the production of coal. The State needs coal. We cannot increase production unless more men are brought into the industry. It is possible in the near future that other companies will be operating in Collie in the coalmining industry, and if they do we will want houses, not at the rate of one a week, but about 400 within a week. We must recognise that unless some provision is made to accommodate the people required for the industry they will not go into it: especially when we cannot house the people already in it. We should give greater consideration to the channels through which the present materials go, and see that there is more control over the merchants in regard to distribution.

We should also take greater notice of the size and specifications of the timber that is being produced by the sawmills. If we do these things I think greater satisfaction will be given all round, and the number of houses will be materially increased. I have heard much said about brick fences and so on. That sort of thing does not happen in Collie because the housing position there is so acute that we are not allowed to have brick houses. We have to be content with timber and asbestos structures.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Is that on account of the earthquakes?

Mr. MAY: No. Bricks are too dear at Collie. It is beyond the capacity of almost anybody in Collie to have a brick dwelling. The only person to get a brick house at Collie is the new engineer for Amalgamated Collieries. I could say quite a lot about that, too, but it will keep for some other time. I have said all I want to say on this

matter. I ask the Minister, in spite of all he is trying to do, and all that I have tried to do to help him and his staff at the Commission, to take some note of the fact that if there were tighter controls in regard to the distribution of the timber available, he would get more houses, and consequently have less clamouring by the public at the offices of the Commission; and there would be greater satisfaction overall.

MR. YATES (Canning) [10.16]: The member for South Fremantle, in his usually breezy style, happened to mention a portion of the Canning electorate, which I represent, as being quite a rich district.

Mr. Fox: South Perth, I said.

Mr. YATES: It happens to be reasonably wealthy, and the same goes for portions of the electorate represented by the member for South Fremantle. There is not a larger metropolitan electorate than mine, and it covers both rich and poor alike. Some parts of the electorate are very poor indeed, and the people are living in very poor conditions—in some cases in substandard homes. But let us not worry about the person who has provided something decent for himself. We do not know the circumstances of each individual. If a man likes to be thrifty throughout his life and save sufficient money to make a nice home for himself, members of Parliament should not deride him.

Mr. Styants: Do you think a man on the basic wage could save enough money to provide a home for himself?

Mr. YATES: Many of them have done so.

Mr. Styants. They must be little ones.

Mr. YATES: Not necessarily. I could take the hon. member to a home in West Leederville built by my father. It is a 7-roomed house and he built it on the basic wage, which was £3 10s. at the time; and he reared a family of children.

Mr. May: He could not do it now.

Mr. YATES: No. I am leading up to the present time.

Mr. Fox: Did he build it himself?

Mr. YATES: Yes, he did. Why cannot others do the same? Members say it cannot be done on the basic wage. Many people have been able to save enough to pay a deposit on a home and put by the balance

out of their wages, year by year, and so have completed the purchase of their homes over a period of 25 or 30 years. A married person who raises a family, so long as he is thrifty is able to do that—or he has been able to up to the present time. It has been said that costs have risen. Well, so have wages. Wages are not far behind the higher cost of living. They are always behind, we admit that, but as costs have risen so have wages, and the opportunity is still available for the individual to save not only for the present but for the future. Let us get down to some of the things that have been said. The member for South Fremantle does not have much regard for lawyers or other professional men who happen to be on this side of the House. Well, it would be a poor old Parliament if it consisted only of union secretaries, or lawyers, or butchers, or bakers. A few of each makes a big difference, and they contribute to the welfare of the State.

The hon. member may cast aspersions on the Minister for living a life of comfort and ease, but he probably worked very hard to get what he now has—and, I can assure the hon. member, he has not eased in his present job. At least the Minister is still doing his very best—and it is quite an able job—for this State. There appear to be few members of the Labour Party who are satisfied with the achievements of the Minister for Housing. I am not altogether satisfied with our achievements in respect of the housing programme, but I am sure the Minister has done all he possibly could in the short time during which he has been in his present office. When this Government took over from its predecessor the duties of Minister for Housing were performed by the present Leader of the Opposition. At first our Premier took over those duties, but that work, together with the other duties that he had to perform, became too much for him and the Government decided to create the portfolio of Minister for Housing. The present Minister has done a very good job in the short space of time that he has held the portfolio.

Member: You seem to know a lot about the Ministry.

Mr. YATES: I know very little of the activities of Cabinet. It is a body unto itself. Individual members may go to Ministers with the various problems that arise from time to time. I have always had the utmost

courtesy from members of the Cabinet, and no doubt I would have received equal courtesy from members of the previous Cabinet. The fact that I am a member of a particular party does not mean that I get anything more from the Minister than members opposite would get.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: To what party do you now belong?

Mr. YATES: I think we can be sure that the Minister for Housing has done all in his power to forward the house-building programme of this State. He has proved to the House that the building rate has increased. Members mentioned that some of our people were living under bad conditions before the war. We know that some of them were living two families to a home, and some even in tents. There was also the class of individual that did not care where he and his family lived. Before the war there was no Commonwealth-State housing scheme and the Government was not building fine homes for all in those days. The average person who then wanted to rent a home went to an agent, and there were usually quite a number of homes available for that purpose. Since that time the Commonwealth has decided to build houses all over Australia and to make them available to all and sundry.

A large number of the people who have applied for homes would not have sought them had not the war intervened and the Commonwealth commenced this scheme. However, they have now put in applications, knowing that homes are being supplied by the Government and that even if they meet with troubled times in the future they will have reasonable security of tenure until they find new employment. A number of people such as that is swelling the list of applicants today. I realise that in many cases the figures are duplicated, because people have applied for war service homes, rental homes and permits to build, all at the same time. To analyse the figures would take a long while.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You are allowed 10 per cent. on the figures that the Minister supplied tonight.

Mr. YATES: I think the proportion would be greater than that. In my electorate I always ask applicants who approach me whether they have applied for

rental homes, permits to build and—if they are returned men—war service homes.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The figures supplied to me by the Minister apply only to rental homes. There are 11,000 applicants and 3,000 are admitted to have priority.

Mr. YATES: Many of them would be applicants for permits to build and also for war service homes.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That would not reduce the figure of 11,000 applicants for rental homes.

Mr. YATES: No, but if a number of them had their applications approved, that would reduce the figure.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: If you presented them all with homes you would cut out all the applications.

Mr. YATES: The figures are not altogether accurate and I do not think we can bank on them, but we know that the number of applications is increasing day by day. Last year the member for Swan mentioned the marriage rate and it was pointed out that there were approximately 3,000 marriages taking place each year in the metropolitan area. Those couples alone would absorb the metropolitan house-building scheme for that year, and on top of that there is the inflow of migrants and all the people who have been waiting since before the war to get into homes of their own.

We are faced with great difficulty in giving satisfaction to them all. The war was responsible for the major housing problem with which we are confronted today. The Labour Government, which was in power at the outbreak of war, had to cease house-building in order to assist in the war effort. In the intervening years marriages still took place, and the natural increase in population continued. We lost the number of homes that would ordinarily have been built during that time and at the end of the war we were confronted with a vastly increased number of people wanting houses. Young men were returning from the war, in some cases with large sums of money in their pay-books.

There was also a speeding up in the marriage rate during and immediately after the war, so that the Labour Government was faced with a heavy house-building programme that looked like lasting for a

number of years. That Government commenced the scheme that the present Government has carried on. It laid the foundations, with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government. I cannot understand why members of the Labour Party are worrying the Minister so much about the activities of his department. He is carrying on the scheme that was started and was left to him by the Labour Government.

The Minister for Housing: With improvements.

Mr. YATES: Under his direction the house-building rate has been improved.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It is a pity you did not think of all that before the last election, instead of telling the people tales about cobwebs.

Mr. YATES: I did not tell any tales about cobwebs.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Premier did.

Mr. YATES: I am interested only in what I said, and not in what the Premier said. The Government has done a commendable job in regard to housing. I have on my list 142 applicants for homes. Like the member for Collie and other members who have spoken on the matter, I have spent a considerable amount of time with the Housing Commission.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: And you have got your share of results.

Mr. YATES: I have received no more assistance for the people who have approached me than has any other member who has done what I have done.

Hon. A. H. Panton: When I manage to get a house for a couple they go to South Perth to live.

Mr. YATES: We all do what we can to assist people to get homes and when we present their cases to the Housing Commission we get a good hearing there. I have nothing but admiration for the staff of the Commission. Those that I have contacted have been helpful and obliging and have listened sympathetically to the cases I have presented to them.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: How many houses per year do you succeed in getting?

Mr. YATES: I cannot say, offhand. A number of those who approach me have had applications in for some time, and must wait their turn. I have been able to assist evicted

people to get houses promptly, just as have other members, and, in cases where people have been living in tents, I have been able to get them into houses reasonably quickly.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I am interested, because I never seem to have much luck in that regard.

Mr. YATES: I do not have much luck, either, considering the number of cases in which I approach the Housing Commission.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Whom do you see.

Mr. YATES: I am at them all the time. To assist in this house building problem in the metropolitan area the road boards could play a much bigger part than they are playing at present. Some road boards stand on their dignity regarding building regulations. They will not permit homes below a certain size to be erected. Certain specifications have to be complied with and that makes it very difficult for a family, a husband and wife and one child to build a small home in their district. Some of the road boards make it taboo and these families have to go further afield and approach a road board with a more sympathetic outlook so that they can build a smaller type of house. I want to commend the Canning Road Board for the assistance that it has given to the people approaching it during the last couple of years for permits to build in that locality.

The Premier: I had a letter from the Prime Minister only a day or two ago in which he asked us to stick to the 8ft. ceilings. He said that it was no detriment at all and that it has been proved.

Mr. Marshall: It's a pity the Prime Minister did not have to live in such a home himself.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Especially in Western Australia.

Mr. Marshall: I could tell members about the 8ft. ceilings.

The Premier: Anyhow, he has made the request.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What does the Premier think about it?

Mr. YATES: In any case the homes that are going up in the Canning Road Board district are of the weatherboard and asbestos type. In some instances they are only small, but they make provision for the people to add to those houses in later years. However, all road boards are not sympathetic to the

young married couple who desires to put up a modest dwelling and that is why in that district a lot of houses are being erected. They are homes that are not costing too much to build and they are within the reach of people with little finance, but over a period of years they will be able to make them neat and attractive and at least a home for their children when they come along. Some of the more settled road board districts are too firm with their regulations.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I think that is right too.

Mr. YATES: Such road boards issue all sorts of warnings to people living in desperate circumstances and in some cases in condemned shacks. A person might have to vacate a house and put up a tent on a block, and yet he receives a notification that he must immediately remove himself from such block. These road boards do not temper justice with mercy. It is time that legislation was brought down by the Government to give it power, in case of emergency, to over-ride road boards on some of their decisions regarding the erection of homes in their particular districts.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Government is in enough strife with the local authorities now.

Mr. YATES: Mention has been made of the two and three unit families not getting homes. We know it is very difficult for them to do so under the present scheme as only a small percentage of the output is allocated to them. Where we as members of Parliament suffer is that we might receive a letter from a person who has applied for a home and this person points out the details of his present accommodation, and probably states that he has two or three children living on a back verandah and that the application has been in for two years. Then we are asked how is it that Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so, who have no children, recently moved into a house.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You get that every day of the week.

Mr. YATES: The two and three unit families unfortunately come under the small allocation for such units, although at times the two-unit families are suffering very great hardship. As a matter of fact, some such cases have been allocated a home on a hardship basis. That is why it is very difficult

for the State Housing Commission to allocate homes to the small unit groups because they get so many letters complaining bitterly about houses being allotted to two and three unit families. It is a difficult problem to overcome. We have heard much about the co-ordination of timber and bricks, roofing materials and such like. I favour controls over many commodities when they are short, but I do not believe that controls can go on indefinitely and they should be lifted when things are back to normal.

Mr. Graham: But are they?

Mr. YATES: The control over bricks assisted greatly towards the home building problem and I do not think that that control should have been lifted. That is my personal view and I may be wrong.

Mr. Hegney: It's a pretty sound view too.

Mr. YATES: I rang a brickyard last week in an endeavour to arrange for the supply of 2,500 bricks for a person in my district who required them to build a shed for turning out some urgent work. The people at the brickyards told me that I could not get the 2,500 bricks for at least nine months. I could name the brickyard and the manager, if necessary, because I did all I could to assist him to get further land granted to him in order to double his output of bricks, but unfortunately I was not able to have the necessary arrangements finalised. The manager told me that if the bricks were available he would let me have them, but he said that if I did get them they would have to come out of one of the contractor's allocations and the contractor would then have to wait for them. I told him that I would not do that and that the person concerned would have to wait the nine months.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How many months?

Mr. YATES: It would be nine months before the bricks could be allocated to him.

Mr. Nimmo: What about "Dunbricks."

Mr. YATES: They were all in the same position regarding the brick output. I also know that when we had control over timber I had to extend my back verandah to make room for a second family to live with me. I had £20 worth of work to do and it required £3 or £4 worth of timber. I approached the local millers and received that timber within five days, but I know that at present it is impossible to go to the same

timber yard and get the small amount of timber that would be required for the work that I had to do. I also know that other timber yards are faced with a similar position.

I realise that when controls are lifted things go haywire for a time. Certain people try to buy in large quantities and they make it bad for the person who requires small lots. Other members have dealt with the problem and they speak from experience. I know they do not come along and tell falsehoods regarding the difficulties of getting timber supplies. If the present position is to continue, then the Government should review the position and include in the control list such items as bricks, timber or anything else that is now being denied to the average person who wants to do urgent work. I do not know who the people are whom Opposition members call capitalists and who they say are getting the benefit of it all. What we want to see is that the right people are getting the benefit and, if they are not, then it is up to the Government of the day—whether it be our Government or the Labour Government—to see that these people get what they require and that an equitable distribution is made to all.

Mr. Graham: Have you seen brick fences going up?

Mr. YATES: Yes, and they are still going up and I do not think it should be allowed. It is not fair that brick fences should be erected when it is to the detriment of the people who wish to build houses and so on, and thus have more important work done.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Yet the Minister said that he did not believe that brick fences were going up.

Mr. YATES: I have had my car out in the weather for three and a half years because I realise that I cannot build a garage owing to the shortage of materials. Members can come along to my home and see my car out in all weathers where it has been, as I said, for three and a half years.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is why I have not bought a car. I cannot get a garage.

Mr. YATES: Until the position eases it is not possible for people like myself to put up garages and yet it makes us mad when we see brick fences being erected. The Minister should review that particular item

and, if bricks are to remain free from control, then the people receiving them should sign statutory declarations that the bricks are not required for the building of fences or other unnecessary work.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: And if they are eventually discovered to have been used for a fence then that person should be taken to court and heavily fined.

Mr. YATES: I also think that the State Housing Commission pays too much attention to administration. Although it is necessary to administer the building programme and have a large number of people to do it, if more attention were paid to the outside supervision of the Commission's activities regarding the production of timber and its co-ordination, the production of bricks and the operations of the various timber yards in the metropolitan area, it would assist it in its difficult work. If those industries were so co-ordinated it would go a long way towards relieving the problem of shortages. During the war, the Army took over from the first day, when everything was in chaos, and thousands of men were in camp, and soon co-ordinated and straightened things out and had them under control.

The Minister for Education: That cannot be done in civil life.

Mr. YATES: It was their policy of co-ordination which proved to be a great factor in the successful conclusion of the activities of the A.I.F.

The Minister for Education: You should see the representatives of the National Service Department and the work it carried out. It is a lot different with regard to the manufacture of bricks.

Mr. YATES: I am referring to the co-ordination of output. One member referred to the output of timber from the mills that is useless for house building. The mills might be turning out thousands of feet of 5 x 3 when we urgently require a lot of 4 x 2 and 3 x 2. Co-ordination would ensure that the right type of timber, or any other material, is produced and given to the various contractors, per medium of the Housing Commission, to complete their work.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: They would erect a saw bench and cut it up. Money is no object with them.

Mr. YATES: Attention could be paid to the co-ordination of supplies that come directly under the activities of the State Housing Commission. If that were done, we might give more satisfaction to the builders and we would also get more homes built. I support this measure, which is definitely needed. I will be pleased when the day arrives when this measure is no longer required. But until that time does arrive, then our duty, as members of Parliament, is to guard the interests of the people wherever they might be, regardless of which Party we support or whatever Government may be in power. Today, it is up to us to do our best for the greatest good and the greatest number.

Mr. BRADY: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. BRADY (Guildford - Midland) [10.43]: At this late hour I do not intend to take up a great deal of time, but I feel I would not be doing justice to the people I represent if I did not discuss this matter tonight. Recently, I have investigated two or three cases where the people concerned applied to build their own homes as early as 1944. Those people have now withdrawn their applications because they find that the increase in costs are such that they cannot bear the burden, and they will now have to accept tenancy homes. So those people are bitter towards the policy of the Government in allowing prices to increase and depriving them of the opportunity of ultimately owning their homes. The position in my electorate is becoming more desperate from day to day. When I was elected in March, 1948, there were 150 people waiting for homes. In December, 1948, the position had improved and there were only 90. In June, 1949, which is right up to the present day, the position has worsened to such an extent that 25 per cent. has been added to the original 90, and now there are 120 waiting for homes in Midland Junction alone. Those figures apply to applicants for tenancy homes, apart from the number seeking building permits who desire to build privately. The latter are decreasing in number from day to day as costs are increasing.

It has been suggested that in a debate of this kind one should be rather constructive in criticism levelled against the Government,

and therefore I want to offer one or two constructive suggestions whereby I believe the Government could help to overcome the housing shortage. I traverse my electorate a good deal and I find that in the various industries operating within it the amenities are appalling. We know that there is a small amount of labour available to brick-yards, tile workers, timber yards and the cement industry. If the Government cared to face up to the job as it should, it would introduce amendments to the Factories and Shops Act and ensure that conditions and amenities in those industries are similar to those in many other industries in the city, and which are warranted according to modern standards. Since the brick industry commenced 50 years ago, there has not been one iota of improvement in the conditions under which the men work.

In many of the brickyards there are neither hot nor cold showers available. The men sit around in the yards and in the factories to eat their lunch almost in the same spot where they work. They boil a billy of tea, eat a few sandwiches and play cards alongside a stack of bricks or the pressing machines at which they have been working all day. When they knock off, they have to walk or pedal a bike into Midland Junction to board a conveyance to their homes. If the Government, through the Factories and Shops Act, were to improve conditions in those industries it would help the housing position considerably. For instance, in the cement industry there is always a considerable amount of dust and the men are likely to contract silicosis, and though they might receive better wages, they leave the industry for one that is more congenial. They cannot be blamed for leaving those industries when they are likely to suffer from sickness by continuing to work in them.

If members of the Liberal Party or the Country and Democratic League could see the conditions in which the lime-workers of Western Australia are working, they would not believe their own eyes. Their conditions are the same today as they were 50 or 60 years ago. In fact, there are very few Britishers working in the industry. The conditions are so appalling that the number of Australians and Englishmen could be counted on one hand. These are all essential with regard to the building industry. I believe that if the Factories and Shops Act

were amended so as to improve the conditions of the men working in these avocations, it would have a marked effect on the situation. As it is, the workers frequently leave their jobs and it is difficult to get others to replace them.

The member for Canning said that the road boards had not proved very helpful regarding the housing problem. On the other hand, in my district I have attended a number of meetings with road board and municipal representatives, and I have found them very co-operative. To indicate what is happening and how pioneers of this State are being treated, I shall read a letter that I received this morning. It was written from an address in Bassendean and states—

Last September I had to sell my farm situated at Witchecliffe owing to ill-health and applied for a permit to build at Bassendean. I had to obtain at the time of application a doctor's certificate to say that I was totally unfit for heavy work and was advised that my application had been approved and that my name had been put on the list as from February, 1949. Although I have the money to build a house and a builder who stated he could complete it for me within three months, it appears that I have, for some unforeseen reason, to await the Commission's pleasure for a permit to build. Doesn't it seem a farce that this should be so? At present myself and wife are living in a bachelor's shack, with the permission of the Bassendean health authorities, until November next. We have just been granted permission to erect a tent for sleeping accommodation for our two boys, 17 and 12 years old. Will you please contact the member for Sussex who knows me well and can verify my good work and standing while in the Forest Grove, Witchecliffe and Margaret River districts? It does not seem justifiable to me that a permit cannot be issued. I have helped to develop this country for a period of practically 40 years. I still hold the doctor's certificate . . . Providing, as I have stated, my builder can build, nothing is to be gained by withholding the issue of a permit to me.

That serves to indicate that the Bassendean Road Board has been helpful in this instance and at the same time it discloses the experience of one who has been a pioneer in this State but who cannot get a permit to build. There are scores of similar cases. I would not protest tonight were it not that I have seen in the city, particularly in James-st. and Wellington-st., huge commercial and industrial buildings being run up that must have necessitated the use of large quantities of building materials; and

this at a time when people are forced to live in crowded conditions in one or two rooms. Only today I received a letter indicating that a lady and her husband with three children were living in one room. In consequence of the conditions existing there the health of one of the children had been considerably impaired. People are allowed to exist under such conditions while others are permitted to construct buildings for the storage of flour, machinery and so on! The Government should give consideration to the policy of allowing commercial and industrial enterprises to continue to expand in this way, because I think it is not satisfactory at this juncture.

The Minister for Housing: All such matters are examined by the Department of Industrial Development.

Mr. BRADY: That may be so, but I know of a storehouse that has been built in James-street, close to Westralian Farmers Ltd., in recent times for the storage of flour that could well be provided for elsewhere. Then again, a timber man drew my attention yesterday to the fact that the Government itself is largely to blame for the shortage of scantling for houses. He explained that that was due to the Government's policy of giving concessions to timber hewers in the South-West, and said that the position of the small man was very unsatisfactory because, if any concession were obtained, the Government department laid it down that the individual must cut sleepers only. Sometimes a man may fall a 16 ft. or 17 ft. tree from which he has to cut two 6-ft. sleepers which means that he has 5-ft. of waste timber, which has to be put over the fire-chute or is allowed to rot on the ground.

If the Government were to alter its policy and allow one 6ft. sleeper to be cut and the balance to be converted into scantlings or other suitable building material, the improvement in the supply of timber for the construction of houses would be immediate. Thus it would appear that the policy of the Government regarding timber cutting in the South-West has contributed to the shortage of supplies. Another factor that appeals to me is that it may be said that a certain amount of timber has been made available for commercial and other enterprises as against the percentage allowed for the erection of private houses. When the report of

the Royal Commission that investigated matters relating to the State railways was submitted, it contained a recommendation for an improvement in the amenities provided for the railway men. Various improvements were outlined. While I notice timber supplies being provided for commercial and industrial enterprises, little has been made available for the provision of amenities to improve the working conditions of the railway men. For instance, during a by-election last year the Premier said that a canteen was likely to be built for the convenience of the railway men at Midland Junction. So far as I am aware, that work has not yet been started.

Earlier in the session the member for Hannans asked a question indicating the lack of amenities for the railway men at Kalgoorlie. I could go on enumerating other instances. Reference has been made to the position that would arise if controls were lifted, but the indications are that under the existing conditions it would work to the detriment of the small man in view of the concessions that are given to the bigger concerns. I know of a small contractor who started operations last October, but he did not realise the control the big man had over the output of timber and other accessories necessary for the construction of houses. He commenced six contracts and in each instance found he had to wait for three months to get them completed. So great was his disappointment that he has gone out of the contracting business and has taken a position with the Railway Department. I am sure there are other contractors who would be able to build small homes for workers were it not that the big contractors have a monopoly over the building accessories and timber available.

I believe that in many instances the officers of the State Housing Commission could probably be a bit more liberal in their treatment of people who have materials for the erection of two or three rooms for their accommodation. Because of their suspicions, the authorities withhold the necessary approval. If those people were allowed to erect their two- or three-roomed houses, the places they now occupy could be made available for others. The premises they now occupy could possibly be renovated and so provide accommodation for two- or three-unit families. I have an instance of a lady named Smith who applied for a permit in 1946.

She stated on her application that she had the materials necessary and did not want any from the Commission. She did not require any labour as her son was prepared to build the house. Notwithstanding that, now in 1949 she has not even got her approval to erect the dwelling. She has a permit from the Belmont Road Board for the erection of the house there; but because of some pettifogging argument that is going on between the officers of the Commission and this lady, she is denied the right to build her own home and thus leave her present accommodation available for others.

I consider that the officers could show some little relaxation in their treatment of such cases. In my opinion the position is deteriorating, but a big improvement could be effected if the Government brought down an amendment to the Factories and Shops Act to ensure better conditions for employees in the brick, cement and lime industries and in the timber yards. I believe that the employees in those industries are working under very difficult conditions, especially during inclement weather when some of them have to walk two or three miles or ride their cycles to work. Apart from this, many of them work under hot and extremely disagreeable conditions. With the provision of suitable transport, we should be assured of having men to follow up these industries permanently and this in itself would assist to overcome some of the shortages of material.

Point of Order.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker! I feel that I have to ask your ruling on the question whether this Bill can be proceeded with. I have spent some time in research because I have had a doubt about it for almost 24 hours. When speaking last evening, I mentioned that I thought the Government would be in difficulty later in the session regarding the motion that the Premier was then moving to rescind. The Premier sought to get out of the difficulty by quoting from "May." I subsequently referred to that quotation and, in my opinion, it has no bearing on the point I raised. Consequently, I went further afield, and I am now perfectly satisfied that this Bill should not be allowed to proceed.

I appreciate that the step I am venturing to take is a very important one; the fate of several Bills will be involved. It is a step that I do not take lightly or frivolously; I take it because the responsibility devolving upon me requires me to do so, feeling as I do about the matter. Wherever I have had any doubt in my mind, I have sought further reference and precedent, and I consider that I have found them in this instance. I regret that it will take a fairly long time to read them—the hour is already late—but I have no option in the matter and must proceed.

During my research, I have been struck with the quickness of the Speaker of the British House of Commons to take the initiative and promptly rule out of order Bills and motions which have been similar and introduced under similar conditions to this measure. I cannot expect you, with your limited experience, to be as quick as that, but I hope that after I have made out a case, you will fearlessly make your pronouncement on its merits, as I find has been the invariable practice in the British House of Commons.

I wish to establish first of all that our Standing Orders and our Interpretation Act bearing on the matter are exactly the same as those of Great Britain.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is an important point.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Yes, there is no difference whatever between them. Consequently, when the Speaker of the House of Commons has ruled, despite the existence of the Interpretation Act and the Standing Orders, that a Bill has been out of order, he has done so with a full knowledge of the provisions of the Interpretation Act and the Standing Orders—the same provisions as we have here. In order to make this point quite clear, I shall quote the Standing Order and the portion of the Interpretation Act that I consider applies in this instance. Standing Order 180 reads—

No question shall be proposed which is the same in substance as any question which, during the same session, has been resolved in the affirmative or negative.

That is also in the Standing Orders of the British House of Commons and has been observed and acted upon for very many years. To show this, I shall quote over a period of about 300 years. Section 44 of our Interpretation Act reads—

Any Act may be altered, amended or repealed in the session of Parliament in which it was passed.

At first glance it would appear that that provision would be fatal to the case I am submitting, the Bill now under discussion being one to amend or alter an Act passed this session. I wish to repeat that a similar provision is found in the Interpretation Act of Great Britain and to prove this I propose to quote from "May's Parliamentary Practice," Fourteenth Edition, page 375. I ask you to take note of these references, Sir, so that you may clearly follow what I am about to say as I consider them important in that they link the one with the other. "May" says—

Matters already decided during the same session: A motion or an amendment may not be brought forward which is the same in substance as a question which has been decided in the affirmative or negative during the current session. The rule may be fully stated as follows:—No question or Bill shall be offered in either House that is substantially the same as one on which its judgment has already been expressed in the current session.

That is similar to the provision in our Standing Order 180. I mentioned that the Interpretation Act of Great Britain is similar to ours in making it possible to alter, amend or repeal Acts passed in the same session. Here is the proof that this provision exists in Great Britain. I quote from the same edition of "May" at page 492.

Bills amending or repealing Acts of the same session: The amendment of an Act of the same session is another aspect of the rule against the repetition of decided questions. Formerly it was expressly disallowed, but has been made permissible by the Act of 1850 and by the Interpretation Act of 1889.

So it is perfectly clear that the British Parliament is permitted to amend, alter or repeal Acts passed in the same session. However, notwithstanding the Standing Order and notwithstanding that provision in the Interpretation Act, the Speakers have ruled against the introduction of Bills such as the one now before us. The question before us is a Bill for an Act to continue the operation of the Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act, 1945-1948. An amendment is proposed to amend the Act by substituting for the word "forty-nine" the word "fifty." When this question was considered earlier this session, what the House had to decide was whether or not it was prepared to continue the controls.

The Attorney General: For a period.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is what we debated earlier this session, whether we were to continue the controls or whether these were to cease at the date mentioned in the Act. Having agreed that we were to continue the controls, the next point for us to decide was the date to which they were to be continued. We decided that they would continue until 1949. Now, in the same session, we are being asked either to reaffirm that decision, which we would do if we voted against this amending Bill, or reach another decision in the same session contrary to the one we have already made. That is the point, and on it I quote from Parliamentary Debates of the House of Commons, 1920, Vol. 129, page 931. In this case the Speaker himself took the initiative. He said, on the Women's Franchise Bill—

I have examined this Bill and it appears to me to raise substantially the same question as the Representation of the People Bill which was discussed in the Spring, to which the House gave its assent, and which is now before a Standing Committee of the House. In my opinion, as it raises substantially the same questions as that Bill, it cannot be taken.

One of the members, rising to a point of order, asked the Speaker whether, in coming to that decision, the second reading of the Women's Franchise Bill could not be taken in consequence of the House having already given a second reading to the Representation of the People Bill. In answer to that question, the Speaker said—

The right hon. gentleman has not given me sufficient notice. At one minute to twelve today I got a notice from him saying that he was going to bring this matter to my attention. It was perfectly impossible for me to examine the Bills referred to. My recollection is that those Bills were different. The right hon. gentleman says they were substantially the same, but if that was so what was the object of bringing in both? There obviously must have been a very considerable difference between the Bill introduced by Mr. Hudson and the Bill introduced by the Attorney General. I have not had time to look at them, but I have had time to look at these Bills, and they raise exactly the same point. If it is discussed again today as it was on the previous occasion, it will occupy the whole attention of the House, and may place the House in a very awkward situation, supposing that upon this occasion the House came to a different opinion from that which it reached on the former occasion. The whole object of this rule is that the House should not be placed in that position. It has given its decision on the first Bill, and it is now asked to reconsider it. If it affirmed its previous decision,

it would only be a waste of time. If it took an opposite view to that which it took on the former occasion, it would place the Committee in a very grave and difficult position, and the House also.

The continuance Bill earlier in this session, and the one now before us, raise exactly the same point, whether we desire to continue the controls or not. That is the first point—the continuance of controls—whether they are advantageous or not, whether it is expedient to keep on imposing them or whether they should be lifted. That was the whole tenor of the discussion on the first Bill and it should have been the discussion on this Bill.

Mr. Bovell: Have not the dates a bearing?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Yes. We will come to them.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I ask you, Sir, could both of these Bills, that is, the Bill first introduced this session and the one introduced now, have been introduced at the same time? The first Bill, which was introduced on the 2nd September, 1948, was for an Act to continue the operation of the Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act, 1945-1947; the second Bill, the one now before us is for an Act to continue the operation of the Building Operations and Building Materials, Control Act, 1945-1948. Again I ask could these two Bills, which propose to amend an existing Act and to continue controls for a further period, have been introduced together? Would not either one of them have been sufficient to enable a determination to be made by this House upon the question as to whether controls should be continued and, secondly, for how long?

I submit that it was competent for the House to have amended the first Bill to have the period fixed for any year. Not only that, but the House could have determined that the controls could be continued until 1950 on the first Bill. The House determined, however, not that controls should continue until 1950, but until 1949. We are now being asked to reverse that decision on the very same question and to say that we did not want the controls to continue until 1949, but that we wanted them to go to 1950. Suppose the former Bill had been amended so as to substitute 1951 for 1949, could the Government then have brought in a Bill to alter

the date back to 1950? I say definitely not, because the House earlier in the session, when called upon to determine how long the controls should continue, had decided that they should continue until 1951. Then how could we be asked in the same session to determine that the controls should continue to 1950?

So this second Bill calls upon the House to consider substantially the same question. In order to emphasise this point, I propose to quote from various volumes that I have before me. I take first of all the Parliamentary Debates of the House of Commons for the year 1860, Vol. 3. I shall make the quotations as short as possible.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is necessary to give the legal references in full.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I quote from page 1347—

Order for Second Reading read.

Lord Robert Montagu said he rose to order. It was the rule of the House that a Bill should not be brought in on the same subject twice in one Session. He was informed by the hon. Member for Westmeath (Mr. Pollard-Urquhart) that this Bill was identical with one on the same subject which the House had rejected in March last. It was now brought in under another name.

Mr. Speaker said, if the Bill was the same in substance, it was undoubtedly the rule of the House that it could not again be introduced, and the order must be discharged. But the fact must be ascertained.

The next reference is from Volume 201 of the Parliamentary Debates of 1870 at page 823. It is as follows:—

Mr. Speaker: I shall be glad to explain to the House the ground on which I informed the hon. member of the objections which exist to his motion. There is a rule of the House that no question may be proposed which is the same in substance as has been resolved in the affirmative or negative in the same session. On the 1st March of this year this resolution was proposed—

That, in order to arrest the increase of pauperism, and to relieve the distressed condition of the working classes, it is expedient that measures be adopted for facilitating the emigration of poor families to British Colonies.

The motion today is—

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty praying that she may direct measures to be taken to provide passages to the Colonies for intending emigrants, who shall be approved by competent authority, at cheap and uniform rates of charge.

Now, that is facilitating the emigration of poor families to the British Colonies. The vote of the House has decided against it; and, certainly, in obedience to the rules of the House, I must say most distinctly that, in my opinion, it would conflict with the rule which I have quoted.

The next reference is in Volume 160 of the Parliamentary Debates of the House of Commons of 1906 at page 359. This is somewhat different from the other references, dealing with a different matter and showing how still the same principle is applicable. I quote as follows:—

Colonel Saunderson moved the following motion:—"That Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown in Ireland to make out a new writ for the election of a member to serve in the present Parliament for the County of East Tyrone, in the room of Patrick Charles Doogan, Esq., deceased."

I will skip a paragraph or two in order to save time. Subsequently Colonel Saunderson said—

The question was, what should be the date of the election?

Then a Mr. Paul raised a point of order. The record proceeds—

Mr. Paul: On a point of order I wish to know whether the right honourable member, not being a member of the party to which the late Mr. Doogan belonged is entitled to make this motion without public notice.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think public notice is required. Notice should be given by the right honourable gentleman to the Whips of the party to which the deceased member belonged, and I believe that has been done.

That is the commencement of this ruling. At page 363 appears the following:—

Mr. Speaker: I think it is right to point out to the honourable and learned gentleman that if the House refuses today to issue this writ he cannot make a similar motion during the present session.

One of the Ministers was urging that this motion should not be agreed to and that permission should not be given to issue a writ and the Speaker pointed out that if a decision were taken on that question it would not be competent for the Minister in the same session to move that a writ be issued. I next quote from the debates of 1912 (Volume 35) at page 1043 as follows:—

Mr. Speaker: The motion standing in the name of the hon. member cannot be proceeded with. It is practically the same question that was discussed on the 22nd February

as an amendment to the Address. It seems to me that, although the wording of the amendment then proposed and the motion standing in the name of the hon. member is slightly different, yet the substance of the two resolutions is the same. It has been ruled that the same matter cannot be brought before the House twice in a session.

At page 1754 of Volume 38 of the Parliamentary Debates of 1912 appears the following:—

Mr. Speaker: I would like to point out to the hon. member that the House has already considered, discussed, and disposed of a Bill under the same title as the Bill which he now proposes to introduce. The House, therefore, could not consider a precisely similar Bill. I do not know whether the hon. member proposes in the Bill which he now asks leave to introduce to raise another question which was not discussed by the House.

I would like you to take note of that, Sir, where the Speaker pointed out that it would obviously make a difference if the new Bill included something which was not discussed before. I submit that the matter that is in this Bill was discussed earlier in this session, as a reference to "Hansard" will show. The extract continues—

If he proposes to raise simply the same point as has already been discussed, I would point out to him that we cannot proceed with this Bill. Does this Bill contain any fresh proposal?

I now quote Volume 119 of "Hansard" of 1919 at page 1718. This is a very important reference because it shows that in accordance with the Interpretation Act it is possible to amend or alter by way of revision and not by way of reversing a definite decision which was given. I trust that members will follow this closely. I have further references bearing on this aspect of the matter and I regard this as the crux of the question. Here is the quotation—

Mr. Speaker: It is sometimes found that second thoughts are best. It is open to the House to revise its decision provided that it is not asked to agree to or disagree with identically the same question. That is not the case here.

Before I quote the last reference, which I think completely clinches the matter, I want to emphasise again the importance of this ruling, because there will be a number of continuance Bills that will have to come up for consideration. There will be continuance Bills relating to the Increase of Rent Restriction Act, the Land Alienation Restriction Act and the Industries Assistance Act;

but I do not think the Government will be able to introduce those continuance Bills and carry on its business unless it closes this session and opens a fresh one. In the Bill before us there is only one proposition and that is that the provisions of the existing building materials control Act be extended for a further year beyond the date already decided this session. Let us see whether we can do that. I remark again that the same Standing Order with regard to introducing a matter twice, and the same provision in the Interpretation Act with regard to the ability to amend or repeal, exist in Great Britain as here. Despite that, the Speaker has given this ruling—and I quote from "Hansard" of 1920, volume 132 p. 2206—

Mr. Speaker: I put it this way. Supposing in the first instance, the matter had been limited to shops, and the House had been asked to say that the Regulations relating to shops should cease on 31st December, it could not be again invited to reconsider its decision and say that Regulations regarding the shops should be continued for a year or 18 months beyond 31st December.

That is exactly what this House is being asked to do. The one matter which this House, this session, decided was to continue this measure until 1949. Now the Government is asking us in the same session to reverse that decision and to extend the operations of this provision for a further 12 months. I refer members again to the last reference I quoted to show the complete analogy. I maintain that that is exactly the same situation as we are in, and what we are being asked to do. The British House of Commons has been in existence for a much longer time than we have. It has been my experience since I have been in this House that we have invariably turned to "May" when we have not been perfectly clear in our minds as to what decision should be given. I can remember Speaker after Speaker quoting from various pages of "May" to prove what action we should take.

When we realise that our Standing Order and our provision in the Interpretation Act are the same as those in Great Britain—and probably taken from there—and we find these decisions being given by successive Speakers, how can we determine in this place other than that, because this is a continuation of the session last year, it is not competent for us to give consideration to substantially the same question? I admit I have had to give you, Sir, quite a lot of

matter to consider. I felt that was necessary to prove my point, because it was to be expected that there would be many people holding a contrary view. If there is an answer to these precedents, and to the last quotation in particular, I would like to hear it.

If there is no answer, then I think there is an obligation on you, Mr. Speaker, to follow the example set by those illustrious men who occupied the Speaker's Chair in Great Britain, and show that, although you did not yourself come across this position, but had it pointed out to you, you are prepared to rule not in a way which would suit the Government but in a way which would establish fair and proper procedure to be followed when the Standing Orders and the provisions of the Interpretation Act are being contravened. I submit that that is the position with regard to the Bill now before the House. We are being called upon to give consideration to a matter already determined. We have either got to re-affirm a previous decision and allow the Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act to remain as it is—and we do that if we negative the Bill before us—or we have to reverse the previous decision and fix a different date. If we do that, we will be doing the very thing which my last reference says we are unable to do. I do not propose to labour the point. I now leave the matter in your hands and in the hands of the House.

The Minister for Housing: I regret the member for North-East Fremantle did not do me the courtesy of letting me know he intended to raise this point, and so give me an opportunity of studying the various precedents to which he referred. I should have been interested to read the cases because from a very limited extract from them, and without any background as to the facts which gave rise to the particular rulings, it is impossible for anybody to give a determination on the various precedents referred to by the hon. member. I should have said that on a plain man's rendering of this matter there could be no doubt that this Bill was entirely in order. So far from accepting the suggestions of the hon. member, I would be reluctant to see a ruling given which would limit to such a very great degree the powers which ought to be possessed by a sovereign legislature. I should say that the hon. member, in raising this point, is

creating a rod, if his view is successful, and the precedents and rulings are followed as he suggests, which will put a very severe limitation on the powers of this Parliament in future.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That would not be so.

The Minister for Housing: It would be so.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Government has created this difficulty itself.

The Minister for Housing: Many cases have happened in the past—and they happen continuously in the Commonwealth Parliament—where it is proper that the session should be adjourned for a period and resumed—perhaps extending over two or more years. I should be reluctant to see such a limitation imposed on the powers of Parliament as is suggested by the interpretation which the hon. member seeks to put upon this Standing Order. The words of the Interpretation Act by themselves are perfectly plain. Section 44 provides—

Any Act may be altered, amended, or repealed in the Session of Parliament in which it was passed.

I should have said that by itself that statement, which is paramount in an Act of Parliament, was perfectly plain. But the hon. member, to my mind, in the limited time I have had an opportunity of considering the matter has sought to place a very narrow interpretation on the question involved in the prior continuance Bill and the continuance Bill which is now before the House.

This is not a Bill to amend a prior continuance Bill, but to amend the parent Act. The prior continuance Bill sought to amend and did amend the parent Act in a certain way, and this is a second Bill, the purpose of which is to amend the parent Act in another way. The first Bill, which became an Act of Parliament, had for its purpose to strike out the words "forty-eight" in the parent Act and substitute in lieu the words "forty-nine." The question before the House was whether the words "forty-eight" in the parent Act should be taken out and the words "forty-nine" inserted in their place. This Bill, to use the words of the hon. member, contains an entirely different proposal, which is to insert in the parent Act the word "fifty." I suggest, from my reading of the matter and on looking at the substance of the earlier Bill which became an Act and the Bill now before the House, that it will

be found that they represent two different and distinct proposals and are two different and distinct measures brought forward this session in order to make different amendments to the parent Act, each Bill having a different effect in relation to the objective and effect of the measure that has been brought down.

So, without having had opportunity of examining the precedents or even of examining "May," in view of the fact that this point has been brought forward without the opportunity of seeing those precedents, I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is a different proposal in this Bill; a different year and a different objective from that contained in the earlier measure.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Do I understand you to argue that the Bill now before the House is to amend the Parent Act?

The Minister for Housing: Yes.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is ruled out if you read the Standing Order.

The Minister for Housing: These are two measures which raise different questions and involve different proposals, and that being so on the plain meaning and the objective of the two measures in relation to the parent Act and on the plain meaning of Section 44 of the Interpretation Act, I will be surprised to find that there is any legitimate objection to be taken to the validity of this Bill.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: My remarks will be brief. The member for North-East Fremantle has submitted to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House, the results of a very close study of the principle involved in his point of order. He has clearly shown to you that the Interpretation Act and the similar Standing Order obtain in the British House of Commons. He has pointed out to you the importance of your decision on this point, and the importance of your decision does not rest merely with the important items with which we are hoping to assist the Government—that is that there should be no challenge whatever to the continuance Bills which are now being continued in this session to the end of 1949. Although it is something vital in the laws of this State that is nothing compared with the reactions from your decision if it over-rides the decisions of illustrious Speakers of the House of Commons. If it does that the effect of your decision will be felt in every British House

of Parliament. It will create something entirely new in spite of the precedents that have gone long before.

You will be numbered among the very great and you may find that your ruling, if it is the wrong one, will cause you tremendous mental anxiety for the rest of your life. You will notice that the Speakers of the House of Commons continuously and constantly refer to the necessity to obey the ruling of the House, and in the last reference mentioned by the hon. member the specific point is exactly similar to the point in this Bill. I would suggest that since we too are not voicing our own opinions only on this constitutional matter, but the opinions of learned constitutional people, it is necessary in all the circumstances that you should reserve your decision and not be at all precipitate about it; that you should take the opportunity, if necessary, of an adjournment of a week.

There would be no objection from this side of the House if the Government would see the seriousness of the position and communicate with the House of Commons through you. Then there could be no doubt whatever, but if you make this decision precipitately it can bring very serious repercussions, not only on the Government but upon yourself your advisers. So, with great definiteness, I plead with you to consider the possible repercussions if your decision is hasty or ill-founded, because you may rest assured that if you take the precipitate line and give your decision forthwith, without perhaps having the advice of your Clerks or of seeing these references, your decision will have a serious effect on the people of the State. But if a few days elapse we will be able to see clearly that you are wholly right or wholly wrong. Therefore, in the interests of the people of the State, of this Chamber and of proper decisions following those that have gone before, I suggest to you that the matter might be deferred for whatever time is requisite to have it referred to the proper quarter and the right decision made.

Mr. Speaker: The fact that this Bill is before the House is proof that the officers and myself thought it was in order. We are therefore in the wrong if that has not been the case, but I will certainly stand, as far as I am concerned, upon the reasons why this is on the notice paper. The first rule in our Standing Orders states—

In all cases not provided for hereinafter, or by Sessional or other orders, resort shall be had to the rules, forms and practice of the Commons House of the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which shall be followed as far as they can be applied to the proceedings of this House. I would like at this stage to compliment the member for North-East Fremantle upon his very carefully prepared case and refer to Standing Order No. 180 which is as follows:—

No question shall be proposed which is the same in substance as any Question which, during the same Session, has been resolved in the affirmative or negative.

The only other thing I wish to quote is from the Interpretation Act which says—

Any Act may be altered, amended, or repealed in the session of Parliament in which it was passed.

Therefore it is clear that we are either altering or not altering an Act. That is obvious. If we are altering an Act, then we are enabled to do so. If we are not altering an Act then we must bring in some new matter and Standing Order No. 180 can only mean that no question of the same substance can be brought in again. Therefore we have to ask ourselves whether a Bill to continue an Act to 1949 is the same as a Bill to continue an Act to 1950. That is the question. The member for North-East Fremantle has pointed out that debates were conducted last session, as shown in "Hansard," and they were the same questions as were stressed here to-night.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Not last session, this session.

Mr. Speaker: I should have said "last year." However, there was one thing that was not stressed in the first period of the session last year and that was the year 1950. That is the crux of this Bill and that is all the Bill really is. What may happen in 1950 is altogether different from what happens in 1949. They are two different things. Between the section of the Interpretation Act and Standing Order No. 180 and the fact that we refer to the House of Commons only if we are in difficulties that are not provided for, I rule that the Bill is in order.

Debate Resumed.

On motion by Hon. J. B. Sleeman, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.53 p.m.