

is, on the 31st December last, members will realise that these owner-builders are making an important contribution to our building programme, and I believe that if we placed more red tape and more difficulties in the way of these people by controls, we would appreciably diminish their opportunity to provide themselves with homes.

Broadly speaking, the measure which is now sought to be continued has, in my opinion, performed a useful purpose in the building industry in this State. So far it has been in its main features continued in operation as originally commenced when the measure came into force. Where it has been found to be unnecessary to continue controls the Commission has decided they should no longer be imposed. But the measure contains important features which I think are valuable to continue. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.9 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 21st June, 1949.

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

QUESTIONS.

EDUCATION.

(a) *As to Monitors and Trainees.*

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

(1) How many monitors were appointed during 1948?

(2) How many monitors have been admitted to the service of the Education Department this year?

(3) What is the number of students at present undergoing training at the Teachers' College?

(4) Of the total number of students in training how many commenced this year?

(5) What is the number of re-construction trainees in each case included in the answers to questions (3) and (4)?

(6) How many re-construction trainees are at present taking the preparatory course, with a view to entering the Teachers' College?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 170.

(2) 133.

(3) 413.

(4) 185.

(5) No. 3, 167; No. 4, 82.

(6) 19.

(b) *As to Size of Classes.*

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

(1) During the last week of the first school term, this year, how many teachers had—

(a) single classes of 50 children or more, but less than 60;

(b) single classes of 60 children or more;

(c) grouped classes of between 40 and 50 children;

(d) grouped classes of 50 children or more, but less than 60;

(e) grouped classes of 60 children or more?

(2) Are there any teachers with classes exceeding 65 children?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The figures during the last week of the school term are not available, but the following are the enrolments as at the 11th February, 1949:—

(a) 270.

(b) 33.

(c) 157.

(d) 69.

(e) 4.

(2) Six. In addition to the above, the following enrolment figures complete the return of primary schools under the control of the Department:—

Teachers in charge of single classes—

Enrolment under 30, 30; enrolment 30 to 39, 69; enrolment 40 to 49, 212.

Teachers in charge of grouped classes—

Enrolment under 30, 158; enrolment 30 to 39, 204.

Teachers in charge of schools with average attendance between 8 and 20, 192.

Attendances are checked by the Department during the first week of the first term and the first week of the third term. The next revision of attendances will be as at the 8th July, 1949.

(c) *As to Long Service Leave for Teachers.*

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

(1) How many teachers have qualified for long service leave as a result of having completed fifteen years' service?

(2) How many are at present away from duty taking such leave?

(3) How many teachers does the Education Department propose to allow to take long service leave during 1950?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 329.

(2) 49.

(3) Possibly 100, but the Department reserves the right to vary the number to meet the exigencies of the service.

(d) *As to School Bus Route Distances.*

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

(1) What distance is regarded as the reasonable maximum for school bus routes?

(2) How many existing services exceed this distance?

(3) How many routes exceed 40 miles?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Terminal routes—37 miles.

(b) Circular routes—48 miles.

(2) (a) Terminal routes—15.

(b) Circular routes—Nil.

(3) (a) Terminal routes—1.

(b) Circular routes—7.

(e) *As to North Kalgoorlie School Sanitary System.*

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Will he expedite the installation of a septic system at the North Kalgoorlie

State school to replace the present unhealthy and unsatisfactory pan system now in existence at the school, and which is wholly inadequate to serve the requirements of the 650 pupils now attending the school?

(2) Is he aware that a number of cases of diphtheria recently broke out at the North Kalgoorlie State school, from which one child has since died, and that many parents of the pupils of the above school are very disappointed at the slow progress being made by the Government to install a septic system?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Authority has been granted for the provision at the North Kalgoorlie school of new lavatories, septic tank system, new washing facilities and drainage, and the Department of Public Works hopes to call tenders for these works by mid-July.

(2) I am informed that there were five proven cases of diphtheria in the North Kalgoorlie district recently, one of which unfortunately ended fatally. While all the children at the school have been swabbed, it is the opinion of the Public Health Department that the matters referred to by the hon. member in question No. (2) are not attributable to the conditions mentioned in No. (1), and that the immunisation methods adopted in the Kalgoorlie districts could be of much higher standard. The authorities concerned have been urged to alter their present methods.

LAND SALES CONTROL.

As to Continuance, Black Marketing, Preference, etc.

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is it the intention of the Government to continue the operations of the Land Sales Control Act, 1948?

(2) If so, why?

(3) If not, why not?

(4) Has he any knowledge of the fact that in sales of homes, etc., under this Act, blackmarketing is rampant?

(5) If so, which persons participate in the blackmarket profits?

(6) Are blackmarket prices being charged also for renting flats and single rooms?

(7) Does he consider that the great majority of victims are new arrivals unfamiliar with local property values?

(8) What measures, if any, are being taken to combat this increasing black-market?

(9) What measure of protection is available to tenants occupying dwellings offered for sale?

(10) Is any preference given to returned soldier occupants?

(11) Is any preference given to wives or mothers of soldiers killed in action?

(12) Must an owner wishing to sell give first preference to a tenant willing and able to purchase?

(13) How many furnished homes were sold in the years ended the 31st March, 1939, 1947, 1948 and 1949?

(14) What was the total cash value of these houses in each of these years?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Notice of a continuance Bill has been given.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) Answered by No. (1).

(4) It is estimated that less than five per cent. of transactions may be of a black-market nature and less of this nature than under previous Commonwealth regulations.

(5) Unscrupulous racketeers.

(6) Rents of flats and other premises do not come under this Act.

(7) Yes, but many of these people are well aware of what they are doing.

(8) Action is taken to intervene against the renewal of licenses of agents who offend. Action would be taken against other parties, if circumstances became known.

(9) If the tenant is not the purchaser, the vendor is asked if the tenant were given the opportunity to buy the property and, if not, why? If the tenant is willing to purchase the property and can finance the transaction, it is made known to the purchaser that there is a tenant in the house and the difficulties of obtaining vacant possession are explained.

(10) Not applicable to Act.

(11) Not applicable to Act.

(12) No.

(13) The number of furnished houses cannot be obtained.

(14) Answered by No. (13).

BUS SERVICES.

As to Dalkeith-Nedlands-Maylands Route.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Were tenders called for the new inter-suburban bus service to operate between Dalkeith-Nedlands and Maylands?

(2) If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) There is no obligation placed on the Transport Board to call tenders for such services, nor had the board reason to believe that any advantage would accrue from so doing.

PETROL RATIONING.

As to State Action and Supplies.

Mr. HOAR asked the Premier:

(1) What steps are being taken by the Government to assist the Commonwealth Government and the British Empire to preserve the dollar position following the High Court's decision in respect of petrol rationing?

(2) From information which should be available to him, can he say that sufficient supplies of petrol will be available to Western Australia to meet all reasonable requirements without rationing?

(3) If not, what is the Government's policy in regard to future control, and will he recommend that extended powers be granted the Commonwealth Government to control this commodity?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) The State was represented at a conference of State Governments which met the Prime Minister at Canberra on the 17th instant.

(2) From information compiled since rationing restrictions were removed, it would appear that, provided an amount of petrol equal to that which was supplied to this State under rationing conditions, plus an increase to cover requirements of new vehicles to be released, is made available to this State, the State's requirements should be met.

(3) The Powers Act of 1943 gave to the Commonwealth for a period of five years after the termination of the war (i.e., to 1950), power to control the distribution of any commodity which in the opinion of the Commonwealth Government is in short supply.

CREAM, SYNTHETIC.

As to Protection for Dairying Industry.

Mr. KELLY asked the Premier:

In view of possible serious threat to the dairying industry through the sale of large quantities of unbranded synthetic cream to the public, what action does he intend to take in order to protect the future interests of the dairying industry?

The PREMIER replied:

The demand for synthetic cream is mainly occasioned by the Commonwealth embargo on the sale of cream, and the matter of the increased sale of synthetic cream is being referred to the Commonwealth Government with relation to such embargo.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

(a) *As to Provision for Parliament and Government Printing.*

Mr. KELLY asked the Premier:

(1) In the absence of a guarantee that the East Perth Power House will not break down during the present session of Parliament, what steps has he taken in order that an adequate supply of light and power will be available at Parliament House?

(2) Has he reached any decision whereby an auxiliary power unit will supply electricity to the Government Printing Office?

(3) If so, what decision?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Steps have been taken to provide alternate lighting.

(2) The matter is under consideration.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

(b) *As to Increase in Charges.*

Hon. E. NULSEN asked the Minister for Works:

Is it a fact that since the Government purchased the Perth City Electricity and Gas Department, charges for electricity have been increased on an average of 46 per

cent. over the whole scale of charges, and that the rate for industrial power has been increased by 93 per cent.?

The MINISTER replied:

No.

PRICE CONTROL.

(a) *As to Investigators and Prosecutions.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Attorney General:

(1) How many investigators or inspectors were employed in the Price Fixing Department when he assumed ministerial control thereof?

(2) How many are employed at the present time?

(3) How many prosecutions have taken place against traders for excessive charges for commodities?

(4) How many times has he refused permission to prosecute?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) 111.

(2) 71.

(3) The Prices Branch has instituted 339 charges against 60 traders.

(4) None.

(b) *As to Increased Cost of Foodstuffs.*

Mr. TRIAT asked the Attorney General:

(1) As the State Government obviously was anxious to have the power to control prices given to it in lieu of the Commonwealth Government, will he kindly advise the House if he is in agreement with the enormous increase that has taken place in the cost of foodstuffs during the last few months?

(2) If he does not favour this enormous increase, will he inform the House what steps he has taken to exercise proper control?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) and (2) I agree that prices have risen. With the lifting of wage pegging, the institution of the 40-hour week, and the withdrawal of subsidies, prices gradually commenced and have continued to rise from some time prior to the date on which the States took over control.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What foodstuffs were subsidised?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Potatoes, for one.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is the only one.

BETTING.

(a) *As to Prevalence.*

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

In view of the fact that the Government has now had two years and over of administrative office and also the able and courageous advice of that determined reformer the Honorary Minister, will he state why it is that S.P. betting is still as evident, if not more so, as it was when the Honorary Minister was on the Opposition benches?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

There is no evidence of any increase in the volume of starting price betting in this State, and no Australian Government has been able to eliminate this class of betting, particularly in view of broadcasting facilities for those indulging in such betting.

(b) *As to Wagering on Horse Racing.*

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

Does the Government propose to introduce legislation this session to deal with wagering on horse racing?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

The report of a Royal Commission appointed by the New Zealand Government was presented last year. The report of a Royal Commission appointed in 1933 by the British Government recommending the abolition of betting through football pools has never been implemented by that Government and another Royal Commission recently appointed by the British Government is now inquiring into betting generally. The Government proposes to await the results of these Commissions, when they will be studied in conjunction with the report made last year by the Royal Commission appointed in this State.

(c) *As to Introduction of Legislation.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Attorney General:

In view of the Royal Commission on Betting having cost the taxpayers of the State the sum of £1,624 5s. 2d., and in view of

his reply to a question of mine on the 5th October last, that he would give consideration to the introduction of legislation this session for the purpose of dealing with question of betting, has he yet concluded his consideration and if so with what result?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

This question relates to a matter under the direction of the Minister for Police.

A similar question is being answered by the Minister representing the Minister for Police today.

COAL.

As to Black Diamond Open Cut.

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

(1) Is it a fact that the Amalgamated Collieries actually did diamond drilling on what are known as the Black Diamond Leases while the tenures of such were in the name of the State Electricity Commission?

(2) What was the approximate date that the Amalgamated Collieries commenced open cutting on the Black Diamond Leases?

(3) What was the actual date that the Black Diamond Leases were transferred from the State Electricity Commission to the Amalgamated Collieries?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) It is understood that some hand drilling (not diamond) was done by Amalgamated Collieries.

(2) May, 1948.

(3) Operations of the company were undertaken under arrangements made between the Government and the company in order to ensure the earliest possible production from the open cut. Action is now in course for the return of the leases to Amalgamated Collieries, the correct procedure as advised by the Crown Law Department being that the company should re-apply in the ordinary way before the Warden's Court for a grant of the leases concerned.

KALGOORLIE HOSPITAL.

As to Treatment of Emergency Cases.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Health:

(1) What provision, if any, is made to treat emergency accident cases at the Kalgoorlie Hospital over week-ends?

(2) Is it correct that a youth who recently fractured his neck while diving in a lake, and was admitted to the above hospital on a Saturday, had to wait until Monday to be x-rayed because no qualified radiologist was available either at the hospital or the Commonwealth Laboratory?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Full treatment is available at all times.

(2) No. He was admitted on Monday and was transferred by his doctor to another hospital within one hour. No request was made to the matron for x-ray, which could have been supplied if required.

SERVICEMEN'S LAND SETTLEMENT.

As to Speeding-up Policy.

Mr. HOAR asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Does he remember stating to the Land Section Conference of the R.S.L. last year that "since the appointment of the Land Settlement Board the red-tape methods of the past had been scrapped and short cuts taken to get applicants on the land before the farms were fully developed, as was originally intended"?

(2) Is he aware that as a result of this policy widespread discontent has been occasioned among soldier-settlers in the Pemberton-Northcliffe districts over the past few months?

(3) That until repairs can be undertaken, many of the houses now occupied are sub-standard?

(4) That many of the conditions of development originally considered essential before occupation have been broken down and that considerable dissatisfaction, and in some cases, hardship, has been the result?

(5) In view of these things, would it not be reasonable to suppose that the progressive figures quoted by him from time to time to indicate the number of settlers placed on their farms, have a political origin and intention?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. The Land Committee at the Annual Conference of the Returned Soldiers' League last September was advised by me that it was impossible to complete the developmental programmes before most

farms were allotted, as was originally intended. The Land Settlement Board had arranged for farms to be advertised, which conformed to certain standards of development, and for allotment from the voluntary applications which were received, so as to prevent purchased estates being thrown out of production.

(2) No. Twenty-five (25) ex-Service applicants have been allotted farms in the Pemberton-Northcliffe area; of these only seven (7) were allotted by the Land Settlement Board and only one of these after the statement in No. 1 to which the hon. member refers.

(3) Existing houses are being made comfortable as rapidly as possible. Farmers are granted finance to effect own repairs if private contractors or skilled labour can be obtained.

(4) The planned development on each farm will be completed as soon as possible. I am not aware of any cases of hardship among the seven (7) ex-Servicemen allotted by the Land Settlement Board since the policy regarding occupation was amended.

(5) No. Farms are advertised, and allotments are made after a personal inspection by the applicant and the receipt of a statement that he is satisfied with the property.

TRACTORS.

As to Permits Issued.

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Transport: -

(1) What is the total number of tractor permits issued from the 31st December, 1948, to the 30th May, 1949?

(2) The names of the persons receiving these permits?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Twenty-three permits were issued on the 31st December, 1948. 882 permits were issued from the 1st January, 1949, to the 30th May, 1949 (both inclusive).

(2) The permit book containing the names of those receiving permits may be inspected by the hon. member at the office of the Tractor Allocation Authority, Forrest Place, Perth.

ROYAL HONOURS.

As to Recommendations.

Mr. MANN asked the Premier:

In the matter of decorations conferred by His Majesty the King in recognition of services rendered, who makes the recommendation to His Majesty?

The PREMIER replied:

His Majesty's Government in the State concerned.

HOUSING.

(a) As to Analysis of Component Costs.

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

(1) Has there been an analysis made by the Housing Commission during the last two years of the costs of the various components used in the building of houses by the Government (including labour costs) and does such analysis show the percentage of the total cost represented by each component?

(2) If such an analysis has been made, will he have particulars made available to the House?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No special survey has been undertaken but figures relating to increased costs have been extracted from information available in respect of homes built under the base price scheme.

(2) Since January, 1946, costs have increased and components varied in respect of a standard type two-bedroom brick home as follows:—

Date.	Increase in Total Cost.	Components.	
		Wages.	Materials
		%	%
1/1/1946	—	36.85	63.15
1/1/1947	1.29%	37.72	62.28
1/1/1948	23.32%	41.48	58.52
1/1/1949	8.27%	44.11	55.89

(b) As to Rate of Building.

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

In a speech last week the Minister stated that in 1947-48 the building rate of dwellings was 2,923 per annum and that in the quarter ended the 31st December, 1948, houses were being built at an annual rate of 4,030. Do these later figures represent

the number of permits issued or the number of houses actually completed? If not, how many houses were actually built in the year 1948?

The MINISTER replied:

The figures relate to the building rate and that rate is determined by the statistical office on the mean of commencements and constructions. The number commenced and the number completed in the period are added together and divided by two and that is the method used by the statistical people in arriving at the building rate. With regard to the number completed, I would say that, in order to get an accurate answer, the hon. member should put the question on the notice paper.

IRON AND WIRE.

As to Shortage of Supplies.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Premier:

(1) Is the Government aware that negligible quantities of galvanised iron and iron products, and of wire and articles manufactured from wire are available to producing industries in Western Australia and that almost desperate conditions are obtaining because of the inability to either effect new improvements or to recondition and renovate existing improvements?

(2) What efforts of any substantial kind are being made by the Government to correct such serious conditions?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) The Government is aware that there is a serious shortage of ferrous products available to all phases of industry arising principally from reduced production by manufacturers in the Eastern States. This position is not confined to Western Australia but affects the whole of the Commonwealth.

(2) By direct approach to the B.H.P., the Government secured approval to an increased quota for this State of 50 tons per month of steel rods for the manufacture of fencing wire, netting and nails.

The quantity of nails and nail wire supplied to Western Australia increased in 1947-48 by 50 per cent. over 1946-47 and that increase has been maintained during the current year.

In order to ensure that the maximum quantity of the products involved would be available to the public, the Government placed an order overseas for steel products, roofing and plain iron, and fencing wire to the value of £126,000. In addition, an order has been placed in the United Kingdom for the supply of alternative building material (corrugated and flat asbestos), and negotiations are in progress for the supply of water piping from the Continent.

RAILWAYS.

(a) As to Dianella Line and Lime Sales.

Mr. HOAR asked the Premier:

(1) Which year was the line put into the Dianella lime deposits at Karridale?

(2) What was the amount received from the sale of the lime?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) 27th May, 1933.

(2) £61 11s. 3d., cost of loading plus cost of bags when supplied by the Department; £284, freight charges; £345 11s. 3d., total.

(b) As to Resumption of Property for Booking Office.

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is it a fact that he has given Pellegrini & Co. (Church Furnishers and Book-sellers) of 776 Hay Street, 60 days' notice to quit their premises?

(2) Is this building to be used for a Railway Booking Office? If not which departments

(3) What building did the Railway Booking Office use during the war?

(4) Is there a question of considerable compensation to Pellegrini's involved?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The utilisation of this accommodation by State Departments is still under consideration.

(3) Perth Railway Station.

(4) Pellegrini's tenancy is on a weekly basis. Compensation, if any, will be limited accordingly.

(c) *As to Retaining Sandstone Line.*

Mr. TRIAT asked the Minister for Railways:

In view of the Big Bell Mining Company applying for 10 gold mining leases at Sandstone, will he reconsider his decision to pull the rails out of the Sandstone line?

The MINISTER replied:

As the Department must have rails for maintenance, and has been unable to obtain them from any other source, it has been compelled to obtain them from the Mt. Magnet-Sandstone line. Reconsideration of the matter is, therefore, impracticable.

(d) *As to Port Hedland-Marble Bar Line.*

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

Has the Government yet made a decision relating to the reported discontinuance of the Port Hedland-Marble Bar railway?

The MINISTER replied:

The matter is still under consideration.

ARGENTINE ANT.

As to Administration and Plans.

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

(1) For what reason has the Argentine ant problem been made a matter for the Health Department rather than the Department of Agriculture?

(2) Is not the Department of Agriculture better equipped in specially trained personnel and research facilities for the task than is the Health Department?

(3) What has the Health Department so far done in dealing with the problem?

(4) Has it any plans for the immediate future regarding this matter? If so, what are they?

The MINISTER replied:

(1), (2) (3) and (4) The Government has been giving consideration for some time to the spread of Argentine ants in the metropolitan area and their appearance at Bunbury, following on their earlier establishment at Albany.

Some months ago, an approach was made to the Commonwealth Government for technical and financial assistance on the grounds that it might be expected this pest

would in time spread to all the other States, and that its control, and if possible eradication, in Western Australia was an insurance for the rest of Australia. No favourable reply was given by the Commonwealth, but the problem was referred by it to the Agricultural Council, which decided, inter alia, that States concerned should use every effort to control the Argentine ant and to restrict the areas which were infested. The Government has, therefore, decided to take steps to set up a unit on the lines recommended by the State Entomologist's Division, for the purpose of evolving the best method of eradication of the ant.

The estimated expenditure for the next financial year in connection with this work is the sum of £45,000, which has been approved by the Government.

It has also been decided to assist householders to control the pest. The Government has been advised that the best method of doing this is by householders spraying infested areas. Steps are now being taken to have a spraying preparation, in accordance with the formula of the Government advisers, manufactured and distributed at the cheapest possible rate. It is hoped to have it available at production cost price through local authorities.

The advice the Government has received is that administration of matters relating to the ant problem can be best dealt with through the Health Department in conjunction and close collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, as the areas infested are urban and the former department, through the local authorities, has offices in every district which would be available for use.

Upon the result of the first year's campaign future decisions will be made in connection with efforts for extermination.

NORTH-WEST.

As to Shipping Shortage and Road Transport.

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

(1) In view of the serious shortage of shipping operating on the North-West coast, and the equally serious accumulation of materials awaiting shipment, will he direct the Transport Board to approve permits for transport by road direct Perth to North-West areas for the carriage of essential commodities of all kinds?

(2) Will he arrange the approval of subsidies to be paid on all goods so hauled by road to meet the difference between boat costs and road costs on the same lines as approval is given and payment is made for the cartage of superphosphate to country districts?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No applications for permits covering road transport of goods to the North-West have been received by the Transport Board, but in view of the shipping position, any such applications will be favourably considered.

(2) From present indications, the shipping position will have cleared by the middle of next month, when the return of the "Koolinda" will maintain it. There appears no necessity to arrange subsidy payments on land transport at present, but consideration can be given to the proposal in the event of the position deteriorating.

SUPPLY AND SHIPPING PORTFOLIO.

As to Minister in Charge.

Mr. MARSHALL (without notice) asked the Premier:

In view of the absence of the Honorary Minister, will he state which Minister now shoulders the colossal responsibility for the administration of the portfolio of Supply and Shipping?

The PREMIER replied:

I do myself.

GOVERNOR OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

As to Term of Appointment.

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

In the "Government Gazette" of the 4th November, 1948, the terms of the Governor's appointment are published. Does this mean that the Governor is appointed for an indeterminate term and that there is no period to his appointment? If there is a period, what is it?

The PREMIER replied:

The Governor is appointed in accordance with the practice that is usually observed and he holds the Commission during His Majesty's pleasure.

BUILDING SUPPLIES.

(a) As to Items Decontrolled.

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

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

The MINISTER replied:

The following are the dates of the relaxation of controls on those items:

Bricks—1st September, 1948.

Timber—1st October, 1948.

Nails—Heavy gauge: 1st December, 1945; light gauge: 1st December, 1948.

Paint—1st April, 1948.

Cement—21st June, 1948.

(b) As to Imports of Japanese Plywood.

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

Is it correct, as reported in the Press, that Japanese plywood is being admitted into Australia and that the import tariff has been lowered at the request of the State Governments on behalf of their State Housing Commissions, and was Western Australia a party to that request?

The MINISTER replied:

I have no knowledge of any such request by the States or by their State Housing Commissions, and I believe that no such request has been made by this State or by the State Housing Commission.

TIMBER INDUSTRY.

As to Hakea and Shannon River Mills.

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

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

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

The MINISTER replied:

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

(2) The estimate is that the Shannon River mill will come into production in 18 months' to two years' time.

TOBACCO.

As to Legislation to Control Distribution.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE (without notice) asked the Premier:

In view of the increasing discontent in country districts regarding the distribution of supplies of tobacco and cigarettes by private trade treaty, will he consider the question of bringing down legislation to control the distribution of these products?

The PREMIER replied:

I know of the committee to which the hon. member has made reference.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Do you know who are the members of the committee?

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: No-one else does, either.

The PREMIER: Consideration has not been given to this matter, and I can only say in reply that the matter, as raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, will receive the consideration of the Government.

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

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—North Perth) [5.5] in moving the second reading said: Last year the Commonwealth put forward a suggestion that the States might agree to cease collecting, from the estates of mental patients or their relatives, fees for maintenance in return for the Commonwealth recouping the States the equivalent of such collections. There was no suggestion that the States should be assisted in any way in the cost of maintaining persons suffering from mental disabilities who were unable to or did not pay for their own maintenance. The State, for the financial year 1947-48, expended approximately £192,000 in connection with mental institutions, but only collected an amount of £15,251 12s. 4d. from the estates of those who were in a position to assist in their keep.

It was pointed out to Mr. Chifley that it would appear that the patient himself would receive no benefit under this scheme and that, with a few exceptions, it would

benefit only beneficiaries entitled to share in the estate of an inmate on his death, and relatives of a patient who are obliged to contribute something towards his maintenance during his lifetime. These people comprise, of course, persons whose financial position well warrants their doing so. The Government felt that there was no justifiable distinction between a person who, for physical reasons, is an invalid and one who, owing to mental illness, is detained in an institution. The Government wrote to Mr. Chifley on the 2nd December, 1948, as follows:—

Dear Mr. Chifley: I refer to your letter of the 4th May, 1948, relating to the Commonwealth's proposed introduction of a benefit scheme for inmates of certified lunatic asylums and other mental institutions.

It would appear that the patient himself would receive no benefit under your scheme. With few exceptions, the scheme would benefit only beneficiaries who are entitled to share in the estate of an inmate at his death, and relatives of a patient who are obliged to contribute something towards his maintenance during his lifetime. These latter comprise only persons whose financial position well warrants their doing so.

A proposal far more acceptable to this State would be that patients in mental institutions should be entitled to receive the invalid pension. There would appear to me to be no justifiable distinction between a person who for physical reasons is an invalid and one who, owing to mental illness, is detained in an institution. In my view, both categories are, and should be deemed as, invalids.

My medical advisers have informed me that, in their opinion, if the patients received the invalid pension, it would enable them to purchase small personal requirements and add greatly to their comfort, as well as having an important stimulating effect upon their morale. At the present moment the financial position of the State does not permit of the patient being paid any allowance for such purposes.

Before further considering your scheme, it would be appreciated if you would give some thought to the suggestion put forward by me.

The letter was, of course, signed by the Premier. This matter was also discussed at a conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers of Health in June of last year when the Government's point of view was again fully stressed. The Commonwealth, however, would not alter its attitude and the Government was, therefore, forced to accept what assistance the Commonwealth was prepared to give, however meagre it might be. The assistance, as I have already pointed

out, will amount to about £15,000. The proposed agreement to cover the arrangement was received by the Government towards the end of March, and the legislation I am now presenting to the House is brought forward to enable the agreement to be implemented. That agreement provides that no means test is to be imposed on, and no fees are to be charged in respect of, any qualified patient. In return for that, the Commonwealth agrees to pay for any financial year, or part thereof, in respect of qualified patients, an amount to be determined by multiplying the Commonwealth mental institution benefit by the number of patient days in the financial year.

This benefit rate is to be 8d.—or such other amount as is from time to time agreed upon between the Commonwealth and the State—per patient day, and will lead to the State's receiving approximately the same amount as it did previously as a result of the moneys collected from estates or from relatives who were in a position to contribute to the upkeep of patients.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Will this apply to Heathcote?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I do not think so, because Heathcote is classed as a hospital and is recognised as such by the Commonwealth, but it will apply to all other mental hospitals.

Hon. A. H. Panton: There is only one other such institution, the Claremont Hospital for the Insane.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: And there is also the institution at Whitby. The result of the proposal will be that the State, as such, will receive nothing at all, but certain persons who have been contributing towards the upkeep of their relatives in asylums and the estates of certain persons who are in asylums will be relieved of all of such payments, of which the amount received has been a little over £15,000. The term of the agreement is to be for a period of five years.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Who will administer the estates in future? I know that a Government department administers them now.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The estates will still be administered by the Public Trustee, but there will be no claim on the estates of any person who is in a mental institution. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. H. Panton, debate adjourned.

BILL—TUBERCULOSIS (COMMONWEALTH AND STATE ARRANGEMENT).

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 16th June.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville) [5.15]: The Bill authorises the State to enter into an agreement with the Commonwealth respecting the campaign that has been set afoot to reduce the incidence of tuberculosis in Australia. I suggest that members generally will readily agree to any scheme launched with the object of reducing the incidence of that particular disease. The contents of the Bill are embodied in the schedule, which is, in fact, the Bill. It is proposed to reimburse the State for its actual expenditure on and after the 1st July, 1948, and also in respect of any maintenance expenditure incurred by the State prior to July, 1948.

Certain conditions are attached to the document, and I would like the Minister to furnish some information in that respect because he did not tell members much about the matter apart from what appears in the schedule. I notice it provides that no charge shall be made for accommodation and treatment in respect of a person occupying a bed in the public ward of any institution or part of any such institution. I understand that the campaign is already in operation and that certain premises are being used for the treatment of those suffering from T.B. I would like the Minister to state, when he replies to the debate, just what are those premises. Is the Wooroloo Sanatorium now regarded as a public hospital and are patients treated there free of charge, without any test being applied as their ability to pay? In other words, has the means test been abolished as applied to these patients at Wooroloo, as well as to those accommodated elsewhere?

Is any ward in the Royal Perth Hospital, or in any other hospital in the metropolitan area, set aside for the treatment of patients

suffering from this particular disease and staffed by the campaign committee? In any such portions of hospitals utilised, are the patients being treated free without any means test at all? That is a phase about which the House is entitled to information. If that is the position, will the Minister inform members how many patients are being treated in that manner? The schedule also provides for the appointment of a Director of Tuberculosis. The Minister told the House that Dr. Henzell would occupy that position and I understand he has actually held the appointment for some time.

The State is particularly fortunate in having Dr. Henzell's services at its disposal for this particular work. From my knowledge of that gentleman during the time I occupied the position of Minister for Health—I am sure my successor will endorse my views—I know that Dr. Henzell is particularly capable and keen with regard to the treatment of tuberculosis. I am indeed very pleased that he has been made available to undertake this task. I would like some information from the Minister on that point. I trust that some arrangement has been made to pay Dr. Henzell a salary adequate to keep him here. That is one trouble we have had with regard to our highly qualified officers.

I have heard members representing agricultural constituencies complaining bitterly about the loss to this State of some of our best agricultural experts, and if we are not careful that will apply to our experts in other spheres. I trust that the Government will, if it is at all possible, increase Dr. Henzell's salary with the object of retaining his services. I am fully aware that the matter of salary is not of so much concern to the doctor as is his work. At the same time, if a man is provided with an adequate salary, that in itself is an inducement to him to remain in the State, particularly when a higher salary may be offered by some other State that may desire to secure his services. As this legislation appears to be retrospective in that it is to apply to all capital expenditure and maintenance since July, 1948, can the Minister when replying give us an idea of the reimbursement that will be made by the Commonwealth? In other words, what amount over and above that expended in 1947-48 has since been expended and will be reimbursed?

There is nothing else in the Bill that calls for discussion. I am pleased that the measure has been introduced. I consider that the medical men associated with Dr. Henzell are doing a particularly good job, and I say that as one who has been following up this matter for some time. A large number of men and women are being x-rayed with a view to detecting symptoms of the disease and such examinations are all to the benefit of the community. I shall be interested to hear the figures for which I have asked so that we shall know what has been done during the last year and what is proposed in the matter of capital expenditure and getting it authorised by the Federal Minister, as provided in the schedule. If we are to have the same difficulty in getting authorisation as the Minister for Lands has experienced, I am afraid it will mean that the tuberculosis campaign will not be carried very far. I support the second reading.

HON. E. NULSEN (Kanowna) [5.23]: The member for Leederville has analysed the Bill and I have no intention of dealing with the same phases. I am pleased that the Commonwealth will have the full co-operation of the State Government in the matter of endeavouring to reduce the incidence of tuberculosis. From my experience as Minister for Health, I am quite satisfied that this disease can be controlled. It is just a matter of securing complete co-operation between the State and the Commonwealth and giving those trained to treat the disease the means and facilities to deal with it. In Dr. Henzell we have a very efficient man, and I hope the Minister will see that he is adequately recompensed for his work. I consider him to be the best man in this branch in Australia. There is no conceit about him and he does not look for glory; his whole interest is in the reduction of the incidence of the disease.

I am pleased that the Minister appreciates that it is possible to eradicate tuberculosis. Provided facilities are made available to the profession, this disease can be controlled, as are many other diseases, by means of injection and in other ways. Going back over history, we find that tuberculosis has never been treated very seriously, and yet statistics show that it has taken a great toll of the human race. I cannot understand why we have had to wait until the middle of the twentieth century for something effective to

be done. It is pleasing to find that the Minister is taking a great interest in this matter. I believe that, in twenty years' time, this disease will be capable of being treated on a very ordinary scale.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—North Perth—in reply) [5.26]: No means test is applied to patients of Woeroploo or any institution classified as a tuberculosis hospital. There might be some cases that are treated in the intermediate wards of the Royal Perth Hospital and patients in those wards would be subject to a means test. In other words, patients in those wards would pay a charge, but in no other instance is a charge made.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That would not be reimbursed under this scheme?

The **MINISTER FOR HEALTH**: No. I was asked how many patients had been treated in intermediate wards. I have not the information at hand, but before the third reading is submitted I shall try to obtain those figures and some of the other details requested by the member for Leederville. I quite agree with him and with the member for Kanowna that Dr. Henzell is a valuable servant of the State and is recognised by the profession throughout Australia as being a highly qualified man. There are probably few others who are more or equally qualified and so there is very keen competition between the States for men holding such qualifications as he has. I shall do all in my power to ensure that Dr. Henzell remains with us.

The member for Leederville raised the question of the salary paid to Dr. Henzell. The hon. member, having been a Minister for many years, is well aware that the Government has to consult and be advised in such matters by the Public Service Commissioner, and, while the Government is not necessarily bound to accept his advice, after all he is the person responsible for co-ordinating the whole of the Public Service. So far as I personally am concerned, I certainly want to see that Dr. Henzell remains in the State and that his salary is commensurate with his qualifications. As I said, I have no knowledge of the expenditure incurred by the State in regard to tuberculosis since the 1st July of last year and I doubt whether the figures are at the moment available.

However, I will try to supply them on the third reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

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

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 16th June.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [5.33]: The parent Act which this Bill is designed to amend in one particular, namely, the extension of the date, is of recent origin. It was introduced in 1945 to assist in the carrying on of the control, distribution and use of building materials. Although it is of such recent origin, it is interesting to observe that 16 members now in this Assembly were not here at the time of its introduction; nevertheless, during their time in this Chamber they have experienced some of the difficulties associated with the obtaining of a permit, the obtaining of releases for materials controlled, and no doubt the obtaining of materials not controlled. I therefore deem it necessary that they should have a clear knowledge of the background of this legislation.

It is safe to say that the supply of many kinds of building materials is steadily getting worse and worse, in spite of the fact that it is now four years since the cessation of hostilities. Controls were first applied in this State in pursuance of a delegated authority under the National Security Buildings Control Regulations, 1939-43. In 1943, the gentleman who is now the Public Service Commissioner, but who was then Auditor General, had the delegated authority vested in him by the Commonwealth to issue permits to build. At that time a Commonwealth officer, Mr. Andrews, controlled the approval of materials supplied. People were then still

interested in erecting various types of buildings, and it was necessary rigidly to control not only permits to build but also the meagre quantities of materials that were released and not earmarked for war purposes.

The years 1943 to 1945, when the control was virtually Commonwealth control, were the most serious of the war years so far as our nation was concerned. All the concentration was on the war effort. No public buildings were constructed during those years as the result of a promise made by the then Premier to the Prime Minister, and every artisan and workman associated with the building industry at the outbreak of the war was made available to the Commonwealth for war purposes.

Mr. May: For a total war effort.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes. That promise was honoured from the outbreak of the war to the cessation of hostilities. No buildings were constructed except for war purposes. It was the period of the greatest drain in history on the manpower and womanpower of the State. All our resources in men and women for the production of materials and food were made available for the total war effort. Manpower was controlled. Men and women were told where they had to work and the industries in which they could be retained, as well as what vocations they were not permitted to continue to follow. I consider it necessary to make these observations to show the circumstances which were prevailing in the State at the time of this drastic regimentation of the people.

It is safe to say that many houses that could have been bought in 1942-43 for £1,000 could not be bought today for £3,000 or £4,000. Many people had voluntarily and anxiously left this city. They had vacated their homes and had gone to places where they considered it might be more difficult for the enemy to find them; to places where they considered their families would be safer in the event of an invasion. The Governor, by request, left Government House in 1942 and lived at Kalamunda for the following years. It is a fact that the Public Service and public servants of this community were, on the advice of the highest military authorities, dispersed so that no big numbers would be in any one building in the event of bombing. The Premier and the Treasury officers were

in Lawson Flats. As a matter of fact, Government House was used by officers of many departments, and Lady Mitchell's boudoir had an occupant in an officer of the Public Service.

Those were the conditions obtaining from 1942 until well into 1945. Military generals and the Government were in constant conferences as to what to do to meet the emergency circumstances that might arise. Under the National Security Building Operations Regulations very drastic impositions were placed upon the people, some of which were translated into the parent Act which this Bill amends. Although people at that time did not raise many objections to the irksome regulations, immediately there was a sign of hostilities ceasing—or, indeed, of the enemy being driven further away—there was an endeavour on the part of many sections of the community, not only to find ways and means of getting around the regulations, but also to exert every possible effort to have them annulled.

But at that time all materials were hard held. As supplies went into uses of war, things were sent from this State for use in the Pacific area. Forests were slaughtered that would not have been cut for the next 10 or 15 years, to meet the situation in this State and other States. It was at that time—and I think it very necessary to remind the public of this—that a set of circumstances prevailed which had never before been experienced or anticipated in such a community as this. As the war situation eased and the enemy was pushed further away, the Commonwealth Government, in 1945, under pressure from some States, decided very abruptly to relinquish controls over buildings which were to cost up to £1,200. It removed entirely the necessity to obtain a permit for a building costing up to that figure. It is very necessary to observe that even at that time, in August 1945, chaos and confusion resulted from selfish persons rushing in as soon as permits were not necessary, buying up materials of all kinds, and entering into contracts for erecting unnecessary buildings, irrespective of the demand and the need of those who were seriously circumstanced at that time.

In the interregnum between the time of the dropping of the Commonwealth authority and the introduction of the parent Act of 1945 tens of thousands of pounds worth

of materials in this State were directed into unnecessary channels by unthinking people. Those were the circumstances prevailing when this Bill was first introduced into this Chamber. The State Housing Commission—or, as it was called at that time, the Workers' Homes Board—had ceased operating as a builder from the early days of the war, and recommenced in 1944 from a standing start with not even a draftsman, the Principal Architect being the only one in his section. The fires in the brick kilns had been out for years; the timber yards had been divested of everything usable, especially anything that was seasoned; and the sawmills were unable to cope even with war orders because of the manpower position.

In spite of that, it must be said very firmly and definitely that, with no manpower available, with all experienced people in the Services, the Government at that time, before the war ended, undertook the colossal responsibility of reviving those industries to enable a skeleton staff at least to function as soon as opportunity offered. During the early part of 1945 the first homes were completed, before the war ended; and during that fiscal year 860 homes were constructed in the metropolitan area and the City of Perth—that is, in the year 1945-46—at a cost that must make the Government very envious today; namely, a cost of £80 a square. That happened when there were few men, no materials, no brick kilns working and with no seasoned timber at all until it was kiln dried. I think it can be said without any fear of contradiction that the achievements of those years and the two succeeding years in home building were rather remarkable.

The Act of 1945 provided for very rigid control to ensure that materials went into necessitous channels for urgent works. It was directed to the use of the people who had permits because they were extremely necessitous cases. It also had very generous conditions for those who needed to make alterations to their homes and for those who were expecting sons and daughters to return. It also contained provisions for repairs which, by the force of the war, had had to be neglected for six years. Section 9 of the parent Act gave an opportunity to people to effect these repairs, within certain limits. It will be recalled by those who were in this Chamber at that time that that section was one hotly criticised

by the Legislative Council when the Government, to save the Bill to continue control, had to relax somewhat and enable £50 worth of material to be bought without a permit, instead of £25 worth, the basis on which the Bill was modelled. But the provisions of Section 9 of the Act were then very generous, and they still are.

Unfortunately, Section 9 has been used by many careless and selfish people to evade their responsibilities and to impose greater burdens upon other people. All sorts of ways and means were devised to see that £50 worth of materials, which should only have been sold under permit, were bought in the month of June, and a similar quantity in the month of July, so that not more than £50 worth would be bought in one financial year. All sorts of practices were developed by people anxious to evade the spirit of this legislation to give the greatest good to the most necessitous cases. But if members will study Section 9 of the Act, they will find that in its application today, in the quantity of materials suitable and useful for repairs and improvements to homes, it gives a wide choice and contains very generous provisions. This Act was introduced appreciating the position.

I recall stating that many people would feel bitter and restrained because of the necessity for its introduction. But it was introduced in spite of all the difficulties in administration; and in spite of the unpleasant attitude officers had to adopt. It was introduced as a duty to the community—especially to those who had great need but very little finance. It was brought down to protect that type of person from the rapacious people with money who cared not at all for those who had a great need but little money. It was introduced to protect the public against those who think that if they have money they should have the right to purchase what they believe they require. It was introduced to direct into the most necessitous channels the materials which were then in such short supply. I repeat that in looking back on those years—not so long ago—we were very fortunate that the vast majority of the people in this State obeyed the principles upon which this Act was founded and, by so doing, enabled very great achievements to be attained in the building industry in the construction of homes, even before the war

ended. I think, too, it should be recorded that such men as Mr. Doust, the president of the Building Trades Executive, rendered a very great service to the Government and, through the Government, to the community in seeing that all the force of his organisation was backing the Government to ensure that the right thing was done in the distribution of the available supplies.

I have mentioned that when in 1941 the then Government commenced to re-organise the Workers' Homes Board and its specialists and teams of artisans, it met with much objection from the civil as well as the military authorities. I have taken the trouble to obtain a record of what happened in the years 1944, 1945 and 1946, when the then Government sought the services of men in the Forces who were key-men in industry and in Government departments. The story today is almost unbelievable when we think of the pressure the Government had to exert to have men released from the Forces to take up positions in anticipation of a serious period arising as soon as hostilities ceased. As a matter of fact, it was well into 1945—after hostilities had ceased—that we had the argument with the military authorities that men should not be returned to private life based on record and length of service only, but on the type of industry they left to go to the war, and the urgency and need for their returning to their former vocations. That was established at a Premiers' Conference, because we could not get the military officers to accept that principle. So you see, Mr. Speaker, it is a different background today.

The circumstances now are very different when giving consideration to legislation of this kind compared with those that obtained at the time when there was no avoidance at all of retaining the control which wartime legislation—the National Security Regulations—gave to us, and which was our authority. For several years no bricks were made for home-building in Western Australia. As I said earlier, the fires were out in the brick kilns for years, and it was from that sort of start that there had to be rigidity in control—either making or breaking the value or virtue in this sort of legislation—in spite of such rigidity being irksome to the population. With all those disabilities and all that background,

with a country geared for war and with the people 100 per cent. anxious as to the future of this country, we were able during the war to build homes at the figure of £80 per square.

In the light of all the circumstances, in spite of the Minister being pleased to use this Bill to state the Government's case for its achievements, I say it is an undeniable fact that the period of the two years before hostilities ceased and the next two years was the period of the greatest achievement in this State's history towards the recovery of the State so far as the building industry is concerned. A little over two years ago the then Government was strenuously and vigorously criticised by members opposite with regard to buildings that had had to be neglected—building operations that by force of circumstances had had to cease. It was stated that not much had been done, when in point of fact 860 homes were completed in the year 1945-46 and 1,800 in the year 1946-47. Since the Minister has used this Bill to state his case I say that the case he stated was unimpressive, in view of the circumstances and the resources available to the Government during the past two years.

The Government does not now need reminding what was promised in relation to housing and with regard to the control of materials. The Deputy Premier said, "The Labour Government prefers to dole out through permits and boards the existing meagre supplies." What does the present Government prefer to do? The present Minister attempted then to belittle and ridicule my Government because of circumstances unavoidably forced on the community. I wonder what his attitude is today. What is the Government doing in the matter at this moment?

Mr. Marshall: Nothing much.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: What is the Government doing in regard to the control and availability of materials? What is the purpose of this Bill? Its purpose is to continue those controls and still—in the words of the Deputy Premier—to dole out through permits and boards the meagre supplies that exist; supplies that in the case of some commodities are becoming more and more meagre. That is the attitude of the Government on the question of releasing controls; and in decontrolling commodities that are still in short supply it is making a pretence and a sham of legislation of this sort.

Mr. Marshall: It is a policy of wretched hypocrisy—all of it.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: On past statements of present Ministers all controls should be unnecessary by now. In view of their own promises it is ridiculous that legislation of this kind should be introduced. It would be far better, in the interests of the community, if some commodities that have been decontrolled were again brought under control.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It would be much better for all the deserving cases.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It would be better than going on with the pretence that some of the commodities that have been decontrolled are readily available. I will analyse that position a little later. I would remind the Minister, who introduced this Bill, of the attitude of the Attorney General, who said he would sweep away all controls. I regret, for two reasons, that the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping is not present tonight. My first reason is that she is ill and the second is that owing to her absence I am not permitted to say what I would like to say if she were present. However, I refer members to page 2275 of "Hansard", Volume 2 of 1946, so that they may know the lines my thoughts are following. On that page they will read sufficient to explain how these two Ministers, the Attorney General and the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping, are dominating the Minister for Housing in the matter of relaxing controls that he knows should remain in existence or should be reimposed.

When the Minister analyses the position—if he knows the real position—he must realise that these commodities should be re-controlled immediately. I refer to the commodities that the Government pretends are available to the people because of the relaxation of controls. Removing controls does not make commodities available. In fact it makes them harder to obtain in legitimate cases. I ask the Minister does he think there is a real shortage of building materials still in Western Australia?

The Minister for Housing: There is.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is interesting to get that admission in June, 1949, in the light of what was said by the Minister in March, 1947.

The Minister for Housing: We are now building twice as many houses.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Minister could not have avoided that had he tried, but he has made matters much worse, as I will show in a few moments, by fiddling round and decontrolling those commodities that are today not going where they are most needed. We know that there is a shortage of 15,000 homes in this State.

The Minister for Housing: No.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Minister said very recently, with regard to the applications handled by the Housing Commission, that there were nearly 12,000 applications outstanding.

The Minister for Housing: That includes triplications and duplications.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It would need more than duplications to account for that. So far as the idea of expansible homes is concerned, the Minister needs something more expansible than a home to meet the present serious circumstances. What we do know, on the Minister's own admission, is that there are 3,174 urgent cases which have to be reviewed monthly to apportion the 70 to 80 homes available. That means there are 3,174 urgent cases to be satisfied with only 70 to 80 houses available each month.

The Minister for Housing: We are satisfied with 1,000 homes a year plus the private permits to build.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is not a bit of use the Minister making any excuses because an analysis of the figures will show the seriousness of the position which faces this community today. May I quote from "The Daily News" of yesterday, where a letter was headed "13 People in One House," and stated—

I wholeheartedly agree with "Ex-Digger" (Grumble, June 14th) that he should have a house. He says that apart from eight other people living in four rooms of the house, he and his wife and their three children must be content to live in the one remaining room until he is allocated a rental home. Can anyone cite a more deserving case?

And the letter is signed "Another Ex-Digger."

Mr. Fox: I know of one case where there are 16 people in the house!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The reply of the Housing Commission is very interesting and states:—

The Housing Commission has already replied that this family has been given a high priority, but "unfortunately many are living in similar conditions."

So much for the great pride with which the Minister recited this State's achievements in housing. As the Minister has said that there is still a shortage of materials, it does not say very much for the flimsy method the Government is adopting in its pretence at the control of materials which are being dissipated although urgently needed.

Let me first deal with the cement position. The Minister will tell us that with the extra kiln, which was prepared long before he became Minister for Housing, the supplies available to the community have increased enormously. The supply of many other commodities has increased greatly, but the demand has gradually increased and many works are being undertaken today which would not be permissible if the permit system were operating.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: And they are getting supplies, too.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Of course they are getting supplies, and they are getting them because they are good customers; because they are attractive accounts, and on all sorts of pretexts. Many miles of kerbing are being laid in this State today and as the mix for that kerbing would be no weaker than four in one members can visualise the quantity being used for non-essential works. Members can see this work being done, in many suburbs and many districts and cement being used for purposes which are not vital or essential. Not half as vital or essential as the housing of the people! There are cement verandahs and paths being put in. Does the Minister know that? They are being put in in homes both old and new and whether approved or not the work is still continuing. Even though it may be ruled out by the Housing Commission, I can still take the Minister to places where this sort of work is being carried on.

In spite of the increased production and in spite of the kilns working harder than they have for years, the increase is being absorbed because of the unwise use of this commodity, and yet this Government is attempting to take some kudos from the importation of cement. It is attempting to make a virtue of the importations of thousands of tons of cement. I know of nothing more ludicrous. The removal of controls

has pushed this State into that position and if cement continued to be controlled I doubt if there would be any need, at this stage, for the Government to be paying exorbitant prices for cement arriving in bad condition from oversea and charging this State's exchequer with the added costs.

The Government is gaining nothing from the decontrol of this commodity. The only thing it is gaining is the wastefulness of an amount equivalent to that which it is importing and yet it is attempting to take kudos from the fact that it is importing cement to ease the position. Let the Government look much nearer home than that. When controls were rigidly held over this commodity it was available at short notice for urgent and essential works. If one had a permit and a priority one could get delivery but that is impossible today. Let any member, and especially country members who know the urgency and need of works that are unavoidable—

Mr. Marshall: There are not too many country members interested.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Can any of them tell me where it is possible to get two or three tons of cement at short notice? Can they? They cannot get it legitimately.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I was dealing with the drift in the availability of materials so essentially needed since the Government has practised decontrol. I think the influence of the Attorney General and the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping, to which I have referred—

The Attorney General: Where did that statement, which you allege I made, appear?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It appears in "Hansard" and I will quote the page if the Attorney General has any doubt. The statement appears in "Hansard" No. 2 of 1946, on pages 2270 to 2275. He will find there that he referred to the objectionable principle of control. Of course, he believes that and his influence and that of the Minister for Supply and Shipping apparently has forced the Government into the position of haphazardly relinquishing control of materials that continue to be in desperately short supply. But the influence of the Attorney General on his colleague, the Minister for Housing, is, I can assure the Minister for

Housing, getting the Government into desperate straits. I am certain that the colleague of the Attorney General—the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping, who is his ally in this drastic attitude towards principles of control—will land the Minister for Housing in even more desperate straits than he is in today.

The Attorney General: I think you are basing your premises on a very small amount of information.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The amount of information I have consists of the words of the Minister himself.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Those are small enough.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It may be that it is a small amount of information; it may be the sort of information, too, that one should not take notice of. However, it is obvious to those who are looking on from the outside that this pernicious influence of the Attorney General is breaking down the controls of commodities that young married couples in particular are finding is the definite obstacle to their obtaining homes for themselves now and in the future.

The Minister for Housing: The chief trouble I get into is for retaining controls.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I was afraid that was so and I am glad the Minister has made that observation because this Bill reflects that that is his view. He would like to get away from these controls because they are difficult and therefore, in regard to cement, he hands the public over to the wholesale distributors. He has placed the public entirely in the hands of those distributors.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Minister for Housing is to get away from it all by retiring.

The Minister for Housing: I am only retiring on my laurels.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The distribution today is in the hands of the cement distributors and they have their allocations made for them by the distributors' committee. The Cement Allocation Committee is not worth a pinch of salt today compared with its activities and purposes under the previous permit system. I know the whole process and have the information in a letter from the Premier from whom I sought advice and some redress for the serious circumstances obtaining. The Premier very kindly sent me

a letter signed by J. D. Whyte. Everybody knows J. D. Whyte and his interests. His interests are not the interests of people desperately in need of cement, but it is to that authority that the Minister for Housing has handed the public. I challenge the Minister to say that one can get 15 tons of cement anywhere in the city tomorrow at short notice for a desperate and urgent need.

The Minister for Housing: I think you can.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Well, the Minister knows much more about it than thousands of people in this city, and I suppose even more than the gentlemen in the Press gallery who may be affected and cannot get a bag of cement.

Mr. Marshall: They will not admit it.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: But one can get cement by devious means, and I hope it is not by devious means that the Minister gives the assurance that he can obtain authority for 15 tons.

The Minister for Housing: I am never devious.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It would have to be devious because one could not get it otherwise. For example, one could not get 10 tons ordered tomorrow on the next State ship proceeding north.

The Minister for Housing: You have obtained 273 tons.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: But how long ahead did I plan for it?

The Minister for Housing: You got it in two months.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I repeat that tomorrow the Minister could not get 15 tons for an urgent purpose because the relaxation of controls has put all the surplus supplies of cement into unnecessary channels. The onus is thus placed on the wholesaler to define which are urgent cases and those in drastic need. The result is that the wholesalers are not seeking this difficult sort of business.

When in the North-West recently I heard that one could get cement if one was prepared to buy a cement brick-making machine, so I decided to test it out for myself and rang three firms in this city. A cement brick-making machine is a simple little contrivance costing under £2. On telephoning these firms I asked them whether

if I ordered a few of these brick-making machines, I could be assured of a supply of cement. They said, "How much do you want?" and I replied, "Fifteen tons." The answer I received from the first firm was, "Well, if you buy a number of these machines, 15 tons is out of bounds, but we would let you have four tons a week". Four tons of cement for any purpose and for any number of these machines! That is the sort of control that is going on. If one buys an engine from any reputable firm and that engine requires a concrete bed and the cement is ordered, it can be obtained. Is that a fair thing to the public? Surely the Minister knows what is going on.

The Minister for Housing: A concrete bed is necessary for an engine.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am not inquiring whether a concrete bed is necessary. The point is that one can order cement and get it. I know of an instance this week where two tons of cement were delivered to a person who needs it not, compared with the needs of the public in their vast numbers.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is free enterprise.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: This lack of control by the inconsistent Attorney General which has influenced the Minister for Housing is giving the public a tremendous heart-ache. In fact, a tremendous lot of bitterness is being engendered. It is merely a pretence and a sham to say that because the production of a commodity is being increased we can release controls. There could have been achievement and a better record had this commodity been continued under control to assure the best application of all materials available. It is possible to get cement if one knows the way about it. Does the Minister know that? What is necessary is to "know a man who knows a man" and then one can get cement. If one were fortunate enough to know a man who is employed at a cement works, one could get a few bags of cement each week. I have been told that on the best of authority. Why does not the Minister face up to his responsibilities, irksome though they may be and difficult though the problem is to handle? Why does he not afford those urgently needing supplies an opportunity to obtain them? If members opposite will

only say what is in their minds along the lines I am pursuing, they will be able to overwhelm the Minister with facts of the same description, and with statements that he will not be able to deny.

There are necessitous cases where some cement is required for the foundations of houses and the firms say that those desiring the cement must wait for two or three months before they can secure supplies. Is that a fair thing when we know what is going on in this city and the suburbs and appreciate the works that have been undertaken, but in respect of which operations could have been delayed for years and which have in consequence retarded the home building programme that should be undertaken? There are many other instances of the effect of decontrol. As time goes on, we shall find that even such flimsy control as we have had over materials by those administering this legislation, has fallen to the ground and has not followed the course that was prepared for it to accomplish the progress that should have been made in this State with respect to housing. Timber and bricks are in exactly the same category.

When the Minister was speaking the other night, I interjected and said he could find hundreds of bricks in backyards. His reply was that it would be found that the bricks were on sites of works that had been approved or were about to be approved. What a questionable sort of statement that is? How does the Minister know that is so?

The Minister for Housing: Because any contractor who is building—

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am not speaking about contractors.

The Minister for Housing: That is where you will find them.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If the Minister had consulted his officers and if his mind were not directed along lines apart from the practical side, he could make some investigation. He could go with some of the practical officers of the State Housing Commission to some of their suburbs—I do not know where they may be living—and view the position. I challenge the Minister to go with any of his principal officers. I know, if he were to do so, he would find in their suburbs heaps and heaps of bricks representing thousands in the aggregate, respecting which no permit to build has been

obtained. This has had the effect of depriving many people of the legitimate acquisition of supplies and has deprived many home seekers of the opportunity to use them.

The Minister for Housing: We have just had a survey of the position.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Surely we have a most gullible Minister!

Mr. Marshall: That applies to the whole Government and not to the Minister alone!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I invite the Minister to go through the suburbs, especially the wealthier suburbs, and take a senior officer with him on his visit of inspection. Those concerned must know what is going on. I venture to say that they do know what is going on. He will find that there are many thousands of bricks waiting on jobs, the permits for which will not be granted for years to come—if proper control is exercised. On the other hand, there is considerable delivery to non-permit works. I repeat that so long as one "knows a man who knows a man," one can get bricks. I do not say that the bricks can be obtained from the State brickyards, because I understand that the system operating there is very rigid and those in control make no delivery without a permit. On the other hand, I know of a case where last week a person from an authorised house ordered 2,000 bricks. The firm said, "We cannot supply them but we can tell you where you can get them." A carrier was rung up and that carrier, without any question whatever, delivered the bricks to the person's backyard. The members of the State Housing Commission and their officers know the mess and muddle that decontrol has created. Why does not the Minister listen to them?

The Minister for Housing: He has listened to them.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I challenge the Minister to go tomorrow morning with his principal officers and investigate the position. If he does that he will see enough bricks to enable many homes to be built. With regard to timber, I think it can be safely said that the retail trade for local supplies is in a chaotic state. It is quite insufficient for the Minister to indicate that there has been increased production. That will be the line he will take. He will quote figures to show what the sawmills of the State

have achieved during the regime of the present Government. That is only half the story, and it is absolutely insufficient. It is essential that the Minister should realise—I invite him to undertake a further perambulation tomorrow, if he has time—that if he were to go to various timber yards and endeavour to get 100 pieces of 4 x 2 and 3 x 2, he would not be able to procure them.

The Minister for Housing: I do not know that anyone ever could.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The principal scantlings used in a home consist of 4 x 2 and 3 x 2 jarrah and karri. If the Minister wanted to secure 100 pieces of timber of that description in unspecified lengths, he could not get them tomorrow morning. I know that is a fact because I tested it out with three firms today. The best I could get was that I could be supplied in about two or three months.

The Attorney General: Had you a permit?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes—not for myself, but I am acting for hundreds of people. Perhaps the Attorney General does not understand that I am trying to make arrangements for the requirements of hundreds of people, and the best I can get when I seek to obtain supplies of 4 x 2 and 3 x 2 timber, is the promise by most co-operative firms that are anxious to help, that supplies will be made available in two or three months' time. Thus the troubles of home seekers are far from over when they secure their permits to build.

I am wondering what the Minister has done to find out what is causing all these difficulties and particularly with respect to the over-issuing of permits. It is much more than that which is at the root of the trouble. The young couples who are being given authority to build expansible homes are in a grievous situation. They can get approval for the erection of an expansible home in not less than five or six months and we know that no more such applications will be approved. I know that for a fact because my own daughter and her husband have been seeking some such approval. They were told that five to six months hence was the best that could be promised. That is the position of young couples who want to erect a building of two rooms in which they can live. What

now of the much vaunted promises that were given so much publicity? How much can we value the influence upon the present Government by the Attorney General, regarding the removal of controls?

The Attorney General: Why not be fair and give the whole of the context? Why pick out one bit?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We know the natural instinct of the Attorney General on the question of control. Unfortunately, the relaxation of control has got the Government into this dreadful mess. I mentioned earlier that the Minister will say in reply that much more timber is now being milled in Western Australia. He will give the progressive figures and show what the State Sawmills are doing, but those figures will indicate nothing except that timber merchants, interested in profits rather than in the interests of the community, are sending forward large quantities of timber in sizes not used and inappropriate for home-building.

There is a very small percentage of timber of scantling size coming to the city. I suggest to the Minister that, if he examined the weighbills of even the State Sawmills, he would find the truth of my contention that timber millers are sending forward sizes inappropriate for the building of homes, the reason being that there is more profit in the sizes they are cutting. Does the Minister know that?

Mr. Marshall: How could he?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: A very small percentage of scantling is coming forward from any sawmilling source. Therefore, the best use is not being made of the volume of timber being cut by the State Sawmills or any other mill. I venture the opinion that it would be far easier to get timber of the size that local authorities use for the kerbing of roads than it would be to get 3 x 2 or 4 x 2 scantling. There is nothing to the credit of the Government in that situation, and that is the situation. Let the Minister analyse the reasons why there is such a shortage of building scantling. The reasons are that 4 x 2 and 3 x 2, which were the offcuts that in earlier days were hawked to be sold, are not a profitable line compared with many other types and sizes.

If there were ever an opportunity for the Government to use the State Sawmills to good advantage, the time is now. If the

Government is in earnest in its desire to catch up with the timber position, the State Sawmills, with all their resources, should be utilised to supply local markets, and local markets only, for many months to come. Why are the State Sawmills in competition for export trade at this moment? That is not a proper function of the State Sawmills in an emergency like the present. It is all very well to say that their percentage of jarrah is so small and that this is impracticable because of the quantity of karri they cut. Let the Minister examine the position if that is the answer he gets.

I suggest that the answer to the problem lies in a strict examination of what the merchants and millers are doing to ensure that high prices are obtained for the timber they cut and that their profits are not reduced by cutting less profitable lines. I suggest, too, that there might be a tendency to hold back a little in the production of such timbers in order to ensure that a rise in price is granted a little later on. All these things—problems with which the subject is bristling—are things about which the Minister might well become agitated and make whatever inquiry he likes to overcome the chaotic state of affairs prevailing in the retail timber trade in this State.

Iron and iron products are materials that continue to be in desperately short supply. If a man with a No. 1 priority sought roofing for a home, unless it were to replace a portion that had collapsed, he might have to wait until June of next year to get it. That is the position regarding iron. But the ludicrous feature of the Bill is that, with iron almost rationing itself, iron and steel products are the only items retained in the Government's puny effort to regulate, control and direct materials into proper channels. Iron and steel products, which cannot be obtained for another 12 or 18 months, even if ordered on a No. 1 priority tomorrow! Four thousand tons behind! Yet this Bill is designed to continue control of those commodities, and let everyone have an open go that can find a reason or excuse to present to a wholesaler or distributor to get cement or bricks. Thus decontrol has brought about mess and muddle.

As the Minister who introduced the parent legislation, I say clearly and distinctly—there can be no mistake about my attitude—that this Bill is an urgent need and

that the recontrol of the commodities now so loosely tied to it should be a matter for early investigation by the Minister. What matter if it is an unpleasant task? What matter if he is being pressed to decontrol and relax still further? The only way to handle this matter properly until the crisis has passed and until we can satisfy the 11,800 people he has mentioned and the 3,800 urgently in need of homes is to look at the overall picture without playing up to a few interested people. I support the second reading.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [7.58]: I think it is generally recognised that control must be continued wherever it would be disastrous to lift it because, were control removed, these articles would go into use in directions that were not of the greatest priority, and the people in greatest need would be kept waiting still longer for their requirements. Because iron products—such lines as galvanised iron and piping—are in very short supply, if controls were lifted, we would find people obtaining these things and using them for certain replacements which they felt it desirable to make and on which they had money to spend, and that would result in others—who are in dire need of the supplies and have been for years—being obliged to go without. Because of that necessity, the Minister finds himself, although very much against the grain and against the protestations of members on his side of the House, obliged still to retain some of these controls. I have no doubt, too, that the chaotic condition referred to by the Leader of the Opposition has brought it forcibly home to the Government that the lifting of controls has not helped at all, but has merely accentuated the Government's difficulties. Therefore, the Government must retain some controls despite the strong pressure of the vested interests which it represents.

Mr. Marshall: That is where the pressure is coming from.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I wonder whether the members of the Government have a proper appreciation of the real nature of the problem. I have here an extract from "The West Australian" of the 1st March of this year. It deals with a speech which the Minister for Education made at a luncheon given by a branch of the Liberal Party.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Which Liberal Party?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It was before the Party changed its name.

Mr. Marshall: Once more!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is only one thing which causes me to doubt whether the Minister knew what he was saying. It is that the speech was made at a luncheon, but the Minister is an abstemious gentleman and I find it difficult to blame inebriation for the fact that he apparently did not know what he was talking about. If he really believed what he was reported to have said, then I wish to know whether other Ministers also believed it, because, if they did, then it is perfectly obvious that the Government has not a proper understanding of the problem. Lest it be said that the Minister was misreported in "The West Australian," I point out that this report also appeared in "The Liberal News"—a different reporter and a different paper!

Mr. Yates: Do you subscribe to it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not, but a kindly friend of mine, who believes it is as well that I should digest Liberal propaganda because he thinks it might convert me, regularly supplies me with this most valuable paper. The statement which I propose to read appeared not only in "The West Australian" but also in "The Liberal News", so it cannot be said that the Minister was incorrectly reported. These are his words—

If the quantity of building materials were doubled and the number of artisans remained unchanged, it would be impossible to increase the building rate by more than a very small percentage.

Does the Minister for Housing believe that?
Does the Attorney General believe it?

Mr. Marshall: He is easy!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I say it is utter nonsense. I am informed by men in the building trade that their operatives are to-day working only part time, or less than half time, because of the shortage of materials.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What proportion of the total cost is charged to waste of time?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is the point. That is one of the main reasons for the increased cost of building. The operatives are working part time because the pieces of

timber required first are supplied last. Notwithstanding that the bulk of an order is supplied by the timber merchant, essential parts are missing and consequently the job cannot be proceeded with. For example, it is the practice to use 8in. by 1in. jarrah for hips and ridges. I have been informed that one firm has not received any of this size of timber for the past nine months. Contractors anxious to get on with building may be requesting the suppliers to use other timber and cut it to size. They are reluctant to do so, but in some cases will use 9in. by 2in., cut off a strip 2in. by 1in. and then deep-cut what is left, in that way getting 8in. by 1in. timber required for hips and ridges. It is the self-interest of those engaged in the timber trade that is largely responsible for the right portions of the orders not being delivered in their proper sequence.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is free enterprise!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Let me give two illustrations of what is a common occurrence in the building trade today. A builder finishes the brickwork.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: If he gets the bricks.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then he has to delay his work because he has no ceiling joists. I know of a case where a builder had to wait four or five weeks after the brickwork had been completed before he could obtain ceiling joists. Having got them, he was again held up for top and bottom plates, back verandah posts and rafters. All that extra waiting time, while workmen are idle, goes into the cost of building. We are told that the extra cost is due to the 40-hour week, but that is not responsible for anything like the extra cost caused by these delays.

Let me give a second example. The foundation is down and the builder is anxious to proceed with the work, but he can get no floor bearers and, because he cannot get them, he cannot put his joists down and therefore no frames can go up. Consequently, the brickwork cannot be proceeded with. That means a delay of weeks after the foundations are laid; and that is why we can see, all over the metropolitan area, foundations laid down for months but nothing else being done. Large quantities of material are supplied—large quantities of timber—but because essential parts of the order are missing it is almost as bad as if no

timber were supplied at all for the reason that men cannot proceed without those essential parts being supplied at the proper time. I am wondering where a lot of this timber we are supposed to be producing is going.

I have here a report of the operations of the Forests Department and I have ascertained from it what the production was for the year ended the 30th June, 1948. I am dealing now with sawn and hewn timber which has been measured in the square. This report discloses, on page 5, that there was a grand total of 10,459,323 cubic feet produced. That is equivalent to 125,000,000 super feet in round figures. The Minister, in answering a question yesterday, said that 14.7 of our total production for that year was exported. I have looked up this sheet of current building statistics which is supplied by the Acting Commonwealth Statistician, and it shows that fewer than 3,000 houses were built in Western Australia for the year with which I am dealing. If we take the figure at 6,000 super feet for each house—and I understand that is the average: about 10 loads with 600 super feet per load—

The Minister for Housing: Ten to 12 loads.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If we take it at that figure we get 6,000 super feet per house or a total of 18,000,000 super feet, which works out at about 14.4 per cent. of our production. So actually, on the Minister's own showing, we are exporting more of our timber than we are using in house building. A very generous people we are! We are in a serious difficulty ourselves; and our difficulty becomes worse every month, as the Minister has shown. Yet we are prepared to export more than we actually use ourselves! If we add these two amounts together we get a total of 29.1 of our production being used for home consumption for house building and for export. What on earth has happened to the other 70 per cent?

The Minister for Works: That is your problem.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What has happened to the other 70 per cent. of that 125,000,000 super feet? Surely there is something there requiring examination, when, of our total timber production, we utilise for house building—our most pressing need; the most important thing in the life of anybody—less than we export, and our export total

and what we use for houses taken together amount to less than 30 per cent. of our total production. I know where some of it is going. We use a very large quantity for fitting up ships that take away bulk wheat and this is something that requires examination too. Frequently truck loads of timber arrive at Fremantle, not for the purpose of house building, but for the purpose of going into bulk wheat ships, and I rather suspect that this is a source of considerable revenue to some people.

The Minister for Housing: Ships are not allowed to bring their own dunnage.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I submit to the Minister that it is possible that this is a better source of income to timber millers supplying timber for that purpose than is the supplying of timber for house building.

The Minister for Housing: The waterside workers will not allow ships to bring their own dunnage.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But can we not examine the type of timber that is going away? I happen to know that on at least one occasion enterprising people wanted to use sleepers for this purpose. Does the Minister know that? They did not get away with it, it is true, but they tried it on.

The Minister for Housing: It would be a good idea, probably.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It was for them!

The Minister for Housing: For anybody.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It would have been a wonderful idea if they could have got away with it, but the Forests Department did not think it was such a good idea because the department knocked it on the head.

• The Minister for Housing: I think it is rather a good idea.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So the Minister thinks it is a good idea!

The Minister for Housing: I think we should use the timber for scantlings and not worry so much about sleepers.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister thinks it would have been a good idea for them to be permitted to use sleepers to fit up bulk wheat ships?

The Minister for Housing: We could afford them better than the other timber.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am surprised!

The Minister for Housing: I am surprised, too.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Perhaps I should say I am not surprised, in view of the chaotic position of home building. Surely the Minister appreciates that if we allowed them to use sleepers for that purpose a much greater quantity of our valuable jarrah would be leaving this country than really is.

The Minister for Housing: Not necessarily.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think so.

The Minister for Housing: I do not agree. I want proof of that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: And we would find there would be less timber for house building. It is pretty certain that this method of disposing of timber provides sawmillers with an opportunity to make a greater profit. Why is it that those engaged in the timber trade are so anxious to send so much of our timber away? Having asked the question and not having received an answer from the Government, I will give an answer myself.

The Minister for Housing: Give me a chance! It is your turn now; mine will come later.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is, of course, that there is a far greater profit in it. It has been actually said that if we were to reduce the quantity of timber which these firms are allowed to export we would have to agree to an increase in the local price. That has been said. I have no doubt the Minister has heard that. So it is argued that because we do not want to increase the local price we had better continue to allow these people to send away far too much of our timber. I say very definitely that in my opinion it is not true that we would have to agree to an increase in the local price if we curtailed exports. Is there not a firm called Whittaker Bros. which deals exclusively in the local trade? I presume it makes a profit, and a satisfactory one.

The Minister for Housing: I do not want to discuss that. It has been having a pretty thin time until recently.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It has been going for a long time.

The Minister for Housing: I know about Whittaker's.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The fact that it has survived in the local trade shows that it is

not necessary to have an increase in the local price. Yet we are told that if we cut down the exports and so conserve supplies for our own use we will have to be prepared to agree to an increase in the local price. I will take a lot of convincing on that point.

Mr. SPEAKER: Do these remarks have a bearing on the subject of controls?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Of course they do! I am urging that we should control the export of timber, and very drastically, too.

The Minister for Housing: Do you not know that the Commonwealth controls it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Has the Minister made any representations to the Commonwealth in the matter of control with a view to a reduction in the quantity exported?

The Minister for Housing: The Commonwealth controls it under an export licence.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is all very well! The Minister has been quite content to allow the amount exported to increase in quantity.

The Minister for Housing: No; you were.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister's figures show that the quantity exported last year was far greater than was exported the year before. Let me quote the Minister's own figures.

The Minister for Housing: I will show you what your Government exported.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister gave figures in answer to a question asked by the member for Nelson. For the year 1945-46—that is when the Labour Government was in office—the amount exported was 8.08 per cent. of the production. For 1946-47 it was 10.8 per cent. of the production, and for 1947-48 it was 14.7 per cent. Now let me hear from the Minister!

The Minister for Housing: I will refer to it later. I am not making my speech now.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister cannot say one thing one day and want to assert the opposite the next.

Mr. Marshall: Yes they can; they do it!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: On the Minister's own figures there has been a substantial increase each year from 1945-46 in the amount of timber exported. The Minister, in order to try to soften the blow, said that steps were being taken to reduce the amount

which was being exported. He realises that far too much of our timber is going away, but of course he is not strong enough to stand up to the self-interest of the persons who get the greatest profit through sending the timber away. That is the trouble. I suppose I ought to feel sorry for the Minister in the circumstances.

The Minister for Housing: I do not want any sorrow.

Mr. Marshall: No wonder you propose to retire from public life!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We will get more houses, and therefore reach a stage when there will be no necessity for control, if we keep more of our own timber for our own use, and direct it into the proper channels. And if we take steps to see that when the millers cut the timber they do not cut the sizes that suit them and from which they make the most profit, but the sizes that industry requires, we will not have the present delays which are the result, as I have already said, of the pieces of timber which are required first, arriving last. I asked the Minister a couple of questions this afternoon, knowing I was to speak tonight, in the hope that he might have been able to give me the answers. He could not do so, but asked that the questions be placed on the notice paper. So, the answers are not in time for my use.

I was interested to read in yesterday's paper of the establishment of a new timber mill at Northcliffe. I have no doubt that hundreds of people had a somewhat similar idea to what I had when I first saw that report in the paper, namely, that this would be a source from which we would have an augmentation of our timber supplies. But I now very much doubt it. I understand that the company which is establishing this mill—the Kauri Timber Company Limited—is one which deals almost exclusively in karri timber which it exports. I have been told by certain persons from whom I made inquiries that it is extremely unlikely that we will get any value at all, so far as our timber supplies are concerned, from the establishment of this mill.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What about the Nannup mill? That is another to have a look at.

The Minister for Housing: That has been there a long time.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This report would no doubt encourage some people to hope that they would have a greater opportunity of getting a house than they have had already. But I have been advised that it will make no difference; that the whole of the production will leave this State. If that is so, it is not much to crow about. The Government has been endeavouring to show, and will continue to try to do so, that it has effected a wonderful improvement in the rate of house building. It quotes figures from time to time to show how many more houses are being erected than previously. Of course more houses are being erected; there are in every State and the increase is about proportionate in the different States. But if the Minister will give attention to the points and try to take some control of the millers so as to keep more of our timber here, and see that the right sizes are cut, we will increase the number of homes being erected all right, and then some of those two and three unit families which were led up the garden path by the Government—

The Minister for Housing: They were not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, they were. They might have an opportunity of getting a dwelling. But what chance have they under existing conditions? In order to arrive at some idea of how we were getting on, I asked the Minister certain questions the other day with regard to housing. I asked him to give the total number of applications for rental homes. Then I desired to know how many of that number were cases in which hardship had been admitted by the department and the applicants placed upon the priority list. The Minister's answer was, that of 11,381 applications, 3,174 were hardship cases. That is the position at present. There are 3,000 or so people on the priority list entitled to a home immediately it is available. But what are their chances? There are on the average 402 new applications being received each month. If we make a conservative estimate on that figure, we can say that at least 100 of those will be admitted to a priority. The number of houses being made available each month is 78. So, on the basis of hardship cases alone, the department, or the Government, is falling behind to the extent of at least 20 houses a month—240 houses a year—on the existing rate.

Mr. Marshall: Hardship cases only!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. That is taken on the hardship cases alone. If we take the number of applications, then it is slipping to the extent of many more hundreds. Is it not smug complacency when a Minister endeavours to say then what a wonderful job the Government is doing? It reminds me of the picture of Jack Horner pulling out the plum and saying, "What a good boy am I." But in this case there is very little plum; it is a crab-apple. Why delude the people? Why lead them to expect that a wonderful improvement is being achieved when, in actual fact, the position is becoming worse every month? If we take the average chance that a person on this priority list has of getting a home we find it becomes considerably worse each month.

How, in the face of that, can the Government claim that it is getting out of the wood? It is time it awoke to a realisation of the fact that the position is chaotic. The Government has no possible hope—try as it will and even with the best endeavours—of coping with the situation unless it grapples with the difficulties of the timber position. It is useless to cry about the shortage of artisans or make statements such as that made by the Minister for Education, about the doubling of supplies of material. Let the Government realise that, until it can ensure that the orders of the contractors are fulfilled and the timber they require is supplied as they want it, there is no hope whatever of speeding up the building rate. Until those orders can be fulfilled in that way, we will continue to see foundations waiting for weeks, and buildings plate high, with no other work being done on them, because essential parts are not being received.

Let the Minister give attention to one item only—that of hips and ridges; 8 x 1. Let him increase the supply of 8 x 1 jarrah, and he will get an advantage. Let him increase the supply of bearers and he will get a further advantage. But no, leave it to the merchants and they will supply those portions of the timber that give the greatest profit, and will supply them to the places which give the greatest profit. House building is a secondary consideration. That is where the problem lies. Let the Minister get out of his office and go round the vari-

ous jobs. Let him talk to the men who are doing the building, and ask what is holding them up.

The Minister for Housing: He has done that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Unfortunately the State has lost a very valuable officer—I may probe this further later on—named Gregson. He was in the Forests Department.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: He was Forest Products Utilisation Officer in that department.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is so, and in that capacity he had a lot of consultation with the sawmillers. The final result was that he went over to the sawmillers and the Government lost him. Has the Government taken any steps to replace him or get someone to do the work he was doing? I do not think so.

The Minister for Housing: The Assistant Conservator is now doing some of his duties.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Was he previously underworked?

The Minister for Housing: No, but he is now doing part of this work.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If he can do Gregson's duties as well as his own, either he or Gregson must have been doing little.

The Minister for Housing: I think Mr. Gregson was offered a higher salary. He is a very capable man.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He is a bright boy, and of value to the sawmillers, but their concern is not primarily the number of homes that can be built in Western Australia. It is rather how they can make the greatest profit.

The Minister for Housing: They are concerned with home building, also.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, as a secondary consideration. If they were concerned about home building, they would see to it that they cut the right sizes and quantities of timber and that the material for complete houses went out, instead of just parts of houses, which causes delay. Surely the Minister appreciates that having highly skilled men waiting round for materials must inevitably force the cost of house building up considerably. * The contractor does not carry the losses. He includes them in the price, and makes provision for them. That is why costs have gone up so

tremendously, and that is the point we must tackle. We must cut out the delay and we can do that only by ensuring that the timber is supplied when it is needed, instead of those parts required last being supplied first, as is often the case today. The Government must knuckle down to dealing with this problem. Although it will be a difficult matter for the Government, which represents vested interests and will come right up against this powerful combination, it is only by tackling the problem at the source that the Minister can hope to effect any substantial improvement.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [8.35]: The Government, in its desire to placate certain interests, has decontrolled quite a number of items of building material. As a consequence of that, the building programme has got completely out of hand. Before dealing specifically with certain items of building material, I will give the House some idea of the over-all picture that is presented at the moment. The figures given to us by the Minister—both last year and last week—reveal that the number of applications outstanding has been increasing constantly. While it is not likely that I will learn the exact figure until I receive the reply to a question of mine tomorrow I estimate that there are approximately 20,000 outstanding and unsatisfied applications on the books of the State Housing Commission at present. In January, 1947, there was a total of slightly over 8,000 applications outstanding, and in July of last year more than 18,000. Seeing that the number of applications, both for permits to build and for rental houses, has increased considerably since that time, I estimate that approximately 20,000 applications are at present waiting on the books of the State Housing Commission.

It is interesting to point out that when this Government—which was going to brush aside the cobwebs—took office, there was a total of approximately 10,000 applications outstanding, and in the short period of two years that total has approximately doubled. So much for the work and efforts of this Government! In an endeavour to seek popularity with the unthinking public, the controls over materials have practically all been removed. The responsibility now devolves on the merchants and traders, and is escaped by

the Government. The very basis of construction is the supply of materials, and the Government has washed its hands of that important factor, with the result that a terrible picture confronts us today.

As previous speakers have indicated, the number of houses being built has increased, but that was inevitable. With the gradual unwinding of the war effort, with people coming back to their jobs and machinery able again to be ordered, and so on, it would be impossible for anything else to result than that the rate of home construction should increase. That has happened not only in this State, and other States of the Commonwealth, but in practically every part of the world, and there is no credit due to the Government for that. Because this Government has relinquished control over building materials, certain things have happened; things which I regard as being absolutely unavoidable. For instance, I shall be interested to learn from the Minister tomorrow how the road board offices at Mundijong were constructed in view of the fact that there are so many thousands of people on the books of the Housing Commission and many more thousands who have made no application whatever, because they know the hopelessness of the situation generally when works of that type are allowed to be put in hand.

Within a few hundred yards of this Parliament House four dwelling places that housed working people and their families have, in recent weeks, been demolished for the purpose of extending a factory which, so far as it goes, is perhaps well and good, but the greater part of the area occupied by those houses is being used for display and showrooms. This, incidentally, is a firm that was able to proceed with its building programme during the war. An employee of that establishment was able to get a permit to build a house notwithstanding that he had recently sold one which belonged to him. I mentioned this case in the House previously. Within three months of making his application, and suffering no hardship whatsoever, he received a permit and is at the moment having a house constructed at a cost of £2,045. Whether that man and his wife have influence, or the particular firm and its employees have influence, I do not know.

Mr. Fox: Has he any children?

Mr. GRAHAM: No children whatsoever.

The Minister for Housing: They have had it a good many years.

Mr. GRAHAM: What?

The Minister for Housing: Influence!

Mr. GRAHAM: They might have had influence 20 or 30 years ago, but now they do not have any family at all. They certainly have not at present, anyhow, and that is the state of affairs that is obtaining. It is because the Government is relinquishing control of the situation in view of its desire to play up to certain interests. I might mention here that a friend of mine—he is, incidentally, personally known to the Minister for Housing—was vexed, to say the least of it, when this Government was returned and, after it had been in office for a number of months had not relinquished control over building materials. So much so that he swore he was finished with the Liberal Party for all time.

Mr. Hegney: Hear, hear!

Mr. GRAHAM: I thought that was very promising, but now, because of the action of the Government in relinquishing these controls and making it a happy hunting ground for builders and contractors, he once more has come back into the Liberal fold.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He was nearly converted!

Mr. GRAHAM: I suggest that considerable pressure has been applied to this Government to bring it to the point of doing this sort of thing, with the results I have previously mentioned. I say it is losing control of the situation completely. A few moments ago I instanced the case of the married couple without any children who, within the short period of three months, received a permit though they are suffering no hardship financial or otherwise.

The Minister for Housing: Will you give me the names?

Mr. GRAHAM: I have discussed the case previously with the Minister. On the 17th March of this year the Minister told me that he could do nothing for a man who had an application lodged since December, 1944. This man is an ex-Serviceman of the recently-concluded war and has a wife and eight children, and lives at the rear of a shop. These premises are falling to pieces. The family is a clean-living and decent one,

but it has received one refusal after another. The Minister, on the 17th March, amongst other things said—

From the inquiries I have made in regard to this particular case and the knowledge gained in dealing with the many hundreds of persons who are suffering hardship and who frequently write to me in regard to these hardships, I feel convinced that Mr. Jones's application should not receive special preferential treatment over and above the many other persons who are in a worse condition than he.

We all know, not of isolated cases, but of scores of people less deserving than the case I have instanced. It merely demonstrates how the position has got completely out of hand. But of course it does not stop there. Because the allocation of building materials by and large is left to traders and merchants they, naturally enough, are anxious to satisfy their best clients. The quantity or proportion of building materials that previously went to the most deserving cases—those suffering the greatest hardship—is now being diverted to other avenues and to other jobs.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Good old free enterprise!

Mr. GRAHAM: And, as a natural consequence of there being not nearly as many houses being built as should be being built at the moment, it is having a terrible effect upon the prices of homes generally. Only today—

The Minister for Housing: The lowest prices in Australia!

Mr. GRAHAM: —I was having a conversation with a comparatively new arrival to this country. Last week he inspected a house at Inglewood. It was a four-roomed jarrah weatherboard home—the ordinary type of cottage that one would see in any suburb—and the vendors wanted £2,500 for it. That situation is caused and is being accentuated because people can get bricks to build ornamental fences, timber to construct wood-sheds, other building materials for horse-stables, and the rest of it.

It is not my place or province to condemn or blame the merchants. After all, it is not their task to police the wishes and desires of the Government. A client comes into their premises and they seek to satisfy him up to a point. Those who are the largest purchasers, those who are likely to be constant customers of theirs, naturally receive the greatest and the earliest preference. So we

have a set of circumstances arising that is anything but healthy. I am informed that it takes, at present, anything up to 12 months to complete the construction of a brick house and a little less for a timber-framed house, and the reason for it is not very difficult to see.

When bricks were controlled—controls brought into operation by the Wise Government and continued by this Government until the pressure got too strong and now released—it was possible for a builder, provided the person for whom he was about to construct the house had a permit, to have bricks supplied to him within a period of a fortnight to three weeks. The position is now that something like four to six months elapses between the order being lodged by the contractor and the bricks being supplied to him. I point out to the Minister and the House that these particulars which I am submitting now were secured by me during the tea adjournment, that is, about an hour and a half ago. Previously, when a person received a permit he simultaneously received an order for the release of the necessary building materials.

The Minister for Housing: But they did not necessarily get them.

Mr. GRAHAM: They got them far quicker than they are getting them at present! But the position now is that a contractor, or any person requiring building materials goes to two, three or four different merchants and lodges orders with each one of them. In addition, whilst 25,000 bricks may be required for a particular job, the contractor orders from the merchant 30,000 or 35,000. The bricks that he has left over from the job in hand he either uses for another job, which is not necessarily a deserving one, or else he retails the bricks on the black market.

I venture to suggest that if any member of this House required 2,000 bricks for a certain purpose—for a new floor in the fowl pen or anything of that nature—he could, by paying a little extra to some of these contractors, secure his requirements without any difficulty. It might be suggested that some check is made by the hardware merchant or those who supply building requirements wholesale. But it is not their task or responsibility to refuse, to rebuff or insult a person who may be, at present

or in the future, one of his best clients. So the wholesaler does everything possible to oblige and to give satisfaction.

We therefore draw the conclusion that to a great extent this release of the control of materials has defeated the purpose of the issuing of permits because such a tremendous proportion of building material is going to jobs of one sort or another in respect of which there is little need, if it be for a housing extension, and certainly no need so far as appendages and decorations to homes and gardens are concerned. It was put to me that the great majority of the small jobs being undertaken at present is being carried out on account of material secured either on the black market, because of the absence of control of materials now or because the applicant has a friend in a particular firm. I do not wish to brag but I know perfectly well that I could get my requirements of bricks, cement or timber from a certain firm tomorrow.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: You have no requirements.

Mr. GRAHAM: I am not suggesting that I have. I am merely indicating that if a person is in need of those materials in short supply he can procure them without difficulty if he knows someone in the right place, and the member for Geraldton knows that is so.

The Minister for Housing: I do not think it is so.

Mr. GRAHAM: I will guarantee, if the member for Geraldton doubts my word, that by the end of the week I could have 2,000 bricks placed in his backyard or any other backyard in the metropolitan area. The position is the same with cement. Admittedly, the merchants are on a quota but they please themselves as to whom they will sell the cement they have on hand. What is the use of the Government pretending that regarding the construction of homes, additions to houses and the building programme generally, only important and necessary work is being undertaken. Practically anybody who has a friend at court and who requires any of these materials that are in exceedingly short supply is able to secure them. That is a shocking state of affairs and is something that the Government surely could, and should have envisaged before taking the steps that it did for the relinquishing of controls.

The Minister for Housing: I do not think there is anything in that statement at all.

Mr. Bovell: Why do you not submit concrete cases?

Mr. GRAHAM: That interjection is appropriate seeing we are talking about cement. Any person who knows anything about the city of Perth is well aware that what I am saying is absolutely true. Once again, notwithstanding that the procedure may be to list applicants for building materials that are in short supply, if someone has a little influence with a firm and that person receives preferential treatment, people who have been waiting perhaps for months for such materials are relegated a little further down the list in order to make way for this particular friend—who is necessarily a man of influence—to obtain his cement requirements or any other building material. In regard to timber, of which there is a grave shortage, I am told that the merchants consider it no responsibility of theirs, as was the position previously, to police the requirements of the Government. That applies if a person without a permit wants timber in excess of the value of £50. If the firm has the timber at a particular moment then that person will be sold that quantity of timber even if it be required only for the purpose of constructing stables for racehorses or something of that nature.

The Minister for Housing: That is quite incorrect, too.

Mr. GRAHAM: At any rate, if the supply of timber in excess of £50 is policed in one particular purchase, there is nothing to prevent a person making a purchase of timber to the value of £20 with this firm and £30 or £40 with another and so on, until he has accumulated approximately £100 worth of timber.

The Minister for Housing: I do not think you will find much of that.

Mr. GRAHAM: I was assured by the principal of a firm this evening that that sort of thing goes on, even with his own firm and, as a consequence, many persons who have permits—and we must assume those persons are deserving cases—are unable to secure supplies of timber. Because of that position they now have to wait approximately four months from the time they lodge their orders until the timber merchants are able to supply timber

to them. That is a state of affairs that did not exist prior to the lifting of controls. With regard to flooring I understand the position is absolutely desperate. The securing of roofing tiles, I am told, entails a waiting period of approximately three months. That dates from the period when the walls have been completed and the gutters placed in position around them. It is only then that the manufacturers of tiles will entertain an order. So it will be appreciated, not on the basis of my estimate but in accordance with information given to me, that a brick house takes 12 months to construct, and the greater proportion of that time is due to delays directly attributable to the irresponsibility of the present Government in releasing materials from controls.

A word or two with regard to houses being built on a speculation basis, or, as the Minister prefers to describe them, ready-made houses! I do not know whether the Minister can recall the experience we had some years prior to the war when a great number of these spec. houses were constructed in the Nedlands area. If he had any intimate knowledge of them at the time, of the poor workmanship displayed and particularly of the type of materials used in those buildings, I feel sure he would not be such an ardent advocate of spec. houses, of which we have heard so much during the last few weeks. The position in those days was that there was no proper check, supervision or inspection of those buildings. The poor, unsuspecting client came along to make up his mind with regard to a particular house after the plaster or lining had been applied. Because of that, he failed to appreciate the second-hand materials used or the soft bricks put into the building and which were practically at the stage of disintegrating and crumbling away. It was only twelve months or so later, after the purchase had been effected—it was then too late for the home seeker to decide upon a change of plan—that he was confronted with the realisation that he had been sold a pup. I can only surmise that it is on account of influence that the Minister seems to be favourably disposed to that particular type of building operation.

I would like the Minister, when he is replying, to make some particular reference to an utterance of the Premier as reported

in "The West Australian" of the 23rd February last. I ask for that because of the information given to the House that the number of outstanding applications is constantly on the upgrade. I have checked "The West Australian" report with that appearing in "The Kalgoorlie Miner," because it was in the Kalgoorlie Town Hall that the Premier's statement was made in support of the candidate for the Hannans seat who was standing in the interests of the Liberal Party, by which name that organisation was then known. The Premier is reported to have said—

Sufficient houses were now being constructed to meet current annual requirements and arrears which had accumulated during the war were being reduced.

The statement there, without any qualification, is that the Government is coping with current applications and picking up arrears that were built up over the war period; yet from the figures I gave earlier in my remarks, the Government inherited a position where there were 10,000 outstanding applications whereas today there are approximately 20,000. Possibly one section of the Government does not know what the other section is saying. That, to my mind, is the only explanation that can be made of this state of affairs. Members will recall that during last session the penalties to be imposed for breaches of building regulations promulgated under this Act, the extension of which we are discussing, were substantially increased. The maximum fine that could be imposed was raised from £100 to £200 and provision was made that, in addition to any fine imposed, a sentence of imprisonment of up to six months could be inflicted. The magistrate could also order the forfeiture of any money or goods accruing to the convicted person and involved in the commission of the offence.

It occurs to me that instead of merely extending the application of this Act, some action is required to alter several of its sections because, so far as my knowledge goes, not in one single instance has an order been issued for the confiscation of any material. As has been pointed out on many occasions, because of the paltriness of the fines in the great majority of cases, most persons are not in the least perturbed at the prospect of being fined for breaching the provisions of the Act. That is so because they realise that if they delayed the

work for several years until they could receive their permits, the additional cost to them would probably be more than any fine imposed upon them. Furthermore, they would secure their houses, or additions several years earlier than would otherwise be the position. However, it is impossible to do anything in that regard at present because of the manner in which the legislation is placed before the House.

There are other observations I desire to make with regard to positive measures that come well within the ambit of the Bill with the object of doing something more than is being attempted at present, in order that we may attempt to overcome the tragedy that confronts many thousands of people. There are couples who were married nearly ten years ago but are still without homes. They are living in single rooms. In many cases they are with in-laws or with other people who are disagreeable to them. They view the situation as it applies to them as one from which there is no prospect of ever securing relief within a measurable period. There are many such people and the whole of their lives will be disjointed and unhappy because they are unable to procure decent accommodation for themselves. I have been informed by an officer of the Housing Commission that the number of applications in hand at present is sufficient, without any more being received, to absorb all building materials that will be available during the next eight years. This does not take into account such buildings as road board halls or offices, a new town hall for Perth, schools, hospitals and so forth.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Where are you going to put the new town hall?

Mr. GRAHAM: Members have only to reflect on my figures which are based on Government statistics, that there are 20,000 applications outstanding at present and, making provision for emergencies, that is not much wide of the mark. Therefore the Government cannot feel very proud of the situation. We should have some regard for the personal and domestic tragedies being enacted from one end of the State to the other. This is a national problem, not something to be dealt with by a Minister in a manner that an ordinary department is dealt with, but something of the greatest possible magnitude and urgency.

I suggest that one of the first priorities is to introduce legislation to override local government Acts. Ten or a dozen Bumbles get elected to a particular body. Because they are representative very largely of bricks and mortar, they are not concerned with such things as human feelings. They live in the past and in many instances are incapable of absorbing new ideas.

Mr. Yates: Who are they?

Mr. GRAHAM: I have read of objections by municipal councils and road boards to the construction of duplex houses in some areas, of expansible houses in other areas, of the lowering of the standard height for ceilings, protests against the erection of wooden houses or refusals to allow wooden homes to be constructed in certain localities because it was considered that brick houses only should be erected there. There are probably many other ways in which these local authorities are interfering with the free flow of building construction, and I say the position has become so acute that we cannot allow these people to interfere with the lives and happiness of so many thousands of our citizens, as is happening today.

I venture to suggest that, if many of the young couples had accommodation, there would be a considerable increase in the birth rate and possibly less need for large numbers of people to be brought to the country under migration schemes. Couples cannot have children when they are restricted to living in one room or with other families. If they wanted to have a family, the chances are that they would have to wait for years before there was a prospect of getting a permit or a home because, under present conditions, so much material is going into channels not warranted in the circumstances.

From time to time I have read in overseas journals—this applies particularly to Europe—that huge blocks of workmen's flats are being constructed capable of accommodating perhaps hundreds of families. Some of them are built in circular fashion having playing fields in the centre for the children and all sorts of amenities for the residents. The situation here is so desperate and so many years must elapse before we shall be able to satisfy the reasonable requirements of our people that something along these lines should be undertaken. I am aware that the cry will be that those are

merely tenement houses and will become the slums of the future. In reply, I would point to Mount-street where, I understand, the Minister for Housing resides. Just off Mount-street, in Bellevue-terrace, are many homes of two or three storeys divided into flats, and people are living there quite comfortably. Surely something more along those lines should be undertaken, because I am convinced that dwellings built in block fashion effect a great saving of labour and material!

The prospect is so bleak for thousands of people and for so many years to come that something along these lines should be undertaken. As a ban has been imposed on certain types of building, work of this nature cannot be indefinitely delayed. On economic and other grounds, we cannot too long tolerate the present position where Government departments, instead of being housed in one set of buildings, are distributed in probably 50 places in different parts of the city.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And very poorly housed.

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes, in the great majority of cases, the accommodation is very poor. That sort of thing cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely. While we are dealing with the housing problem as we are at present, we cannot contemplate with equanimity the prospect of so many people, perhaps for the next 20, 30 or 40 years, spending their lives without being supplied with the ordinary amenities, comforts and requirements of life. The Government, instead of releasing controls on material and thereby allowing so much that is essential on the ground of humanity, if nothing else, to be dissipated on all sorts of unessential work, should be prepared to forget for the moment the interests it is all too ready to serve, admit having made a mistake and reimpose the controls that have been lifted, so that not one brick, one piece of timber or one tile shall be used for other than essential work, great emphasis being placed upon the unfortunate circumstances of so many of our kith and kin.

I support the second reading because the continuance of the Act will mean the continuance of power to impose control. My only regret is that the Government, because politically its action looks nice though from the point of view of the public it is tragic, has removed control from so many of the

materials that are in short supply, regardless of the consequences of so doing. It is not my place to counsel the Government, in respect of what might occur inside the next 12 months when all of us must face our masters, but I feel that the Government, when it goes before the electors, will have a great deal to answer for. If it does not between now and then retrace its steps and provide homes for people, instead of allowing stables, sheds and fancy brick fences for ornamental gardens to be constructed, as they are at the present moment in every suburb, it will not be living up to its responsibilities. I only wish that, instead of voting for a continuance of the power to exercise controls, we could, by our vote on this measure, compel the Government to do the fair, the proper and equitable thing by the deserving and suffering people of this State.

MR. HEGNEY (Pilbara) [9.21]: I am rather surprised that the rank and file members of the Liberal and Country League have not expressed some opinions on this Bill. I am not so surprised that the Country and Democratic League members have not done so, although I understand that one of them will have the courage to say something. When all is said and done, however, it will not matter, as they are only waiting to be liquidated next month. It looks to me as though the rank and file of both the Liberal and Country League and of most of the members of the Country and Democratic League have been muzzled.

The Minister for Railways: Where did you get that from?

Mr. HEGNEY: I propose to deal with a few aspects of the Bill. In passing, I would say that we on this side of the House feel the gravest concern for the future of housing. I know that the Minister for Housing is imbued with the principle of relinquishing all controls, with the idea of showing a brave face to the public.

The Minister for Housing: No, he is not! I wish he were!

Mr. HEGNEY: It looks to me as if his potential successor, the present Attorney General, is one who, if he had his way, would relinquish all controls and give free and full play to private enterprise in all circumstances. We must view the position

with the gravest concern; and, unless there is a change of Government in the near future, the outlook for those requiring homes will be poor indeed. We all deplore the circumstances which necessitated the introduction of the parent Act. It is not my intention to traverse the ground so ably covered by the Leader of the Opposition when he resumed the debate on the Bill this evening; suffice it to say there was every necessity and every justification some four or four and a half years ago for the introduction of the parent Act. We then all hoped that the necessity for controls of this nature would disappear as time went on; but some two or three years ago we knew, as I think everyone, no matter what his political belief, knew, that it would take some few years before we could reach a normal position.

Prior to the last election, as I understand from advertisements that I read and from statements and speeches made by the leaders and members on the now Government side of the House, they endeavoured to convince—and apparently succeeded in convincing—a majority of the people of the State that the housing problem, as well as a multiplicity of other problems, would be solved overnight if the Labour Administration ceased to function. But what has happened? The position is just as acute, unfortunately, as it was then. If anything, it has become accentuated during the past two and a half years; and as far as we can see, it will be necessary, unfortunately again, for these controls to be continued for a certain time. I have no hesitation in saying that the Government, and the people whom it represents, will at the first possible opportunity relinquish all controls. This would result in the great mass of the people who are seeking homes still continuing to suffer. The trend is in the direction of officially relinquishing controls, but unofficially continuing them for the time being. That has been done, as the Minister has indicated, in connection with a number of building materials.

I do not propose to quote a lot of figures dealing with the position regarding materials, as that has been done by previous speakers. From information I have acquired, however, I find that there is a lag of at least three months in the delivery of

asbestos sheeting. The outstanding orders amount to about 196,000 yards. As regards bricks, while not desiring to repeat the remarks of previous speakers, I find that a period of up to eight months must elapse before orders can be met. Bricks have been decontrolled; yet, notwithstanding this decontrol, people have acquired supplies of bricks to which they are actually not entitled in the circumstances. Cement also has been decontrolled, yet we find that the Government is obliged to import supplies from the United Kingdom which cost about twice as much as the local product. In May, 5,600 tons of cement, approximately, was produced, but it has had no appreciable effect in meeting the large number of outstanding orders.

The Leader of the Opposition very clearly indicated to the House the chaotic condition in which the Government finds itself with respect to supplies of cement. As to tiles, a period of up to three months elapses before orders can be filled. One of the factors militating against the expeditious roofing of houses is the shortage of labour. Tile fixing is essentially a young man's job and unless an attractive wage is paid—unless some inducement is held out over and above the ordinary rate of pay—there will continue to be a shortage of this labour. The Government is not to blame for that position, however, and I only criticise where criticism is warranted. With respect to timber, a certain quantity is exported. The member for North-East Fremantle dealt with this position in a very able manner. We are aware of the acute position in regard to scantlings and flooring. I find also that stocks of water piping are very low and that it takes 10 to 12 months to deliver what are now known as No. 1 priority orders. These pipes are imported from the Eastern States. The Minister for Housing, by his remarks on the housing position, and by the publicity which he has given to it, has tried, intentionally or unintentionally, to convey to the people of the State that the problem has been completely solved. The Minister may smile innocently.

~ The Minister for Housing: I am very modest!

Mr. HEGNEY: His remarks are misleading, as unsophisticated people think the housing problem has been solved. The people who need houses, however, those

who are living with their relations or are living in rooms, cannot accept the Minister's statements. I asked a question a few days ago about the housing position. My first question was—

How many applicants were waiting on the 1st July, 1948, and the 1st June, 1949, respectively—

(a) to occupy Commonwealth-State rental homes?

The answer was—

(a) For Commonwealth-State rental homes, on the 30th June, 1948, 7,981; on the 31st May, 1949, 11,381.

That was an increase of 3,400 waiting to occupy on a rental basis Commonwealth-State rental homes built within the jurisdiction of the Housing Commission under the Commonwealth-State housing agreement, despite the fact that thousands of homes were built during the year under review. The second question was as to how many applicants were waiting for permits to build on the two respective dates, and the answers were—

(b) For permits on the 30th June, 1948, 2,351; on the 31st May, 1949, 4,218.

That was an increase of 2,067.

The Minister for Housing: There were a few more words in that answer.

Mr. HEGNEY: That shows that the housing position has not been solved. Answering a question regarding the number of applicants waiting for self-help permits, the Minister said that the self-help scheme was not operating in June, 1948, but that at the 31st May, 1949, there were 157. The position has arisen that, no matter what the extremity is, no matter what are the conditions under which certain people are living who apply for Commonwealth-State rental homes or permits to build, the State Housing Commission appears to take up a certain attitude. I am not criticising in any way the administration, as such, or the officers of the Commission. I believe, from the experience I have had, that each and every one of them is trying to do a good job, often under very great difficulties. But the point I am making is that the State Housing Commission, before it will allow persons, in many instances, to occupy a Commonwealth-State rental home, requires that the persons concerned must have had issued against them, by a magistrate, an

eviction order. That is the position. I think the Minister will not deny it, and it is not an isolated case.

The Minister for Housing: That applies only to a small section.

Mr. HEGNEY: It applies to a section, but these are not isolated cases. I am making this reference to endeavour to explain to the people that, despite the misleading propaganda of the Minister for Housing and his Government, the housing problem has not been solved. I come now to another phase of the position which needs a little clarification—not on my part but, I think, on the Minister's part. The member for Mt. Marshall asked a series of questions, and I would like to hear him on this Bill before the second or third reading stage is completed. I would like to have his views on the Bill and its ramifications. Recently, the member for Mt. Marshall asked these questions—

(1) Are sufficient supplies of all building materials available to meet the requirements of applicants for home-building permits for—

(a) private building;

(b) war service homes;

(c) Commonwealth-State homes?

The answers by the Minister for Housing were—

(1) Building materials are not in sufficient supply to provide houses for all applicants for homes. Permits to build are allocated on a basis which aims at a fair allocation between private building, war service homes and Commonwealth-State rental homes.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Are you aware that there are only seven members on the Government side of the House?

Mr. Marshall: They are very interested in housing!

Mr. HEGNEY: They do not know what they are missing. The Minister was also asked by the member for Mt. Marshall—

(2) Can he indicate from what source building materials will be made available to speculative builders without reducing supplies available to those requiring permits under the categories mentioned in No. 1?

The Minister for Housing then coined a new word. He replied—

(2) Ready-made houses are expected to supply homes to applicants becoming entitled to permits to build who prefer to buy a ready-made home instead of building under a permit.

(3) Ready-made homes will be taken in substitution for houses—

Mark those words very clearly—

—that would otherwise be built by recipients of permits to build.

I had occasion in another capacity to make a few what I thought were very reasonable comments. I made them in my capacity as Acting General Secretary of the A.L.P. I indicated, and I repeat, that if, under present conditions, speculative home-building was going to be allowed, it would be the beginning of the end of all controls of this industry and instead of people who most needed homes—people with families—being able to get into them early, the tendency would be for those with cash to get in in front of them. The Minister came back and indicated that he was going to liberalise home building and that that would tend to increase the number of homes available.

The Minister for Housing: Quite right!

Mr. HEGNEY: I will quote from the "Daily News". I did not catch the Minister's interjection, but as I go along I will deal with him. There could not have been much in it. On the 14th June there appeared in the "Daily News" the following—

Suggestions that speculative building would confer advantages on moneyed people to the detriment of hardship cases were denied by Housing Minister McDonald today.

He was replying to statements by Acting Secretary W. Hegney, M.L.A., of the State A.L.P., and Secretary T. Henley, of the Carpenters' Union. He said their remarks were based on a misapprehension.

"This latest move to liberalise building opportunities will, I believe, add to the output of houses and give a greater chance to those who want to acquire a house of their own," he said.

In his official reply to the member for Mt. Marshall, the Minister indicated that speculative building would be in direct substitution for the Commonwealth-State housing scheme; and, in his statement to the public he said that the scheme which he is permitting—that is, building homes under the speculative system—will mean an increase in the number of homes available to the people.

The Minister for Housing: Another misapprehension on your part!

Mr. HEGNEY: That is the statement of the Minister. He also said, according to "The West Australian" of the 15th June—

I do not think that Mr. Hegney's slur on registered builders and building tradesmen is justified. Since the passing of the Builders Registration Act, the public has been given protection against incompetent or unethical builders.

I made no slur on building tradesmen, but I know that responsible members of the building trades union are in accord with my views on the question of speculative building at present, in view of the extremity of thousands of people in this State. The Minister went on to say—

While retaining an overall control of housing to ensure that those most in need receive first consideration, the object of the commission is to liberalise building opportunity as conditions permit. A commencement with ready-made house construction will be a definite advantage to home seekers, particularly those of the wage-earning groups. The programmes of Commonwealth-State rental houses and war service homes will not be reduced.

Now, what does the Minister mean?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That would be interesting to know!

The Minister for Housing: It could not be clearer.

Mr. HEGNEY: Does it mean that pressure has been brought to bear on him by a certain section of the Builders' Congress or the Builders' Guild? Will the result be that more homes will be built than under the Commonwealth-State rental scheme, or that there will be fewer buildings under that scheme? The point is, I want the Minister to be honest about the business and tell the people the truth.

The Minister for Housing: I have told them perfectly clearly what the position is.

Mr. HEGNEY: Reference has been made in the Minister's replies regarding speculative building, to the fact that the prices will be controlled. Let us assume a person has a block of land and desires to build to his own specifications, and that he is high on the priority list with a permit: What will be the position if homes are built on spec. and this person with the high priority is told that he will have to negotiate with the spec. builder or be put down on the list?

The Minister for Housing: He has an option.

Mr. HEGNEY: It is all right brushing it aside like that but, in fairness to members on this side of the House at least, I think the Minister should give the details of this

proposed wonderful scheme of his. Then again we have the position that people will not be able to finance their homes under the Commonwealth-State housing agreement. If more homes are going to be built on spec. by private builders, it will mean fewer Commonwealth-State homes being built, and hardship cases will have to wait longer for houses.

The Minister for Housing: You are all wrong.

Mr. HEGNEY: Reference has been made to the fact that the prices of these homes will be subject to the Land Sales Control Act. That is all right, and it may be so, but we have every reason to believe that black marketing is going on today in connection with the sale of houses. I think the Minister for Lands will agree with me when I say that he will take the earliest possible opportunity of removing all controls. Control has been removed from the sale of vacant land. If he gets the opportunity, he will remove the control on the sale of lands with houses erected on them. I have here an extract from "The West Australian" of the 20th June last. It shows the trend of the Government's policy as far as its housing scheme is concerned. This article is by a special correspondent of "The West Australian", and is as follows:—

The National Security Regulations were, for a time, a protective measure to purchasers of real estate, but they have collapsed almost completely and are now actually giving impetus to the very forces they were designed to retard and stabilise.

Restrictions remain on the prices at which homes, flats, farms and orchards can be sold, but the Land Controller's approval to such sales has become a mere "filling up a form" formality. Almost every issue of our daily newspapers contains such "keenly priced pieces of domestic shelter" as brick villas of five rooms for £4,000 and £5,000; weatherboards for £2,000 and £3,000, generally with some furniture and immediate possession. The price quoted is not proof positive that a sale will result at that figure, but many of these "bargains" and "sacrifices" have been sold. Last week five were withdrawn, as sold, in one advertisement.

Some owners do not hesitate to say what their black market prices are, and in recent times plausible individuals have mushroomed into the real estate business, finding it very profitable in dividing the black market difference between the approved price and the actual price paid.

Desirable newcomers with no knowledge of local values, finding their money diminishing in extortionate charges for board and residence, or bed and morning tray, grasp the opportunity of securing a "distinctive" home or a "thriving" business, presented so often in glowing terms by some agencies in and around Perth. Many do not know the regulations, sign various forms and blank receipts; check over the takings, banked up for the time; pay over the purchase money, and find, too late, that they have been deliberately taken down.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Who is the authority?

Mr. HEGNEY: A special correspondent of "The West Australian." I read that extract because I believe there is every opportunity for exploitation at the present time owing to the Minister's introduction of the speculative home building plan. I believe that as a result of the decision he has made, because there are so many people without financial capacity requiring homes, it will only be the means of making them wait a much longer time for their homes than otherwise.

The Minister for Housing: I am very happy about this.

Mr. HEGNEY: It does not matter how the Minister—and I give him full marks for his astuteness and ability—twists the remarks I have made, he must either indicate to the House that his latest scheme is a substitution or part-substitution of the existing scheme, or that it is going to mean many more homes built in quicker time for the people of Western Australia who require them. If circumstances arose tomorrow so that the Government changed places with us and took up its position on this side of the House, I personally would be under no illusion as to the gravity of the housing situation, or the difficulties which would confront any Government in connection with the housing of the people of Western Australia.

I think the more honest—and I use the word in the political sense all the time—Ministers are with the people of Western Australia, the more it will be appreciated; and the less devious, dubious and subtle the propaganda which emanates from the Government sources, the better it will be not only for the Government but the people of the State as a whole. It is only a few years ago, when the people of the Commonwealth

throughout the length and breadth of Australia, would subject themselves to any form of control in time of emergency; and unfortunately part of the emergency still exists. We on this side of the House do not desire to retain controls over building materials, or any other materials, if they can be avoided. But where the welfare of the people demands that the Government of the day should see to the orderly production and distribution of essential commodities, then I say without equivocation whatsoever, it should take the responsibility and do the decent thing by the people by being honest with them.

I have noticed for a long while that the form of propaganda that has emanated from the Government Publicity Officer, or from members of the Government, contains an element of truth, but not all the truth. The more of the truth that is told to the people, the better will they understand the difficulties of the Government. The Minister referred to the manufacture of bricks and said that the Government was instrumental in financing or assisting to finance six brick manufacturing firms in the last year or two. I would like him to tell the House how much finance has been made available to those firms, who they are and what were the conditions of the advances made to them; because we have heard a great deal from the Government and its spokesmen from time to time about free enterprise and private enterprise and we would like to know whether this instalment of socialism, with regard to the production of bricks, is part of the Government's policy or only a passing phase. I am under no illusion—in view of the current demand, coupled with the lag in housing—about the long time it will be before we are able to lift controls and say truthfully that we have reverted to the pre-war state of house building. When that position has been attained, the objection of members on this side of the House, to proposals such as the Minister has outlined with regard to the spec. building programme, will have less force behind them.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Geraldton) [9.52]: There is a well known cry to which I think members on both sides of the House will subscribe; "Women and children first." It is a matter of wonder to me what influences the Housing Commission in the granting of permits to build homes. It is

only a few weeks since we read in "The West Australian" an article, and saw in that paper a photograph, with reference to the building of a two-storied house at Mt. Lawley. From memory the remarks about the building of that house were to this effect:—

In response to the many complaints which have been received in connection with the permit to build this home, we have obtained a statement from the Housing Commission.

The article then went on to say that this house was being built for a doctor who had married a lady dentist, and that the house would not only provide living accommodation for the doctor and his wife but also a consulting room for each of them. Not satisfied with that, they were building a garage, which I believe exceeded the permit.

Mr. Styants: A garage for two cars.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I come now to Parliament House. Again we read in "The West Australian"—we know it is true—that considerable alterations have been effected at Parliament House; to wit, the dining room. We know the staff have been labouring under severe disabilities for a period of years and that now those disabilities have been done away with and both members and staff can be ever so much better catered for in the dining room. Those of us that frequent Parliament House during the recess know the number of men employed on the job and the time that it took to put the dining room into its present nice condition. After listening this evening to the impassioned address of a member of the House Committee, I wonder how he squares his statements with the application that that committee must have sent to the Housing Commission. I suppose a permit was necessary for the work that has been done at Parliament House, and I am not finding fault with the House Committee or anyone else. Rather am I criticising the Housing Commission for granting permits other than for women and children, whose needs are greatest.

Cases in my electorate are perhaps not as many or of as great hardship as those in the metropolitan area—especially those in the poorer parts of the city—but on Friday last I inspected, in my home town, a humble dwelling that is housing eleven persons. There are the father, the mother, an adult daughter who suffers from asthma, two sons who are returned

soldiers, their two wives and four young children, making eleven in all in that house. One of those returned soldiers has had an application for a permit in for a long time. The officer whose duty it is to inspect the housing conditions of applicants has been to that home but that young man is still waiting for his permit and, as far as I can discover, is likely to wait still for a considerable time. We should now be told how these decisions are arrived at. The commission was set up by the previous administration; a part-time job against which I raised my voice both before and since I came to this Chamber.

How are its decisions arrived at? We have heard a great deal about those with the most dire need, but we have eyes with which to see and ears with which to hear and we know that that policy is not always put into effect. It is time we made it our business to see that the extreme cases of hardship are dealt with. While listening to the member for East Perth I wondered whether it would not be a good gesture on the part of the Government to invite him and some young Liberal member from the Government side of the House to take seats on the Housing Commission. If they could not help to improve matters I would be gravely disappointed. I cannot understand the granting of permits such as I have referred to and such as are continually being granted. It is time we were given a satisfactory explanation of where the commission's duties, powers and responsibilities begin and end and the part, if any, the Government is taking in seeing that cases of extreme hardship are dealt with as they should be.

I am completely in accord with the remarks passed about the cement position this evening. Members who represent country electorates cannot be expected to keep quiet while this sort of thing is going on, and the sooner the problem is faced the better. It is an affront to us to see miles of kerbing being constructed when that work could have waited for years to come and we know that in the country essential works are being held up. I hate to deal with individual instances but I will refer to a man in Geraldton who has started in business on his own. He applied to these people down here—I do not want to use any harsh terms—for a

quota of cement, but he was just wiped off. He was told that he was not one of those who should get cement.

Mr. Fox: He should have bought a machine.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I am not in favour of handing over the control of essential goods and services to any number of private persons who happen to be engaged in a particular trade or calling.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Reynolds: You have gone up in my estimation.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I do not care about the hon. member's estimation and he knows that I am here to say what I think just as he does. Politics should not enter into a matter of this kind. When we have such misery, wretchedness and unhappiness caused to our young married people, I will not hesitate to say what I think. I will not say "demand" but I think we should impress, by every means in our power, upon the Government the necessity of doing something in the matter. It has gone on far too long. There were certain statements made in this House during the previous session which the Government could not afford to ignore and as a result a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the matter. One of the principal recommendations of that Commission was that a full-time chairman should be appointed.

Mr. Needham: He has been appointed.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I thank the member for East Perth for that interjection—

Mr. Graham: It was the member for Perth.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: —but I read in "The West Australian"—although it may not be correct—that Mr. Brownlie left this city only yesterday, or the day before, to carry out his duties as a commissioner of the Rural and Industries Bank.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is correct.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: So he has not yet taken up his duties. The previous chairman of the Housing Commission, Mr. Reid, has filled the part-time job that long ago required the full-time services of the best man we could get. I wish to make it quite clear that I am not disparaging in any way at all the work of Mr. Reid, the

Under-Treasurer, but I say that it is possible to over-work and over-load any man, irrespective of his abilities or qualifications. The job of chairman of the State Housing Commission closely affects the welfare and happiness of our married people and their children as well as the older people with whom they are living, and this job requires the full-time qualifications and activities of the best man possible. The Government, on the recommendation of the Royal Commissioner, has appointed a person to fill that position and the sooner he takes over his duties, the better it will be. The Government has made the announcement and I urge it to take action and to release this man from his present position and instal him in his new one as soon as possible.

Another recommendation of the Royal Commission, which I think should be effected, concerns Mr. Brine. This gentleman is one of the building contractors in the city and he occupies a position on the State Housing Commission. This state of affairs should never have been permitted to arise. I make no inferences at all against the man or his integrity, but I say it is wrong to have a man on a Commission and yet have him tendering for work to that Commission. If he does not tender, then his firm does. I would never permit the placing of a man in that position and I certainly would not like to be in such a position myself. It is an important recommendation for the Government to face up to, and the sooner it does the better, for it will tend to create confidence which is so necessary to the people of this country.

I understand that we cannot alter this Bill in any way but surely the Government, and especially the Minister for Housing, can see what is occurring. He needs only to read the daily paper to see that a person merely has to collect a few sticks of furniture, put it in a two, three, four, five or six roomed house and ask any price he likes. Does the Government intend to allow this racketeering to continue?

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: Yes, it does.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The member for Kimberley apparently knows the intentions of the Government, but I do not. However, I ask the Government to do something about it, because it is scandalous the way people are carrying on, flouting the law and being allowed to get away with it. I ask the

Minister calmly and reasonably to review the cement position and tell us when replying that he has decided to do something about the matter, especially after listening to the various speakers who have spoken on the measure.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: We hope so.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [10.5]: I cannot permit this measure to pass without making one or two observations, although I intend to support the second reading. We all agree that this is probably one of the most important matters in the economic and social life of the people of this State. The housing of families is paramount to the life of all individuals and this Government must feel somewhat embarrassed because of the advocacy and propaganda which it used prior to the last elections.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: This Government has no feelings.

Mr. MARSHALL: I also feel as though its propaganda agent will be in a particularly bad way when it comes to presenting the picture to the people at the forthcoming elections.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That fellow is a most ingenious cuss.

Mr. MARSHALL: I wonder where he will put the cobwebs over the homes being built by the Liberal Party.

The Minister for Housing: There won't be any over this Government's homes.

Mr. MARSHALL: He is paid huge sums to misrepresent the picture, but will he be honest enough to remove the cobwebs from these homes and give a fair explanation of the situation as it stands when we do go to the people on the next occasion? There is one factor about which I am particularly proud and that is that as a ministerial party we told the people the truth—the honest truth—about the position. As a Minister of that particular Government I took every opportunity to take the people into my confidence and tell them the actual truth as it prevailed at that time.

The Minister for Housing: That has been done.

Mr. MARSHALL: I sat there and took it from those who had misrepresented the picture to the people, and now they will take it from me.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Hear, hear!

Mr. MARSHALL: On every occasion when I rose, as a Minister, to speak on those portfolios which were entrusted to my care, I was honest, explicit and truthful, and I painted the picture as it was and gave those then on this side of the House an honest opinion as to the prevailing circumstances. But those members that now sit on the ministerial bench, when on this side of the House, took the opportunity to cash in on a deplorable situation which was left to us because of war circumstances which had prevailed for years before. Their appetite for criticism on unfair premises was unappeasing. Nothing would satisfy them. The war ceased two weeks after we took office and they expected the Government of that day to wave the magic wand and bring homes into existence within 24 hours, although the whole of our capable manhood and womanhood were serving in the Forces at that time.

As pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, who spoke on this measure a few hours ago, the services of those individuals, which were so badly needed, were not obtained until we went to the people and a change of Government took place. It was then that they were being speedily repatriated from active war service and it was not until this Government took over that that happened. So what is the picture today? If the Minister of today, who sat on the Opposition benches at that time, expected the Government of that day to do more than it did, what damning condemnation must now fall upon the members of his Government! They have the services of those who were in the Forces during the previous Government's occupation of the ministerial bench. Not only have they had the advantage of that key and skilled labour, as well as unskilled labour, but they have had the advantage of the importation of foreign labour.

In the paper the other day I noticed figures relating to the number of immigrants who have been employed in the timber mills. The previous Government did not have the services of those migrants. So now I say to the Minister and his colleagues, particularly the Attorney General, what a ghastly picture they present to the public, with the applications rapidly overtaking and more than overtaking the number of homes provided, notwithstanding all the services that have been made available to

the present Government. It appears to me that the Government is not as interested in providing homes for the people as it is in providing opportunities for vested interests to exploit the situation. What is the position? Evidently, the St. George's-terrace guinea pigs that dive in one door and out the other are able to bring pressure to bear on this Government and thus persecute those unfortunate individuals who are in need of homes. Like the member for Pilbara, I notice that these self-help or spec. homes were to be a substitute for homes that would have been built by the State Housing Commission.

The Minister for Housing: No, you are quite wrong.

Mr. MARSHALL: Well, that is the statement the Minister made.

The Minister for Housing: It provides permits to build; not for State rental homes.

Mr. MARSHALL: I will go one further than the member for Pilbara and say that if that is the accurate situation, then again pressure has been brought on the Government by those in St. George's-terrace because spec. builders are those who will build homes of an inferior type and show huge profits by so doing. That is the mission behind the Minister's changed policy for permitting these homes to be built. I do not think the Government has done much else than consider whether it can bestow blessings upon those who are contributing very largely to its political expenses and propaganda during election time. When the opportunity presents itself I shall have something to say on one or two factors in relation to that matter.

What is the position of people so far removed from the city in regard to building materials? What is the position in regard to the North-West portion of the State so far as building materials are concerned, when people who are here right alongside the State Housing Commission and the Minister and sitting on the threshold of the administrative doors cannot secure these materials? What is the position which applies to the more remote parts of this State when the people in those areas have to write letters for those materials and can buy in small quantities only because of the circumstances under which they dwell? I know of squatters in my

electorate—I do not suppose there is any more valuable individual than the squatter at the moment because of the nature of his production—who cannot get cement nor galvanised iron. As everybody knows, the squatters of the remote areas, in order to maintain their tanks which supply water to their herds, cement those tanks to save the iron, but now the position is that they cannot get cement or galvanised iron because they are not large buyers and therefore they are not in the swim. They cannot exercise any influence. As decent honourable individuals they merely write a letter believing that they will be supplied with this particular material because it is decontrolled, or so the Minister says.

What virtue is there in decontrolling a commodity when by the very act of doing so one of the most urgent and most important industries of today is denied supplies of that commodity? Those concerned are denied material and timber for renovations and additions. After all, during the war years these people were unable to obtain either material or labour and it is difficult, I admit, to obtain labour now. Here is an industry which is producing a great deal of wealth in wool and mutton which are so urgently needed. The members of that industry have had no opportunity for years to make replacements so urgently needed, and because of ministerial action they are now unable to secure any materials whatsoever. With few exceptions, every time a letter is sent to the city from each and every one of them, they are told that unfortunately they will have to wait some months before they can be supplied with these all-important materials, cement and timber.

Then there are individuals such as the miners, whose homes have fallen into a state of disrepair and more particularly those which were vacated during the war period whilst the miners served in the Armed Forces. However, in spite of the state of their homes, and because they are small buyers and do not require much material, they are brushed aside. There is no opportunity for them to purchase any materials. I feel that the Government is merely deluding the people by publishing details with regard to the colossal number of permits that have been issued. Of what

value is a permit to an individual who cannot purchase the materials required for the work?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is just a pretence!

Mr. MARSHALL: A permit without any materials being available can be of no value to an individual. Permits should not be issued in excess of the materials necessary to give effect to applications. The Government seems determined to continue deceiving the people of Western Australia by such tactics. It cannot deceive the people merely by publishing elaborate figures about the number of permits that have been made available. There are too many individuals requiring the release of materials. That is why so many these days readily admit the mistake they made when they believed the propaganda that members of the Government indulged in during the last election. It will be remembered that the whole cry then was that all that was necessary was to get rid of the Labour Government and—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Give the Liberals a chance.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is so. The people were told that if they removed the Labour Government from office and put the Liberals in power, nothing more was necessary. All their troubles would then cease. On the contrary, we find that today there is more trouble than ever before, notwithstanding the advantageous position in which the present Government found itself when the new Ministers assumed office.

The Minister for Housing: The position is better today than ever before.

Mr. MARSHALL: Let the Minister make that statement through the Press and see what sort of an answer he will get. Of course, he may do that because he is retiring from politics before the next election. Now he tells us that the public are better off than ever before.

The Minister for Lands: So they are.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is the sort of thing the people are told these days.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: If Ministers continue repeating that assertion often enough, they will come to believe it.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is the attitude that members on the Government side of the House took up when they were sitting in Opposition—let the people throw out the Labour Government, put the Liberal

crowd in office, and then, like lightning, all their social and economic troubles would be removed. We will see all about that as the session progresses. I notice that the propaganda expert has awakened at last! I wonder what sort of a picture he will make now respecting the housing problem that is so important to the people. What hypocrisy and misrepresentation have been displayed on the part of the members opposite! In that respect, this individual played his part.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That individual is not mentioned in the Bill.

Mr. MARSHALL: No, Mr. Speaker, but the Government is responsible for all this misrepresentation, and it is the Government's policy to indulge in that. Ministers have been indulging in that far too long, and they are continuing the practice. That is what they are doing instead of facing up to the situation and letting the people know the facts. That is what they were told before the present Government took office, and that was the most honourable way to deal with the situation. Is it any wonder that the public spit in the face of politicians when they recollect promises given, such as those heard during the last election, that are never fulfilled, nor are they likely to be fulfilled for years to come? Every member of the Government knows that that is so.

The very figures used in connection with the presentation of this legislation afford convincing proof that for years to come these troubles will be with us. Every political expediency and hypocrisy were resorted to in order to delude the people. It is a shame that they should be so treated because they are trusting individuals and we should respect them. While the Government boasts of the decontrol of building materials and so on, it is a remarkable fact that during the last session of Parliament legislation to amend this particular Act was introduced to rope in secondhand materials, strange as it may seem.

The Minister for Housing: That was always there.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Bill contained that provision.

The Minister for Housing: That was always the position, but it was made clear.

Mr. MARSHALL: Secondhand materials are controlled today and the control exercised is very rigid. To the credit of the

Minister it can be said, although I had to make representations on several occasions before I could get redress, that some relief has been given in that direction. The then Minister for Housing, who was the Premier, gave me an assurance that when homes were demolished in the country districts and were removed for re-erection in other centres, there would be no interference by the State Housing Commission. To my amazement, however, it was only recently that I secured any redress in that respect. When some persons in the goldfield areas desired to remove their homes from one centre to another, there were delays of upwards of five or six weeks, and yet I was informed that there would be no delays in connection with such matters. Those people, however, found all sorts of questions and restrictions confronting them when they sought, for instance, to shift their homes from Wiluna to Big Bell, to Kalgoorlie, or to some other centre. They were called upon to supply the State Housing Commission with answers to a list of questions. They had to state the valuation of their homes; the valuation of the materials involved; the cost of demolishing the premises and the cost of freight, as well as the cost of re-erecting the homes and other questions as well. Nothing could be more stupid or absurd.

As I sum up the situation, there are in the State Housing Commission too many office boys and not sufficient administrators. There are too few who know the State well and understand the varying situations that arise from time to time. What miner would know the value of his home, as required by the State Housing Commission? How would any such man know the value of the work entailed in pulling it down? Mostly they do the work themselves. How would they know what it would cost to erect the home? They would know what the freight would cost, because they would have to pay it. What would such men know about the values of the new materials they required? They are not expert businessmen. One would think that a miner was an expert business man and that his sole job was to ascertain the cost of a sheet of asbestos or a sheet of galvanised iron. These officials are all right for dealing with the demolition of homes in the city where the work is done by contractors or tradesmen who quote a price for it, but to apply those

conditions to people situated in remote parts of the State is stupid in the extreme. The Minister has taken some action to ease the difficulties in that direction and for this I give him credit.

I support the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle. I have long held the opinion he expressed and I pardon him for stealing some of my thunder. I am quite in accord with his conviction about the export of materials required in this State. In the years to come, I should not be surprised if the people of those times look back to this age and regard us as the most stupid of all. Imagine sending away valuable materials so urgently required for home construction at a time when applications for homes are speedily outstripping the number being constructed. If a man were found giving away food and leaving his family in want, he would be considered a fit subject for the asylum at Claremont. We consider ourselves to be wise men and yet we are doing practically the same thing.

Reference has been made to the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth in this matter. The Commonwealth has no jurisdiction whatever over the forests of this State. If it is not constitutional for us to prevent the export of timber, we should take a leaf out of the book of the Commonwealth and just do it. When the Commonwealth has not the power to take certain action, it does not ask the permission of the States; it just does as it thinks fit. We could try the same line of action, temporarily anyhow, particularly when the circumstances are so strongly in our favour. I did not hear the Minister give any explanation of this matter.

As the member for North-East Fremantle pointed out, we can account for 30 per cent. of the timber produced, but 70 per cent. is going somewhere. The hon. member justified the vanishing of what I suggest would be a very small percentage, that is, timber used for conditioning ships for the transport of bulk wheat. That, however, would not account for 70 per cent. of our production, so there must be a big leakage somewhere. Either the figures of the Forests Department are incorrect or the timber is being got away somehow, and it is the obligation of the Minister to ascertain how. Where could 70 per cent. of the total vanish? The mines of this State would absorb a very small percentage. If the huge quantity unaccounted for is not going into channels

where it is urgently required—channels comparable in importance with house building—a halt should be called immediately. The figures quoted by the hon. member astounded me. I could not credit that 70 per cent. of the timber could be unaccounted for. This should be one of the first matters to receive the attention of the Minister.

I recall the propaganda preceding the last elections to the effect, "Prices rise with Wise." I wonder how the Government will explain to the electors about prices rising with Macs. Prices have certainly risen more speedily with the Macs, and I wonder how they will satisfy the people on that point. They will have to account for the rapid increase in building costs. I am positive that most of the excessive increase in the cost of homes arises from the frequent overlapping of tradesmen due to the lack of materials. Tradesmen are being paid high wages. A contractor might be building homes in various suburbs. Some of his men might be employed on one building for a time, then sent to another and again to yet another, and doubtless some of the time these men are sitting down waiting for material to arrive. All of that expense must be a charge added to the cost of homes. This is due to the fact that the available material is not being controlled and directed into the proper channels. Timber that should be used for homes and should be available in sufficient quantities is being directed into other avenues.

It is of no use the Minister's trying to explain that away; he is directly responsible for it, because he held the previous Government responsible for every fault which he could find. When he took office, however, he found the State Housing Commission in operation; the previous Government had had to create it. It arranged a programme for administrative purposes which the present Minister found waiting for him; he had merely to carry it on. The only changes in the programme he made were fatal, especially the decontrol of building materials. Any member who has studied politics knows what happened. Pressure was brought to bear upon the Government. I think the Leader of the Opposition believed that the Attorney General would have some effective influence over the Minister for Housing. That may be so. The Attorney General is strongly opposed to rationing

and controls and, while he was in Opposition what he then said may have influenced the Minister.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Whom do you blame?

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not know. One member of the Ministry, the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping, is definitely and viciously opposed to controls. She has said so in no uncertain way. I wonder whether the Minister, who is a bachelor, was influenced by her. I feel that he would be more influenced by her than by the Attorney General. If one wished to do so, one could quote "Hansard" to show how bitterly opposed these two particular members of the Ministry are to controls.

The Attorney General: You could also quote the Leader of the Opposition, if you like. His statement in "Hansard" is exactly the same.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am not speaking for the Leader of the Opposition. I think the Attorney General will find that he is well able to explain himself. There is no doubt about the attitude which the Attorney General took up. There is no doubt also about the deplorable position in which his advocacy landed the Government. When he was on the Opposition side, the young people of Western Australia were given practically a guarantee that, if they married, and there was a change in the Government, they would be assured of a home. The then Leader of the Opposition, now Minister for Education, said there was nothing in the way of providing homes for two-unit families; all that it was necessary to do was to change the Government. Well, it was changed over two years ago and the position is now worse.

The Minister for Housing: They now get more homes in a month than they previously had in a year.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister has his own convictions on that score; but the married couples have a different opinion altogether. Houses cannot now be found for eleven-unit and eight-unit families and consequently two-unit families will not get much consideration. The Government has been in office for over two years and I think that by now the change has been well recognised by the public. This Ministry will go down in history as the most hopeless that ever occupied the ministerial bench. I

have seen three anti-Labour Ministries, but my opinion, and I state it frankly, is that the present Government is the weakest Government that has ever occupied the ministerial bench since I have been a member of the Chamber. Its members have not the courage to face up to the situation; when pressure was brought to bear on them by those who paid to put them in office—as they accused Labour of doing, so I am justified in accusing them—they yielded to that pressure and in consequence the people of Western Australia are suffering most acutely.

It is deplorable to think that the circumstances prevailing in regard to providing homes for our people are being used for political expediency. There is one thing the present Government cannot accuse the Labour Party of, namely, hypocritically misrepresenting the position to the people on the public platform prior to the elections. Each Labour Minister in turn rose in this Chamber and explained the situation as directly and as honestly as it was humanly possible to do, but I cannot say the same of the members of the present Government. They misrepresented the situation and are trying to do so now. I tell the Minister for Housing, whom I respect and hold in high esteem, that he cannot deceive the public of Western Australia by misrepresenting the true position. He might just as well frankly face up to it, be honest with the people and tell them candidly that the promises made by Government members at the last election are impossible of fulfilment. He might even go so far as to apologise for the misrepresentations which they then made.

On motion by Mr. Leslie, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.47 p.m.