

completely changed. The same newsagent will sell 200 to 250 regular orders, while his casual sales amount only to some 20 or 30 papers. The light, bubbling element of the community has now gone. On a Friday afternoon it is difficult to find a parking area for cars, particularly in Burt and Hannan-sts. in Kalgoorlie, and Spicer-st. in Southern Cross. The position is the same on Saturday also.

The Minister for Railways: That is prosperity.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes, a good solid prosperity; and let us hope it keeps that way. In a mining town, one never knows whether prosperity will fade overnight. I would mention one function which took place and was organised by a well-known body. It took the form of a community fair and was something similar to the Royal Show. The population on the Goldfields today is 26,000 or 27,000; yet the attendance at that function during the 24 hours it was open was 22,000 or 23,000. I believe something in the nature of £30,000 changed hands on the grounds that day. In addition, the whole of side-show alley was leased to travelling side-shows and there is no knowledge of the amount of money taken by those people.

That is an indication of what the district at the present time is prepared to support. The funds from that function were given entirely to charity. A similar function is going to be held again, and I think it will become an annual event. There was a time when it would have been a disaster to hold a function of that nature; but the people today regard it in the same way as they regard agricultural shows. They want to see what is going on in their district.

I do not want to continue for any great length as I will only be repeating what has been said by other members of this Chamber. However, I would like to say to the Minister that anything I have said about mining has been purely with the idea of bringing before him and his Cabinet the needs of my district in particular. It may be said that I should have spoken on matters affecting the whole State, but I do not agree.

The district I represent is a huge one and needs plenty of representation. I do not apologise for anything I have said or asked the Minister to give consideration to. We will keep on pressing our needs, and I sincerely ask members of this Chamber and the Minister, if they have not been to the area, to pay a visit to the Esperance Downs. I extend a warm invitation to them to attend the Esperance field day to see what has been accomplished in the new shelf in the larder of the West.

On motion by Hon. J. D. Teahan, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 22nd August, 1956.

CONTENTS.

Questions :	Dairying Industry, (a) butterfat prices	Page
	(b) export of butter	298
	(c) consumption of butter	298
	(d) number engaged in butterfat production	298
	Rural & Industries Bank, (a) assistance to farmers	298
	(b) loan fund advances and assistance to farmers	299
	Gas, b.t.u. values	299
	Timber, stimulating export trade	299
	Betting, tabling of papers, Applecross shop	299
	Public Service, establishment of board	300
	Wheat, rail freights	300
	Health, (a) charges of and service given by medical practitioners	300
	(b) implementation of Stoller report	300
	Transport, (a) vehicles registered, police cars and cycles, accidents, etc.	300
	(b) vehicle registration notices	301
	(c) increases in tram, bus and ferry fares	301
	(d) effect of increased fares on cost of living	301
	(e) percentage increase for Section 2 Roads, South-West Highway	301
	Police, position of Constable Hardy	302
	Education, (a) output of teachers from teachers' training colleges	302
	(b) accommodation for teachers, Kalgoorlie	302
	(c) payment of cleaners and teachers	303
	Railways, (a) depth of water, Fremantle Railway Bridge	303
	(b) use of accounting machines and anticipated savings	303
	Air services, North-West and representations by member for Gascoyne	303
	Water supplies, experiments in use of cetyl alcohol	303
	Lands, survey and classification of "Berry Brow"	304
	Government works, deferred payments Australian engineers, recognition by Singapore City Council	304
	Unemployment relief, tabling of papers regarding proposed Federal loan	304
	Housing, (a) reduced cost of commission homes	304
	(b) reduced building costs and increased rentals	304
	Naval base, Western Australia's claim	305
	Leave of absence	305
	Address-in-reply, eighth day	307
	Speakers on Address—	
	Mr. Sewell	307
	Mr. Bovell	309
	Mr. Owen	313
	Bill : Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provision Act Continuance, Standing Orders	
	suspension, Message, 1r., 2r.	305
	2r., remaining stages	321
	Adjournment	335

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

QUESTIONS.

DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

(a) Butterfat Prices.

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

(1) How does the interim price for butterfat for the year now current compare with interim prices declared for the two previous years?

(2) What was the final price received for the year before last?

(3) What is expected to be the final price for last year, and can he give any idea of when any extra amount is likely to be paid to dairy farmers?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The comparison is as follows:—

		Butterfat.			
		In Cream.		In Cheese	
				Milk.	
		s.	d.	s.	d.
1956-57	....	3	11½	4	3½
1955-56	....	4	1	4	1
1954-55	....	4	6½	4	9½
(2) 1954-55	....	4	6½	4	8
(3) 1955-56	....	4	4½	4	8½

It is expected that 1½d. per lb. butterfat in cream and 3d. per lb. in cheese milk will be paid with September cheques.

(b) Export of Butter.

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

(1) Can he state how much butter was exported from Australia to overseas destinations last year?

(2) How much of Western Australian production was included?

(3) What were the comparative figures for the previous year?

(4) Can estimated figures for the current year be given, and if so, will he state them?

(5) What was the average price received for butter exported overseas—

(a) last year;

(b) the year before?

(6) What was the total value in £'s Australian of butter exported overseas in each of those years?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 91,000 tons.

(2) 111 tons (this includes carry-over from previous year's production—approx. 50 per cent.).

(3) Australia 63,698 tons. Western Australia 52 tons.

(4) Australia 104,000 tons, Western Australia 50 tons.

(5) (a) 1955-56, 350s. per cwt.

(b) 1954-55, 367s. 6d. per cwt.

(6) (a) 1955-56, £39,033 15s.

(b) 1954-55, £16,558 4s. 4d.

(c) Consumption of Butter.

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

(1) Will he give the figures of the total butter consumed in Australia for last year and the year before?

(2) Will he also give the figures of the total butter consumed in Western Australia during each of those years?

(3) How much of each total consumed in Western Australia was produced in Western Australia?

(4) What was the value of the total imported from other States in each year?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 1954-55—122,846 tons.

1955-56—Not available.

(2) Apparent consumption = production + imports less exports.

1954-55—8,675 tons.

1955-56—8,464 tons.

(3) 1954-55—7,130 tons.

1955-56—7,312 tons.

(4) 1954-55—£620,151 9s. 9d.

1955-56—£523,610 17s. 4d.

(d) Number Engaged in Butterfat Production.

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

What is the total number of dairy farmers in Western Australia mainly or wholly engaged in the production of butterfat?

The MINISTER replied:

Approximately 4,600.

RURAL & INDUSTRIES BANK.

(a) Assistance to Farmers.

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

(1) Is he aware that the Rural & Industries Bank excludes farmers from "hire purchase" loans or arrangements?

(2) If so, will he state the reason for this exclusion and inform the House if he agrees with them, or whether he is prepared to take up with the bank the abandonment of this distinction?

(3) What is the total amount of financial assistance given to other types of applicants by the bank under this scheme since its inception?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Rural & Industries Bank has no power under its Act to transact hire purchase business. It conducts an instalment credit department mainly for the making of personal loans and the granting of assistance for medical and similar expenses, and the purchase of furniture and household amenities. Farmers are in no way excluded from the use of this service, which is available to the whole community.

Hire purchase finance of farm plant and machinery cannot be made available by the bank in its instalment credit or any other department because of the legal disability already mentioned and also because of the very large amount of finance which would be required. In any case, as is well known, there are adequate sources of hire purchase finance for farm plant and machinery, including the industrial finance department of the Commonwealth Bank.

(2) I would point out that farmers are not excluded from any of the bank's services, and I endorse the policies of the commissioners under which these are extended to the public.

(3) I trust that, as the bank is not associated with hire purchase business, the hon. member will not press to be supplied with the figures which he has requested. If he still requires them, I will approach the commissioners to see if I may obtain them for the purpose of giving them to the hon. member privately, but I do not care to ask the commissioners for figures for publication which it would be only reasonable for the commissioners to wish to keep confidential. Banks do not publish information of the nature which the hon. member has requested.

(b) *Loan Fund Advances and Assistance to Farmers.*

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) How much money has been advanced by the Treasurer from loan funds to the agency section of the Rural & Industries Bank during each of the last two years?

(2) How much of this has been advanced to settlers developing conditional purchase land?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Nil.

(2) Answered by No. (1), but the commissioners of the Rural & Industries Bank have (from moneys received by way of principal repayments from borrowers) advanced for the purpose of assisting development—

£63,767 for the year ended the 30th September, 1955.

£83,302 for period from the 1st October, 1955 to the 30th June, 1956.

GAS.

B.T.U. Values.

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

What is the b.t.u. value of household gas supplied by the State Electricity Commission at Perth and Albany respectively, and by the Fremantle Gas Co. to its consumers?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Works) replied:

B.t.u. value 478 in each place.

TIMBER.

Stimulating Export Trade.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) Has he seen the item which appeared in the issue of the "Sunday Times," dated the 19th August, 1956, in which a Mr. E. A. Alstergren, managing director of the Alstergren timber interests, stated that there were good prospects of exporting substantial quantities of Australian timber to the United States and the Continent?

(2) Will he inform the House of the action, if any, the Government has taken to stimulate exports of timber, in view of the difficulties facing the timber industry at the present time?

(3) Is this one of the matters which the Minister for Industrial Development will examine on his present mission to the United States?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. From information available, however, it appears that no market in America for the general run of our hardwoods is open to our sawmilling industry at the present time.

Sample parcels of jarrah and karri have been exported to the west coast of North America in an endeavour to create a market.

(2) It is felt that the search for increased markets overseas is largely the responsibility of private enterprise but the Government is still negotiating with the Commonwealth authorities in relation to a relaxation of the export licensing system.

In the last few days, authority has been given for the export of 85,000 jarrah sleepers to Ceylon.

Major sawmilling firms, including Sate Saw Mills, have their agents in the United Kingdom and on the Continent, and are making every endeavour to increase sales. The recent visit of the assistant general manager of the State Saw Mills to South Africa has resulted in increased orders from that country.

(3) This question has been referred to the Premier.

BETTING.

Tabling of Papers, Applecross Shop.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Police:

Will he table all papers regarding the decision of the Betting Control Board to grant a licence for a s.p. betting shop at 3 Ardross-st., Applecross?

The MINISTER replied:

No. The file will be made available to the hon. member at my office as it contains personal reports of a confidential nature.

PUBLIC SERVICE.*Establishment of Board.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Premier:

(1) Does the Government intend to introduce legislation during the current session to provide for the establishment of a public service board?

(2) If so, will the legislation be introduced sufficiently early to permit of full consideration and to avoid the possibility of it being again deferred as occurred last year?

The PREMIER replied:

Yes.

WHEAT.*Rail Freights.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

In reply to a question on the 16th inst., the Minister for Agriculture revealed that 13.15 pence per bushel is included as Western Australian rail freight in the "cost of production" for wheat and as the average haul of wheat is 126 miles at 3.39d. per ton per mile—

- (1) Does he agree that the average charge for wheat is less than the amount allowed in the "cost of production" figure?
- (2) If so, by what amount per bushel and per ton?
- (3) If the freight rate for wheat were raised by this amount, how much would the departmental income have been increased in each of the last three years?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

It is not known how the rail freights, included in the wheat production figures which it is understood are supplied by the Australian Wheat Board, are made up. They could include siding haulage, wharf haulage, sheetage and demurrage. This information will be sought to enable an answer to be furnished.

HEALTH.*(a) Charges of and Service given by Medical Practitioners.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Do medical practitioners registered to practise in Western Australia give any undertaking to give service to the sick?

(2) Is there any form of control over the charges made by these people?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(b) Implementation of Stoller Report.

Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Minister for Health:

Is it the intention of the Government to introduce, during the present session, a mental health Bill on the lines envisaged in the Stoller report?

The MINISTER replied:

This matter is being held in abeyance pending the receipt of a report by a Royal Commission in Great Britain on mental health legislation.

TRANSPORT.*(a) Vehicles Registered, Police Cars and Cycles, Accidents, etc.*

Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What was the number of vehicles registered in the metropolitan area at the 30th June—

- (a) 1952;
- (b) 1954;
- (c) 1956?

(2) What was the number of police cars used on highway patrols at the 30th June—

- (a) 1952;
- (b) 1954;
- (c) 1956?

(3) What was the number of police motor cyclists used on highway patrols at the 30th June—

- (a) 1952;
- (b) 1954;
- (c) 1956?

(4) What was the number of traffic accidents in the metropolitan area for the year ended the 30th June—

- (a) 1952;
- (b) 1954;
- (c) 1956?

(5) How many of these accidents were fatal in each of the above years?

(6) At what hour each day do the highway patrols commence duty?

(7) At what hour each day do the patrols cease duty?

(8) How many patrols are on an average on duty on Sundays?

(9) What is the actual average time per day that a motorcycle patrolman is patrolling the highways?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) (a) 69,725.
- (b) 84,889.
- (c) 104,432.

- (2) (a) nil.
- (b) one.
- (c) one.

- (3) (a) 24.
- (b) 41.
- (c) 38.

- (4) (a) 12,789.
 (b) 15,404.
 (c) 19,338 (estimated).
 (5) (a) 103.
 (b) 95.
 (c) 101.

(6) In Perth—8 a.m. Fremantle and Midland Junction—7 a.m.

(7) 12 midnight, except on Fridays and Saturdays when duties cease at 3 a.m. the following day.

(8) Twelve.

(9) Five hours, approximately.

(b) Vehicle Registration Notices.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Has he knowledge of the English manner of showing car registration notices on windcreens of vehicles, whereby a small circular metal holder approximately three inches in diameter is permanently affixed to the windscreen?

(2) Will he give consideration to instituting this simplified system here?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No. A somewhat similar system, formerly in practice here, was superseded by the present method of affixing a transfer to the windscreen. This is considered to be a much more satisfactory method of showing current registration, and this view is supported by the Royal Automobile Club.

(c) Increases in Tram, Bus and Ferry Fares.

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Premier:

In view of the alarming increases in tram, bus and ferry fares reported in today's "Daily News," is it the intention of the Government to increase country railway freights and fares? If so, when and why and what increases are envisaged?

The PREMIER replied:

It is not considered that the increases in tram and bus fares are alarming. I would say that the possible increase in railway fares and freights is a matter that has still to receive the consideration of the Government. In that consideration, other angles will be taken into account such as railway lines within the system which are causing very heavy losses to the system. Every effort will be made to try to meet the situation of the Railway Department's finances without imposing increases in the direction suggested.

(d) Effect of Increased Fares on Cost of Living.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON (without notice) asked the Premier:

What effect will the steep increases in tram, bus and ferry services have on the cost of living in this State?

The PREMIER replied:

I understand that these fares are included in the cost of living regimen and become part of the "C" series index, so obviously they will have some effect on the cost of living. I am not in a position to say even approximately what the effect will be.

(e) Percentage Increase for Section 2.

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

In the Press announcement of the increased tram, bus and ferry fares to be imposed under Section 2, the charge of 8d. is up 2d. Is that a 33½ per cent. rise?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

I do not know whether this is a mathematical test but it does suggest to me 33½ per cent. Therefore, the answer is in the affirmative.

ROADS.

South-West Highway.

Mr. I. W. MANNING asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What amount of money was expended on improvements to the South-West Highway between Armadale and Wokalup during the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1956?

(2) What further improvements to this section of the highway are planned for this financial year?

(3) When is it proposed to bituminise the partly-completed section between Serpentine and North Dandalup?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Works) replied:

(1) £131,880.

(2) Armadale-Kelmscott Road Board—

	£
Widen bridge at Byford	1,100
Reconstruct and prime	
24ft wide 1M. Cardup	
Ck.	500
Reconstruct and prime	
22ft. wide 2M. 25.75M.	1,250
	<hr/> 2,850

Serpentine-Jarrahdale Road Board—

	£
Widen bridge to 28ft. at 33M.	7,000
Reconstruct and prime 22ft. wide 32.8M.-33.2M.	3,000
Widen bridges 26M.-40M. (part cost)	2,100
Sealing and resealing 5.55M. (30.6M.-40M.)	7,440
	<hr/> 19,540

Murray Road Board—

	£
Reconstruct and prime approach to bridge 43.3M.	5,000
Reconstruct and prime 22ft. wide 52.8M.-53.55M.	4,000
Construction Sth. Dandalup Bridges	9,200
Widen small bridges 46.2M.-62M.	3,050
Widen and prime sections 63.9M.	3,500
Reconstruct and prime 22ft. wide sections 42.3M.-64.1M.	31,000
Seal and reseal sections	14,360
	<hr/> 70,110

Drakesbrook Road Board—

	£
Widen and prime 4ft. 68M.-71M.	14,000
Sealing 22ft., 5.2 miles 65.6M.-77M.	3,300
	<hr/> 17,300

Harvey Road Board—

	£
Widen and prime 6ft., 77M.-83M.	3,600
Widen and prime 4ft., 83M.-89M.	28,300
Sealing 6 miles 77M.-83M.	4,200
	<hr/> 36,100

Total 1956-57 £145,900

(3) Tar priming will be carried out in about two months, and bituminous surfacing early in the new year.

POLICE.*Position of Constable Hardy.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Police:

(1) What were the reasons for the rejection by Cabinet of the views of Acting Commissioner O'Brien on the question of departmental assistance to Constable Hardy?

(2) Has any provision been made for the repayment of any of this £450 of public money expended on behalf of Constable Hardy?

(3) Why did Cabinet make a larger sum of money available to Constable Hardy than the file indicates the Minister recommended?

(4) Has Constable Hardy been in any trouble of a similar nature since the Trobridge incident?

(5) Did Constable Hardy ever apply for transfer from the Traffic Branch to the Liquor Inspection Branch? If so, when did he make such application?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The reason that actuated Cabinet was to maintain the present efficient standard of the Police Force.

(2) No.

(3) Answered by No. (1).

(4) No.

(5) Yes. The 9th July, 1954.

EDUCATION.*(a) Output of Teachers from Teachers' Training Colleges.*

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Do the teachers' training colleges turn out, annually, an adequate supply of trained teachers to cater properly for the State's educational requirements?

(2) If not, will he state the reasons?

The MINISTER replied:

The annual output of trained teachers from the teachers' colleges for the past three years has been—

1953	—	361
1954	—	296
1955	—	356

This has been sufficient to make good the loss through resignations and retirements, to cater for the increase in enrolments and to reduce the number of temporary teachers employed.

(b) Accommodation for Teachers, Kalgoorlie.

Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Has the Education Department made a recent survey of the accommodation position in Kalgoorlie for both single and married teachers?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is "No," will the department undertake to make such a survey?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) It is not considered that such a survey would serve any useful purpose. The position with regard to accommodation for teachers is better in Kalgoorlie than in most other parts of the State.

(c) Payment of Cleaners and Teachers.

Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Has the Education Department decided to pay school cleaners by separate cheque?

(2) Has the Education Department reviewed the position of payment for relieving teachers, and enunciated a firm policy?

(3) If the answer to No. (2) is "Yes," will he lay on the Table an account of appropriate details?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Payment of relieving allowances to teachers is made in accordance with Regulation 46 which was last amended on the 18th January, 1952.

(3) Regulation 46 reads as follows:—

(1) When a teacher is employed continuously for more than three weeks in filling temporarily a position for which the salary is higher than that for his permanent position, he shall receive for the full period during which he holds the temporary position the salary to which he would be entitled if he held such a position permanently. Payment at the higher rate shall be subject to a favourable report upon his service by a superintendent.

(2) If a teacher, when relieving another teacher, has, in addition to his own maintenance, to maintain an establishment elsewhere, or is put to expense which he would not otherwise have incurred, and which is not covered by the department's allowance, he shall be dealt with on similar lines to those adopted for officers under the Public Service Act, 1904-1955.

RAILWAYS.*(a) Depth of Water, Fremantle Railway Bridge.*

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

What is the depth of water at low tide beneath the centre of the Fremantle railway bridge at 20ft. intervals from the south side to the north side?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

Depth of water along the complete line of the centre of the Fremantle railway bridge is not recorded but soundings taken in 1947 for the two navigation spans only are as follows:

ft.		ft. in.
0	North face of south pier	6 3
20	North face of south pier	9 9
40	South face of centre pier	8 9
50	North face of centre pier	9 3
70	North face of centre pier	10 3
90	South face of north pier	8 6

The remaining spans have been packed with stone and rubble to prevent scouring so a true reading is not possible.

(b) Use of Accounting Machines and Anticipated Savings.

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

In view of answer No. (5) to my question dealing with the installation of accounting machines, answered on Thursday, the 16th August, would he indicate under what headings these savings are expected and have been achieved?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

The economics achieved so far, are the almost complete elimination of overtime and certain operating returns plus other savings made possible by reallocating staff released from other work formerly done by hand.

AIR SERVICES.*North-West and Representations by Member for Gascoyne.*

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) In connection with the complaints made during the Address-in-reply about the alleged poor service given recently by MacRobertson-Miller Airlines, by the member for Gascoyne, has the Western Australian Transport Board any record of any representations made to them by the member for Gascoyne in this matter?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) is "Yes," will he give particulars of the dates of these representations?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

WATER SUPPLIES.*Experiments in Use of Cetyl Alcohol.*

Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Have any experiments been conducted in the use of cetyl alcohol for water conservation in the Kalgoorlie area?

(2) Would the three service storages at the west end of Kalgoorlie be suitable for experiments of this type?

(3) Are evaporation losses from the two uncovered storages substantial?

(4) If the answer to No. (1) is "No," would the department consider a request for experiments to be undertaken on the Broad Arrow dam?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Water Supplies) replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Not entirely. Possible leakage plus inflow and outflow cannot be accurately determined. One reservoir is roofed.

(3) Yes. Approximately six feet per year.

(4) Answered by No. (1).

LANDS.

Survey and Classification of "Berry Brow."

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Has the Government surveyed and classified the property known as "Berry Brow" purchased from the Inkpen estate?

(2) When is it intended to make this property available for selection?

(3) What are the areas of the various blocks?

(4) At what prices is it proposed to make the blocks available for sale?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Five blocks have been made available to adjoining holders, whilst five others will be thrown open for general selection within a week or two.

(3) The areas are from 20 acres for gardening blocks to 1,100 acres.

(4) The prices fixed for the 10 blocks mentioned in No. (2) range from £2 to £4 16s. per acre.

GOVERNMENT WORKS.

Deferred Payments.

Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

(1) What was the total of all payments deferred beyond the 30th June, 1956, and for which liability existed at the 30th June, 1956, for Government works and undertakings?

(2) What departments and Government undertakings were affected and how much for each?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) £2,451,000.

	£
(2) Railways	1,165,000
Public Works Department	348,000
State Housing Commission	305,000
State Electricity Commission	633,000

AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS.

Recognition by Singapore City Council.

Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

With reference to his answer to question No. (10), the 9th August, 1956, has he received the information regarding the recognition or otherwise of Australian engineering degrees in Singapore?

The PREMIER replied:

This matter is now being taken up by the Institute of Engineers with the Right Hon. R. G. Casey and through him with the Home Office, London.

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF.

Tabling of Papers regarding Proposed Federal Loan.

Hon. A. F. WATTS (without notice) asked the Premier:

Will he lay on the Table of the House tomorrow all papers connected with the proposed loan from the Commonwealth for works for the relief of unemployment, including the details of the State's alternative proposals?

The PREMIER replied:

I posted a letter this afternoon to the Acting Prime Minister in reply to one which I received from him last Monday. I would desire that he should receive the letter and have an opportunity of placing it before his colleagues before it is published in this State because publication in this State would mean automatic publication almost immediately in the other States.

On the grounds of courtesy alone, the Acting Prime Minister and his colleagues should know what is in the letter sent him today before any of the contents of the letter are published in the newspapers. However, I will undertake to table the appropriate file on Tuesday next.

HOUSING.

(a) Reduced Cost of Commission Homes.

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

To what extent have the current cheaper building costs in this State reduced the building costs per house being constructed by the State Housing Commission?

The MINISTER replied:

I would say, generally speaking—that is, taking an average in the metropolitan area—that it would be in the vicinity of about £300 per house compared with that sum two or three years ago when building costs were at their peak.

(b) Reduced Building Costs and Increased Rentals.

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

In view of the reply he gave to the member for Nedlands to the effect that the cost of building a house has decreased by about £300, how does he line that up with his statement in the Press that in view of the provisions of the Commonwealth-State rental homes agreement, under which the rate of interest is to be raised from 3 to 4 per cent., the rents of such homes are to go up 8s. a week?

The MINISTER replied:

The reason I am able to line it up is that it is perfectly true. If the member for Dale cares to work it on a 3½ per cent. increase in the existing rent chargeable on a home costing an average of

£2,500, he will find the figure of 8s. as an average is perfectly correct. There are houses being built today for less than £2,500 and there will be houses in the future built for a similar figure, but the difference in rent to be charged on account of the increased interest rate will be, I repeat, in the vicinity of 8s. per week average.

NAVAL BASE.

Western Australia's Claim.

Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

In answer to a question yesterday regarding the Naval Base, the Premier indicated that the State had put forward Cockburn Sound and Albany as two prospective sites. Did the Government indicate any preference as between one and the other?

The PREMIER replied:

No.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Oldfield, leave of absence for one week granted to Mr. Grayden (South Perth), on the ground of urgent public business.

BILL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT CONTINUANCE.

Standing Orders Suspension.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable a Bill for "An Act to continue the operation of the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act, 1951-1955," to be introduced without notice, and, if necessary, passed through all its stages in one day; and the aforesaid business to be entered upon and dealt with before the Address-in-reply is adopted.

Mr. COURT: All I desire is to seek information from the Minister. Does he propose to allow the members of the Opposition some time to consider the contents of the Bill after it has been introduced and the second reading moved, by agreeing to an adjournment of the debate till, say, 8 o'clock tonight?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE (in reply): There will be no objection to an adjournment of the debate after the second reading has been moved, if members so desire.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. There being no dissentient voice, I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Message.

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

First Reading.

Introduced by the Minister for Native Welfare and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE (Hon. J. J. Brady—Guildford-Midland) [5.01 in moving the second reading said: Before commencing, I point out that when I gave the member for Nedlands an undertaking that he could, if he so desired, have an adjournment of the debate, I meant that the adjournment should be to a later stage of this particular sitting. The Bill seeks to continue the operation of the existing Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act for a further period of 12 months.

Briefly stated, the Act may be divided into two sections, namely, that which deals with evictions, the provisions for which expire on the 31st August this year; and the rental provisions, which expire on the 31st December next. Dealing with the part of the Act concerning rents, it is necessary to point out, in the first instance, that the rent lawfully chargeable is that agreed upon between the landlord and the tenant, subject to the right of either party to approach the Fair Rents Court or the rent inspector.

All premises—business and residential—are covered, excluding—

1. The Crown, Commonwealth or State.
2. The State Housing Commission.
3. The McNess Housing Trust.
4. Publican's general licence, hotel licence, wayside house licence, etc.
5. Premises used as grazing area, farm, orchard, vineyard, market garden, dairy farm, poultry farm, pig farm, apiary.
6. Premises leased for holiday purposes, where the period of lease to any one lessee does not exceed 12 weeks.
7. Premises which for the first time or otherwise, are leased for a period of not less than three years.

The Act provides for the establishment of a fair rents court constituted by a magistrate. One court known as the metropolitan fair rents court takes in the magisterial districts of Perth and Fremantle, and Midland Junction. Other fair rents courts may be constituted and assigned to other portions of the State as

the Minister recommends. All applications for determination of rent of any premises—except parts of premises, which may be lodged with the rent inspector—shall be lodged with the local court nearest to the premises, irrespective of the existence of a fair rents court in that district. Such an application shall then be referred by the local court to the fair rents court. If there is no fair rents court in the district, the application may be dealt with by the local court.

As I have already indicated, the landlord and tenant may agree as to the rent of premises, but despite such agreement either party may apply to the court or rent inspector to determine the rent, but the court or the rent inspector has no authority to alter or vary the rent of premises leased for a period of two years or more. The rent inspector can still continue to determine the rent of parts of residential premises, but not self-contained flats, which are completely closed off, and which include both cooking and bathing facilities. Applications in respect of self-contained flats must be lodged with the court.

When fixing rents, the court or rent inspector shall take into consideration any factors which are considered relevant. Such rent shall be based on the present day capital value, to yield a net return of not less than 2 per cent. and not more than 8 per cent—parts of premises higher if considered necessary. If a lessee is given notice to quit premises, the rent of such premises on and after the date of such notice, shall not, except by a determination of the rent inspector or the court, exceed the amount of rent lawfully chargeable on the first day of the month before the month in which such notice is given. Parties who have agreed to rent of premises previously determined may make application for a further determination at any time, but where a determination is made after agreement, no further application can be made within six months of such determination.

Turning now to the eviction provisions, a lessor must give at least 28 days' notice to quit before commencing eviction proceedings. If on the hearing severe hardship is proved by the lessee, the court may suspend the operation of an order for eviction, for any period up to three months. Where a lessee—not under notice to quit—lodges an application for determination of rent with the court or rent inspector, a notice to quit cannot be given until the expiration of a period of three months from the date of lodging the application. If it is an application dealt with by the court—but not by an inspector—and the rent is determined at less than 80 per cent. of the rent at the time of application, the lessee has protection for 12 months after the date of the determination.

This protection to the lessee expires on the 31st August, and may be set aside by the court if it is satisfied that the lessee has during his tenancy—

- (a) failed to pay the rent for 28 days;
- (b) failed to perform a condition of his tenancy;
- (c) failed to take reasonable care of the premises;
- (d) been guilty of a nuisance;
- (e) used the premises for an illegal purpose;
- (f) become the occupant without the consent of the lessor.

As already stated, the Act continues in force until the 31st December, 1956, with the exception of those provisions dealing with protection from evictions which expire on the 31st August, 1956.

The Act which now operates is somewhat different from the original Act which was passed in 1939 and subsequent amendments up until 1951. During that period the various Acts had contributed largely towards checking inflationary trends in rents and provided a certain protection from eviction consistent with circumstances. Since 1951, however, the measure of control has been modified until today very little remains of the original Act. The law today does, however, provide some measure of protection.

The fact that there is a Fair Rents Court to which either party may appeal for the determination of a fair rent is beneficial to all concerned because it gives the opportunity for either party to air a grievance or difference of opinion. It is, too, a restraining influence on exorbitant rentals. The unemployment conditions which are existing now are another reason why the continuance of this Act is necessary, and particularly would this be so with regard to protection from eviction. I have been advised that the following eviction orders have been made by the courts as from the 1st August, 1955, to the 31st July, 1956:—

Perth	....	....	....	441
Fremantle	....	....	....	98
Midland Junction	....	....	....	30
				<hr/> 569

Determinations of fair rents were as follows:—

Fair Rents Court:

Applications	....	....	62
Withdrawn	....	....	20
Determined	....	....	42

Rent Inspector:

Applications	....	....	47
Withdrawn	....	....	7
Determined	....	....	40

With regard to the number of eviction cases dealt with by the courts, which I have mentioned as being 569, 295 of these have been offered accommodation by the Housing Commission. As will be seen, some evictees did not approach the commission and no doubt have secured other accommodation.

The number of applications dealt with by the rent inspector does not reflect the volume of work performed by the staff, which numbers two. I am informed that there are considerable inquiries concerning the operations of this Act, but that, in many cases, no assistance can be given thereunder because of the exclusion from the provisions of the Act of leases for a term of three years or more. This exclusion was inserted in the Act two sessions ago by another place. Despite this restriction, however, the fact that the Act exists does provide some measure of protection for landlord and tenant alike.

Mr. Court: How many evictions were from State Housing Commission properties?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I have not got the exact figures, but if the hon. member wishes to have them, I will get them for him.

Mr. Court: Could we have the Fair Rents Court return before we consider the Bill? The return is supposed to be tabled.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: As a matter of fact, it is an omission on my part and if you, Mr. Speaker, will accept it I will be prepared to table the Fair Rents Court returns now. They were handed in to me just before I commenced. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I will hand in the papers. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Court, debate adjourned till a later stage of the sitting.

(Continued on page 321.)

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Eighth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. SEWELL (Geraldton) [5.12]: I join with other members in congratulating you, Sir, on your elevation to the Speakership of the House. Those of us who have known you over the years realise that you will carry out your duties in the manner that we all desire.

First of all, I shall touch on the question of finance. We all know that in wartime there is no difficulty in raising finance to the extent of millions, and hundreds of millions of pounds, for the defence of the country. But it does seem strange that in peacetime we frequently find ourselves in the position of being short of

money for essential works. Since the session commenced, we have heard requests from each member who has spoken for certain public works to be carried out in his district; and I have no doubt that these works are of an urgent nature. The Treasurer must find it most difficult to try to meet the demands of the various electorates.

We heard the Treasurer, this week, speaking on what happened at Canberra recently; and we heard the Minister for Works last night on a similar subject. We are left in no doubt as to the position in which we find ourselves today. I am sure that everyone in the House hopes that those people in higher places who control the finances of the country, will do something about improving the position so that the unemployment problem that is starting to raise its head in this country, can be effectively dealt with.

Those of us who have experienced two world wars have seen destruction wreaked on the universe. We have seen whole cities shattered and hundreds of thousands of the young men of various nations destroyed in the flower of their youth. We are now reaching a stage, with the development of the atomic and hydrogen bombs, and various other instruments of war which are today being fashioned by the scientists, where one wonders what is going to happen to us.

There does not seem to be any difficulty in the people concerned—irrespective of their nationality—finding large quantities of money to pay for the fashioning of the weapons I have mentioned and I believe the time is overdue when some effort should be made to put the finances of the nation in different hands, so that we might reach a balanced economy. In my electorate—as in every other electorate in this State—a lot of loan money is needed for public works, and the first such work which comes to my mind is that of repairs, renovations and additions to the wharf at Geraldton.

Much has been said over the air and in the Press, in the last few months, in connection with that wharf and harbour. Some of the statements made have been a little exaggerated but some, unfortunately, have been true. The cyclone experienced at Geraldton early in the year had, to my mind, the effect of bringing to a head the state which the harbour was reaching. Members are all aware of the damage done at that time.

We have recently had statements by the Minister for Works and the Minister for Railways to the effect that something will be done reasonably quickly to assist in making Geraldton harbour safer for shipping than it was before, and here I refer to the provision of spring piling, for which, alone, £50,000 is needed. I understand that that money will come from Canberra when the Canberra lords decide we shall have it.

To emphasise to members the importance of Geraldton harbour, I will read some official figures as printed in "The Geraldton Guardian" of the 7th August. These figures will show how important the port of Geraldton is to the State as a whole. Under the heading, "Imports and Exports," we read the following:—

A total of 107 ships—an average of two per week—came into the Geraldton wharf during the year ended June 30th last, and this figure compares more than favourably with the 66 vessels handled at Albany during the same period. The gross tonnage of the shipping to visit Geraldton was 482,010 tons and inwards cargo totalled 64,550 tons, compared with exports amounting to 198,251 tons.

The principal export was wheat, of which 118,338 tons were shipped from the port. Other exports comprised manganese ore (37,673 tons), lead (4,746 tons) and wool (3,372 bales), in addition to substantial quantities of flour and tomatoes.

Phosphate rock comprised the chief import for the year and this amounted to 28,397 tons, whilst 5,105 tons of sulphur were brought to Geraldton by ship. Frequent visits of tankers to the port brought in large amounts of fuels; this comprised petrol (15,626 tons), dieselene (11,602 tons) and kerosene (3,148 tons).

Sheep numbering 11,736 were despatched from Geraldton, whilst 7,025 sheep and 555 cattle were brought here on various vessels.

When making these figures available for publication the Geraldton harbourmaster (Captain C. J. Sweett) remarked that the aggregate number of vessels to visit the port would have been bigger had it not been for the damage caused by the March cyclone and also the fact that a shipping strike had occurred during the year, while unfavourable weather had also caused various ships to by-pass the port. Last year 107 ships came into Geraldton, the figures for 1954, 1953 and 1952 being 93, 116 and 106 respectively.

July Statistics: Continuing, Captain Sweett said that July had been a particularly busy month for the port and the shipping amounted to 63,653 gross tons. Exports comprised 37,000 tons of bulk and bagged wheat, 3,604 tons of manganese ore and 1,306 tons of lead, whilst the chief imports were 4,000 tons of various fuels.

Those figures speak for themselves and emphasise the importance of the port of Geraldton to Western Australia. I hope the departments concerned will in the very near future do something to improve the facilities there for those who use the

port for shipping purposes. In that harbour there is also the fishing fleet and it is the wish of the fisherman to have their own jetty and other facilities. At present they have to use the main harbour and the main wharf and they are more or less a source of annoyance to shipping generally and particularly to the oil tankers.

In order that members may understand the position, I will explain that the fishing and crayfishing industries have grown so much in the last few years that the fleets themselves—particularly when they come in during the slack season—are really a source of annoyance to the larger vessels and it is to be hoped that an amount will be placed on the Estimates next year, at least, to give the fisherman the facilities that their industry rightly deserves.

The next subject with which I will deal is of interest to all country people—water. The water supply at Geraldton has improved vastly in the last four or five years, but there is room for still further improvement. The rising main from Wicherina to Geraldton needs to be completed—I refer to the enlarging of the main. There are new connections to be made in areas which have recently been built on, besides numerous other connections necessary due to the growth of the town. No doubt the department has these matters in hand, but it is the wish of the Geraldton people that the work be completed before next summer.

Mr. Roberts: Is there any artesian water at Geraldton?

Mr. SEWELL: No, the supply is sub-artesian. There are the reservoir and shallow bores. Like most other centres, Geraldton is still short of houses. The Housing Commission has done quite a good job, however, and by the lay-out it has adopted has helped to make a better town of Geraldton. This year we understand there are 55 new houses to be built by the Housing Commission in Geraldton, but unfortunately only eight of them will be built for purchase under the Workers' Homes Act. I am sure the Minister for Housing will agree that it is the wish of practically everyone that people should be given the opportunity to purchase their own homes under that Act.

The Minister for Transport: They can purchase the others, also.

Mr. SEWELL: The school position at Geraldton has also come in for attention and instead of indulging in the usual grizzle made by members—I do not use that term by way of complaint—I think Geraldton and the surrounding districts have been most fortunate. A new school has been erected in the Housing Commission area at a cost, I understand, of about £20,000 and it is now in commission. The school is a credit to all concerned—the architects, the contractors and the men

who actually did the work. The Northampton school has at last had renovations and additions completed, for which I have asked in this House for several years past, and it is now an area school. The staff there is doing a very good job for the children of the district.

Hon. D. Brand: Is the playground completed yet?

Mr. SEWELL: No, and I am afraid we will have to go further afield as the terrain there, being undulating and rocky, makes it difficult for the Public Works Department to construct a suitable playing area. However, it is a must for the future as the children require facilities for sport, just as they have in other places. It is also the wish of the Northampton people that a water scheme be put into operation there as soon as possible and there again, we come up against the question of finance.

It is annoying when we hear, through the Press and otherwise, of millions of pounds being spent on destruction and yet we cannot get a few thousand pounds for a domestic water supply for a town of the importance of Northampton. The lead-mining industry in the district, as shown by the figures I gave, is not in as bright a condition as we would like it to be, but the State battery and the people concerned are doing an excellent job in keeping the industry alive there. It is to be hoped that in the coming year the outlook of those people will be brighter. Goldminers receive certain taxation concessions which are denied to those who operate leadmines and it seems peculiar to me that one class of mining should be given a concession which is denied to another class. The set-up is beyond the comprehension of the ordinary man.

In my electorate we have been blessed with good seasons. Our industries are in a reasonably flourishing condition and it is to the credit of all engaged in those pursuits, including farming, fishing, crayfishing, tomato growing, leadmining and so on, that they are playing no small part in keeping the town and district of Geraldton in the front rank of production in this State. I therefore believe they should be given every consideration by the Government. The Commonwealth Government has been approached to make finance available for certain work which should be undertaken in the district. We hear a great deal about the subject of decentralisation and the committees that are formed to consider it, but, in the first place, they do not go the right way about tackling the problem as it should be.

I now wish to refer to the number of road accidents that are occurring in this State today. In fact, this problem has been an extremely grave one for many years past, but the position does not seem to be improving. Something could be done by the use of visual education, in such a

way that would assist people to become more traffic-minded and courteous. That in itself would assist in lessening the incidence of accidents that are happening on our roads today in increasing numbers.

There are many matters in the Geraldton district that require full discussion, but as these will reappear on the Estimates I will take the opportunity then of speaking on them and to stress the need for urgent attention to be given to the most important.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [5.32]: I join with the other members, Sir, in expressing my appreciation of your appointment as Speaker of this Chamber. I have no doubt that you will be as fair and impartial in your judgments and decisions as you were when you were Chairman of Committees. At all times, as an individual member, you extended to me the utmost consideration.

Next, I wish to refer to the great service which the late John Collings Willcock gave to the State of Western Australia. I lived in the late Mr. Willcock's electorate of Geraldton for many years. Although politically opposed to him, I became a firm friend of his and therefore I place on record my appreciation of his wonderful service to the electorate of Geraldton and to the State generally. Mr. Willcock was a man of great knowledge, most of which he gained as a result of his own efforts. I also record my deep regret at the death of the late Hon. H. Hearn and the late Hon. Don Barker.

In these times the financial position of the Governments of Australia is causing great concern to the respective Cabinets. I was interested to know what the income of this State of Western Australia was over a period of years, and I was rather amazed to learn that, despite the fact that the State Government has appealed to the Commonwealth Government for more finance and in recent months has criticised it because it has not been forthcoming for the various schemes that have been outlined in Western Australia for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1956, this State reached an all-time high so far as income was concerned.

The Minister for Transport: I thought you were going to say inflation.

Mr. BOVELL: In 1945-46 the State's income was £14,407,557. In 1955-56 it was £49,612,406. In 1954-55 the State's income, from all sources, was £45,719,846. So the Government, in the year 1955-56, enjoyed additional income of £3,892,560 over the income received in 1954-55. I am at a loss to understand why the Government has been fit to increase all the charges that it has. Since the general election in April, we have had an increase in hospital charges and in the port charges at Fremantle. In today's issue of the "Daily News" it is announced that tram, bus and ferry fares are to be increased as from next Sunday.

The Minister for Health: You have had an increase in your allowance as a parliamentarian.

Mr. BOVELL: That is quite so, and so has the Minister for Health.

The Minister for Health: Not as a Minister.

Mr. BOVELL: The increase in land tax is a matter of great concern not to the big landholder but to the modest worker who owns his own home. The alarming increase in this tax brought about by the fictitious, inflated land values today has caused a great increase in land tax receipts for the State Government over the past 10 years. In 1945-46 the total amount received from land tax was £111,353 as compared with £529,412, in 1955-56. Receipts obtained last year showed an increase of £128,946 over the land tax received in 1954-55, which amounted to £390,466.

A worker who is employed by one local authority in the district I represent showed me his land tax assessment notice only a few days ago. His tax had increased from £1 15s. 4d. to £9 odd. That man was possibly on the basic wage or a little more. As a result of fictitious and inflated land values imposed by the officers of the Taxation Department, he has been subjected to an increase in land tax which he can ill afford to pay. That is one case, and I will quote another one. A piece of land with a dwelling erected on it has shown an increase in land tax in one year of from £15 some odd shillings and pence to £30 some odd shillings and pence. So the impact of land tax on individual householders, most of whom are workers, has been extremely great, to the benefit, of course, of the State Treasury.

We have heard a great deal from the Government benches about inflation and of its impact on the workers. Many members have submitted proposals to indicate how the inflationary spiral can be arrested. My submission is that the first authority which should give consideration to arresting the inflationary spiral is the Government of the day. It has been said by the Premier that if the State does not increase its charges on public utilities such as transport, electricity supplies and water supplies, we will be penalised by the Grants Commission. However, because the non-claimant States, such as New South Wales, for example, decide to increase their rail freights because of maladministration, are we, in Western Australia, whose problems are not quite akin to those in New South Wales—that State having an area much less than Western Australia with a much greater population which its railways serve—to increase our charges for rail freights and fares merely because the non-claimant States raise theirs? I believe, and repeat, that it is the Government's duty to set the example by maintaining at a level the charges that it imposes on the people.

As I have said, this Government has increased one charge after another. If it is going to impose additional charges on industry, how can we expect to arrest the inflationary spiral? Why is it that the Government of Western Australia, which has enjoyed the greatest income in the past financial year, as compared with that obtained by any previous Government, is in such a precarious position that it is necessary for it to raise these charges? I would suggest that even if deficits are unavoidable, the first thing to do to arrest this inflationary spiral is for the Government to maintain the charges on a level at which they have been operating over the past year.

During the election campaign we heard nothing of these proposed increases. In Press advertisements we read of the campaign on the "Tax-us Raiders." Reproductions of photographs of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in Western Australia were published in the Press as being the "Tax-us Raiders." On reflection, I am quite sure that the Premier cannot be very happy about the type of propaganda which was resorted to by his party during the last State election.

We heard nothing from the Premier on the hustings to indicate that it might become necessary for the State to increase governmental charges, but we did hear a great deal about what the Menzies-Fadden Government had done with its "Little Budget" by imposing additional charges on cigarettes, tobacco, beer and petrol. However, to give the Prime Minister his due, when he was facing the electors in December of last year he did say that it would be necessary for the Government to take steps which it deemed advisable to solve the financial problems in the Commonwealth. He did give the electors an idea that some measures were considered necessary in the direction of imposition of additional taxes. But the Premier of this State was not quite so honest with the electors. He said nothing about the precarious position of the State Treasury, except to blame the Commonwealth Government for its lack of co-operation in providing more and more funds.

Let us see what the Commonwealth Government has provided for the present State Government in its three years of office. In 1953-54, the State received from the Commonwealth £37,268,977; in 1954-55 it received £38,208,840; and in 1955-56, the year when the Premier, in effect, stated that the Commonwealth has not been playing its part, it received £40,092,008.

The Premier: Could the hon. member give us the figure of the total income of the Commonwealth Government for the same years?

Mr. BOVELL: The total income, as far as I know, was £1,200,000,000. I do not blame the State Treasurer for endeavouring to get as much for this State as he

can because we have one-third of the area of the Commonwealth to develop, and we need all the finances that we can get. But I do object to criticism being levelled at the Commonwealth and being used for party political purposes on the hustings, especially when the Commonwealth Government, in conjunction with the Grants Commission, is giving this State a very fair spin.

The Premier: Not in comparison with its total income.

Mr. BOVELL: We should encourage all the capital possible to Western Australia, not only from the Commonwealth but from private sources. I was very interested to hear the statement of the Minister for Lands the other evening concerning American capital for the development of land projects in the Esperance area.

The Premier: Does not the hon. member think that we should get more than £40,000,000 out of a total income of £1,200,000,000?

Mr. BOVELL: In reply to that interjection, I have not had the opportunity to study the financial position of the Commonwealth and the other States, but I repeat, "Good luck to the Premier for all he can get from the Commonwealth". I also repeat that it is not playing the game when the Premier gets more and more from the Commonwealth and the Grants Commission, and yet, for party political purposes, as election time comes forward, depicts the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition as "Tax-us Raiders", when, in fact, the State Government has surpassed absolutely any tax raiding which the Commonwealth Government might have been accused of carrying out.

The Premier: Could the hon. member express those figures for Western Australia year by year in real money values, instead of nominal figures?

Mr. BOVELL: I realise an inflationary spiral existed in the past three years. I also say this: Let us go back to the last three years of office of the McLarty-Watts Government, when the inflationary spiral was equal in intensity to that of the past three years. In 1950-51 that Government received from the Commonwealth £30,487,118; in effect, it received during this period £10,000,000, or one-quarter of the total revenue, less than the present Government received in 1955-56. In 1951-52 it received £34,619,718 from the Commonwealth, and taking into account the altered value of money I would say that the present Government is immeasurably better off in its finances than the McLarty-Watts Government.

The Premier: The hon. member completely leaves out of account the considerable increase in population.

Mr. BOVELL: There has been an increase in population but I do not know that this has such a bearing on the actual financial position.

Hon. D. Brand: We had the same population increase in the last three years of the McLarty-Watts Government.

The Premier: The hon. member is comparing the three years of office of the present Government with the last three years of the McLarty-Watts Government.

Mr. BOVELL: Instead of increasing charges, I suggest the Government should consider budgeting for a deficit. I am not very much in favour of any further conferences like the one held recently, but a conference on a Commonwealth-State basis, somewhat similar, however unpalatable it might be, to the Premiers' Plan of the early 1930's should be held, so that an overall budgeting system could be arrived at under which claimant States would not be penalised by the Grants Commission. How can any country arrest the inflationary spiral when the Government leads the way in imposing further charges on industry? Even if it means the deficit being passed down to posterity, we will be doing something to arrest the inflationary spiral that has continued in the postwar years. Admittedly, the economic position of the State is unique. It is new in that there are plenty of goods for sale and there is plenty of labour, yet the spiral continues.

Mr. Lapham: We had exactly the same conditions in 1929.

Mr. BOVELL: There was some difference in 1929, but that is going back a long way. Without some considered reflection, I am not able to recount what really happened in 1929. I can recount very vividly what happened in 1931 and afterwards.

Hon. D. Brand: There was a change of every Government in office, no matter what its political colour was, during those years.

Mr. BOVELL: I would urge the Premier not to keep on criticising the Commonwealth Government. Whatever proposal is submitted, it seems to me that if the Commonwealth Government will not assist, the scheme will fall down. Surely the State Government should show some initiative and foresight in expounding schemes which it can carry out by itself. I admit that the co-operation of the Commonwealth is necessary in many spheres.

Mr. Hall: Perhaps the Commonwealth will assist with the programme of migration.

Mr. BOVELL: The hon. member has some concern about the unemployment position and the migration programme.

Mr. Hall: That is correct.

Mr. BOVELL: Why then is it that in Western Australia—and the State Government cannot be relieved of all the blame for this—approximately one quarter of the total unemployed people in the Commonwealth is found? Is that the fault of the Commonwealth Government? Has not the State Government some responsibility?

The Premier: It is due to migration and to the fact that we have fewer secondary industries, and to the further fact that the restriction of credit has pressed harder upon this State than any other State.

Mr. BOVELL: All those facts may be quite true, but that does not relieve the State Government of its responsibility.

The Premier: The Government is not employing fewer people.

Mr. BOVELL: The Government I supported encouraged private industry, such as the Kwinana oil refinery and B.H.P. steel works, against which the Premier objected so strongly from this side of the House.

The Premier: I criticised very strongly certain sections of the agreement relating to B.H.P. and I still criticise them.

Mr. BOVELL: The hon. gentleman gave the impression in no uncertain manner that he objected to the big combine of the B.H.P. coming to Western Australia and using some of the resources which he said belonged to the people.

The Premier: Nothing of the kind. That is not correct.

Mr. BOVELL: In other words, from this side of the House the Premier objected to the establishment of the B.H.P. in this State. He interjected a moment ago and said it was because we did not have the secondary industries.

The Premier: I am surprised that the hon. member repeats something which is not correct.

Mr. BOVELL: It is quite correct. I am pleased to see that the Minister for Mines is endeavouring to attract capital from overseas. The more we can get the better, but we will only survive through private enterprise. We will not survive through socialism. If the Minister for Mines can attract private industry to this State he will be doing a great service to this country. I say this: People in the other countries are going to ask, "Of what colour is the Government in Western Australia? Does it encourage private enterprise, or is its objective socialism?"

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What would you tell them the colour was?

Mr. BOVELL: I would say this: The 1921 platform of the A.L.P. has not been altered.

Mr. Moir: You cannot go as far back as 1921.

Mr. BOVELL: That was the socialisation of industry, distribution, production and exchange.

Mr. Lapham: Your memory has improved in respect of the last item. It used to be communism.

Mr. BOVELL: I hope the Premier will give some consideration to conferring on an Australia-wide basis in regard to financing Government enterprises, even if it means incurring deficits, provided that Government charges are not going to be increased, thus further imposing a burden on all the people of this country.

In my opinion, it is the Government's responsibility to set an example. What has this Government done to prune its expenditure? I am not in possession of the details available to the Treasurer and other Cabinet Ministers. Members have to glean by questions and by other means some idea of the State's financial position. But I am quite convinced that, despite the outcry by the Premier and his colleagues, he has received just as liberal treatment from the Commonwealth Government as did his predecessors in office.

Mr. Johnson: If you believe that, you would believe anything you say.

Mr. Evans: That is what is called real "liberal" treatment.

Mr. BOVELL: On the opening day of the session, I asked a question of the Minister for Health concerning hospital charges to pensioners, and I am afraid the Minister was not in possession of all the facts. Pensioners in hospital are subjected to certain deductions.

The Minister for Health: Only after they have been there 28 days; and even then, if they cannot pay, we do not push them.

Mr. BOVELL: Since when was the 28 days' provision instituted?

The Minister for Health: I do not know. Only a few months ago.

Mr. BOVELL: I am not quite clear about the matter. I have heard complaints by pensioners confined to hospital about the charges hospitals are making. I did intend to place a question on the notice paper in regard to the matter, but I would appreciate it if the Minister would make a statement as to the exact charges that are imposed on pensioners in hospitals.

The Minister for Health: If they have been in hospital for 28 days the charge is 7s. 6d. They receive pensions, and there is no reason why they should not make a small contribution.

Mr. BOVELL: In view of the outcry which the Government's supporters have made regarding the necessity for an increased allowance by the Commonwealth to pensioners, it seems to me that this Government could perhaps show a lead by remitting the 7s. 6d. which pensioners are called upon to pay. It is admitted that £4 per week is a very small pension to

live upon. But let this Government show its sincerity by doing something for pensioners!

The Minister for Health: We do not make any charge until they have been in hospital for 28 days. A lot of them get into hospital and we cannot get them out, even though they have good homes to go to. We have to keep them in hospital, and they still continue to receive their pensions.

Mr. BOVELL: I agree with what the Minister has said. But I believe that if the Government indicated by its actions that it felt that the pensioners should receive consideration owing to their difficulties, that would be a means of showing its sincerity.

The Minister for Health: No pensioner is harassed.

Mr. BOVELL: I wish to reiterate an opinion that I have ventilated in this House ever since I have been here—namely, that there are too many elections held in Australia and the time has come when the life of Parliament should be increased.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Not this Parliament!

Mr. BOVELL: I am quite sure that the time for that to be done is very much overdue. I remember asking many questions of the Government during the last Parliament, and on one occasion the Premier facetiously said that the Government did not require longer Parliaments. But elections are a great expense to the community, and I feel that the life of Parliament should be extended to at least four years, though I agree with the member for Cottesloe that that should not apply to this Parliament. That would save the taxpayers unnecessary expense and would give the Government a sufficient period to give effect to its policy.

Hon. D. Brand: What would the tram fares be after 10 years?

Mr. BOVELL: I hope the Premier will give serious consideration to my proposal. It is not new, for I have ventilated it year after year. I believe that the interests of the country would be best served by Parliaments being elected for four years at least. I know that the Premier has said that in South Australia this was tried on one occasion and the experiment failed. But it has not failed in Great Britain or in New Zealand.

Mr. Lapham: Is not the period five years there?

Mr. BOVELL: It is in Great Britain. But it is rarely that the Government, even though it may have an overwhelming majority, does not go to the electors after a period of a little under or a little over four years. I do not know of any Parliament in Great Britain that has existed for its full five-year period. On a previous

occasion I suggested that the period here should be five years; but owing to various comments and interjections that were made by members, I have moderated the proposal to a certain extent. But I suggest that the Premier and his colleagues do give consideration to increasing the life of future Parliaments.

Mr. May: Of this Parliament?

Mr. BOVELL: No; I think the present Parliament was elected for a period of three years or less and it would be breaking faith with the electors to increase its life.

Mr. Nalder: Do you think there are too many members?

Mr. BOVELL: No, I do not. I feel that a member of Parliament is called upon to carry out many duties for his electors, and if he does his job properly he is fully occupied in every phase of his parliamentary activities. He has a heavy social programme to adhere to. In addition, the member of Parliament is, or is asked to be—and he endeavours to meet his electors' wishes—the guide, philosopher and friend of his constituents in matters that are troubling them.

Although in the country electorates there are fewer electors than there are in the metropolitan constituencies, with the many thousands of miles that a country member is called upon to travel each year, and with the contacts he has to make with new electors; and the efforts, whether successful or not, that he makes in the interests of individual electors and the collective electorate, I feel that the country member, if he does the job properly—I am speaking for myself on this occasion—has a full-time job; although I must say that sometimes his efforts are not rewarded with the success that he hopes for.

I would not decrease the numerical strength of this Parliament; if anything I would increase it because members of Parliament today, in addition to attending to the legislative programme and watching the interests of the State generally, are called upon to perform many tasks for individual electors. They are called upon to attend many social functions in their electorates and so on, and I believe it is their duty to attend those functions and carry out those duties to the best of their ability. If the numerical strength of Parliament were decreased, I do not think that a member could conscientiously carry out the duties which the electorate expects of him.

MR. OWEN (Darling Range) [6.11]: I join with the previous speakers in extending my congratulations to you, Sir, on your elevation to the office of Speaker. I know that from your experience in another capacity you will maintain the dignity of the House. I know that you have the confidence of the members and that they will co-operate with you in observing that dignity.

First of all, I wish to say a few words on the matter of electricity and the State Electricity Commission. There has been mention on several occasions already—in the past week or two—about the Government's withdrawal of the £70,000 subsidy to the State Electricity Commission to cover losses on the South-West scheme. We can look at that in two ways. We can say that the commission, as a whole, is paying its way and therefore it does not need a subsidy. I am sure the Treasurer looks at it that way. On the other hand, we can regard the £70,000 subsidy as having been used in an endeavour to make the South-east power scheme self-supporting.

Although I have not the figures to show just what the loss has been on that particular section, I know there is so much work to be done down there in the way of further extensions over considerable areas, and reticulation into comparatively sparse areas, that it will be impossible for the scheme to pay its way for many years. Therefore I regret very much that the Government has seen fit to withdraw that subsidy. I feel that if the £70,000 was continued as a payment to the State Electricity Commission, much better progress could be made in reticulating electricity to those areas.

With regard to the extensions that have been made by the commission, under both the metropolitan scheme and the South-West scheme, a lot of money has been spent by the commission, but I would point out that quite a lot of money has been spent by the consumers in connecting up to the commission's supply at the roadside, or at the first post on the private property. Because in many cases individual holdings are comparatively large, it is often a fact that the centre of the source of consumption of electricity is some distance from the road.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. OWEN: Before tea I was talking of the cost to the consumer of installing electricity on his farm. Very often farm buildings are well away from the road and it is necessary to put in long leads of copper wire. In the metropolitan area and other more closely settled districts where the householder uses only two types of current—for lighting and domestic power—it is the practice of the State Electricity Commission to measure up the house—that is the term they use—and then charge the consumer a nominal amount for lighting while the rest of his consumption is counted as power. That consumer has only one meter and pays what is known as the domestic or D rate.

In those circumstances it is necessary to have only two wires coming from the mains to the house and it is a fairly cheap matter to connect the dwelling with the power lines. In the outer areas it is necessary, in addition to the domestic requirements, to

have commercial power for pumping and other purposes, and in such cases the commission does not allow the domestic rate even for current used for household purposes. It is necessary to have the meter on the first pole and there are usually five wires running to the house—the three-phase and wires for lighting—so that is a distinction between the rate for lighting and the rate for domestic power.

Where there is also a fairly heavy demand for current and the three-phase current is necessary for a motor of perhaps 10 or 20 horsepower, if that motor is situated at any great distance from the first pole, it is necessary to install heavy copper cables, which are quite expensive. Not only that, but this practice uses up a good proportion of the copper wire available on the market and at times we have been very short of cable for that purpose. I know of some farms where, from the meter box on the first pole, it is necessary to have seven cables installed, in some cases for half a mile or more, to the consumer's house and sheds.

If the Electricity Commission could come to some arrangement, as it does in regard to the D rate for the householder, it would be necessary for the people I have just mentioned to install only four cables instead of seven; that is, for the three-phase connection and the return aerial earth. If that were done, two wires and sometimes three wires could be dispensed with on that job and used on other projects. It would not only be cheaper for the consumer to install such a system but also it would make the extra copper cable available to other consumers. I can see no difficulty involved in doing what I have suggested.

With its long years of experience the State Electricity Commission has a good idea of the average household's consumption of electricity and if the people were put on the normal D date, there would be no need to install a meter as the commission, I repeat, would know the average consumption. I am sure most primary producers would not mind even if the payment levied was a little bit in favour of the commission, because they would be getting their installations at a much cheaper rate than at present. For that reason they would not mind paying the extra fraction which might be claimed by the State Electricity Commission to make sure it was receiving full payment for the current used for both household light and power.

Usually that amount is only small compared with the amount of current used by the primary producer for his power requirements, especially where he has installed an electric motor to drive pumps, sawbenches or other equipment. I would like the Minister to ask the commission to give my suggestion consideration as I feel it would result in a considerable saving to the primary producer—particularly

the person whose house and buildings are situated at a considerable distance from the road—and would not cost the commission anything.

I wish again to express my dissatisfaction with the State Electricity Commission for failing to make extensions to many small pockets in my electorate. These small pockets of consumers are often adjacent to the high tension wires, and it would not cost a great deal to extend the light and power to them.

It seems that the policy of the commission when making extensions was to rush in to the larger townships and install the current for those close handy, while conveniently forgetting about others who might be a little bit further from the concentration of settlement, yet the commission claims that it is giving priority to the primary producer. In many instances it is definitely not carrying out that policy but is connecting up the townships and overlooking the primary producers altogether. In my electorate there are at least half a dozen such pockets of primary producers who have been neglected and I trust that the commission will revise its policy and take steps to give a complete service in that district instead of only a partial one.

As regards the Kalamunda district in particular, a month or two ago we had a deputation to the Minister in an endeavour to have the overall service improved. The first electricity extensions were taken to Kalamunda during the early 1920's. The line was extended from the quarries in the Boya-Helena Valley area and taken up through rough country to the Kalamunda township. From there the service has gradually extended, and now it goes approximately 10 miles further on to the Carilla district and in a general radius about Kalamunda, even back as far as Maida Vale and Forrestfield at the foot of the hills. The original line feeding the whole of that district still passes through that out of the way area—through the hills near the old zig-zag railway—and the whole of the district is dependent upon it. The country is difficult to traverse and there is no road alongside the power lines. As a result, whenever there is a breakdown—and they are not infrequent because of the exposed position of the line and the high winds experienced during stormy weather—it is difficult for the men to carry out the necessary repairs.

Although the district engineer is doing an excellent job of repair work when breakdowns occur, I believe it is beyond his capacity to keep up a good supply of current throughout the whole district night and day. I know that the State Electricity Commission has plans for providing another ring-feed into the district. In fact, three or four years ago it proceeded as far as the Wattle Grove district, in the foothills, and that supply is fed

from South Fremantle whereas the other line goes around through the metropolitan area to Midland Junction and back up the hills. As I said, the department has plans to extend that line and in some cases the poles have been erected. That will be another feed into the district and should the old line break down the new one will be able to carry the load to the district and there will be an alternative feed into the area. The commission has had this plan under consideration for some time but apparently a lack of funds has delayed its implementation. However, I hope that the authorities will push on with the project and so give us a better service.

During the last summer and autumn months there were quite a few breakdowns in the Pickering Brook-Carilla area. There are about five cool stores operating there and naturally they are all powered by electricity. When the power supply breaks down, and the stores begin to warm up, it affects the fruit because it is not good to have fluctuating temperatures in cool storage units. These producers have been caused a good deal of worry and some of them monetary loss because of the failure of the power during the last six months. The new ring-feeds, which I spoke about earlier, would do a lot to overcome the problem of power breakdowns and would, I think, give more encouragement to the local engineer.

There is another subject I would like to discuss and that is the matter of main roads funds. We know that this year the Commonwealth Government is making increased sums available to the States; but I understand that in past years all the funds made available to the Main Roads Department have not been distributed, or, if they have been distributed they have not all been spent by the local authorities concerned. Generally speaking, the department, in the work done by its own gangs, has done a good job and we have some excellent roads in many parts of the State.

But I feel that frequently these gangs are put on comparatively small jobs, with an expenditure of only £3,000 or £4,000, or up to £10,000, while the local governing authority could do a better job because it is on the spot. In think the Minister, in framing the policy of the Main Roads Department, should give consideration to making more money available by direct grants for approved roads or to the local authority contributory schemes under which any grant made by the department is matched by a similar sum put up by the local authority. If that were done, I am sure we would get more roads made for the same amount of money expended and, in some instances, we would get better roads.

Usually the Main Roads Department does an excellent job but I am disappointed in the quality of the work done on

the Kalamunda-Mundaring section. Something went wrong in the sealing of the road; I do not know whether the metal was wet or dusty, but it is a fact that the metal has not stuck to the sealing coat of bitumen and in many cases there is no metal to protect the bitumen coating. I would think that it will be only a matter of a season or two before the surface will have cracked up and disintegrated. In fact, I think that the department, before handing the road over to the local authority for the maintenance work, should re-seal or re-sheet it to overcome the deficiencies in workmanship.

Another complaint I would like to voice about the same road is the lack of culverts to take the water from the high side of the road to the low side. I think most members will agree that in heavy rainfall country it is necessary to have culverts at fairly frequent intervals. In fact, in a section which the department completed only last year, a short portion was washed out and had to be repaired while they were doing the new section this year. They went back over the old portion, tore up the surface and in the course of about a mile put in another three or four culverts.

One would have naturally thought that as a result of that experience the department would have learnt its lesson; but no! It went ahead and sealed the road—such as the sealing was—and with the first heavy rains of this winter the edges were so badly scoured that last month gangs went back over the work and put in a further eight or ten culverts. Again, in this instance, they had to tear up the bitumen work, put in the new pipes for the culverts, re-lay and re-bituminise the surface over the culverts.

It would be interesting to know how much extra money was spent because the culverts on that road were neglected during the time it was being prepared for the bitumen and because of the extra work of tearing up the bitumen that had been laid and replacing it with a new surface. Therefore, I believe that small road construction jobs—although this particular job was not small, costing about £20,000—should be done by the local authority because it would have a much wider experience of the roads and surfaces in its own area. I would suggest that the Main Roads Department should give favourable consideration to making available larger grants to local authorities to enable them to maintain their own roads rather than the department trying to do all the work with its own gangs.

In his discussion on traffic matters, the member for Claremont suggested that in the erection of signposts and traffic notices the international code should be followed rather than the Australian code. He indicated that, in accordance with the international code, pedestrian crosswalks were represented by a sign which depicted a pair

of legs in motion and a steam locomotive painted on a sign indicated that a railway crossing was not far ahead. If the international code were followed when erecting a traffic sign, it would prevent any confusion in the minds of new Australians. Migrants from overseas are accustomed to these international code signs and if they saw one at the side of the road they would understand it immediately. Therefore, I sincerely hope that when any new traffic signs are to be erected, they will conform to the international code rather than the Australian code.

I was extremely pleased to hear that the Minister for Transport who controls metropolitan traffic matters, is to take steps to force motorists to keep to the left. Last year I dealt with this matter at some length and I said then that the keep to the left rule is one of the rudiments of our traffic laws. Unfortunately, however, it is one of the rules that is most blatantly disregarded. It is with much pleasure, therefore, that I notice that the Minister for Transport proposes to take action to ensure that that traffic regulation is enforced because it is high time that such action was taken.

If the Minister can induce motorists to keep to the left in the future I am sure that, instead of having one line of vehicles hugging the double centre line, we will soon see two lanes of traffic flowing along in each direction which will assist materially in speeding up traffic. There is no doubt that this is badly needed because we have certainly reached the stage of bottlenecks being created on the Causeway itself and on the roundabouts leading to it.

The greatest bottleneck, however, seems to be in Adelaide Terrace. If the full width of that terrace could be used by motorists, there would be room for at least four lanes of traffic. As a result of cars being parked on either side during the greater part of the day and at least one line of cars being parked on one side during peak hours, motorists who travel along Adelaide Terrace in either direction can move in only one lane. This is extremely galling to a motorist who is anxious to get home—especially after 5 p.m.—because he finds that he is held up because the road is not quite wide enough to carry two lanes of traffic in the direction in which he is travelling.

When a bus stops to enable passengers to either board or alight, there is barely sufficient room for one lane of traffic and the worst section in this regard is outside the carbarn at the eastern end of Adelaide Terrace. Therefore, I advocate that the Minister should ban all parking in Adelaide Terrace, especially during peak hours. It is also most important that the bus stop outside the carbarn should be removed to another spot.

On the question of water supplies, again we have from the Government the reason and almost the excuse of lack of funds

for its not going on with the comprehensive water supply scheme and many smaller water supply schemes in the country areas. Many projects have been started with many thousands of pounds being spent on them and yet with no revenue being received from them because of the work not being completed. Nevertheless, new schemes have been commenced and I consider that more money should be spent on those projects already in hand rather than on new undertakings.

Again I voice my disapproval of the fuss that is being made and the great amount of money that the Government proposes to spend on a scheme to supply Perth with water from the Serpentine River. If residents in the metropolitan area were taught to be more economical in their use of water such a scheme would not be necessary for some time. Nevertheless it is proposed to spend millions of pounds in bringing to the metropolitan area water which will not be required for another three or four years. With the money now available it would be much better to complete country water supplies that have been commenced and then concentrate on the scheme for the metropolitan area when the necessity for it becomes a little more urgent.

I now come to another matter relating to water and water supplies concerning which a report was published in "The West Australian" a few weeks ago. Above the article there were headlines which stated that the Government was anxious to acquire 60,000 acres of the weir catchment area. The article then went on to say the Government was keen to secure, as it became available, 60,000 acres—involving more than 50 properties—in the Mundaring Weir catchment area and that it had already acquired 2,900 acres in two properties. In the early years of its establishment, of course, many hundreds or thousands of acres were acquired.

However, the spotlight has been thrown on these so-called 60,000 acres, although when I asked a question in the House a few nights ago, the Minister informed me that of the total catchment area of 364,000 acres there are approximately only 40,000 acres now alienated and of that acreage only a little over 7,000 acres were improved. The newspaper report went on to say—

Although most of the affected area is unimproved, there has been a lot of development in sections adjacent to stream beds and more development is expected.

Much of the land can be farmed only along the valleys through which streams run.

One of the reasons for the acquisition of the land is to prevent the salinity of the weir water from increasing. As trees are chopped down, salt rises to the surface and is washed into the weir through streams and the general run-off.

Prevention of pollution is a second reason for the acquisition.

A third reason is the necessity to prevent the growth of algae and fungus in streams, pipes and conduits. These growths are fertilised by manures washed off developed land or land under development.

One result of the acquisition plan will be a necessity to find another site for the prison farm now at Barton's Mill.

Some residents of the area thought the prison farm caused pollution but close investigation showed this supposition to be wrong.

It is believed that the Government wants to acquire the land before much more development takes place and as money becomes available for the purpose. The land would be dearer after development and its acquisition then might cause more hardship to land-holders.

That apparently has been exercising the minds of the Public Works and the Water Supply Departments and also the mind of the Water Purity Committee, and I understand that certain recommendations have been made. The Minister did inform me, however, by way of an answer to a question, that it is estimated approximately £250,000 will be required to acquire those properties in the catchment area. I think members will agree that £250,000 is quite a lot of money in any man's language, particularly in these times when because of shortage of funds we cannot have water supplies extended here or public works carried out somewhere else. I feel that the Treasurer would naturally be reluctant to spend that amount of money, particularly in one hit, while there is so much need for finance in other directions.

Mr. May: Especially if he has not got it.

Mr. OWEN: I would like to touch on one or two matters relating to Mundaring Weir and the three reasons given for making it necessary to acquire the land alienated in the catchment area. I think we all know that the Mundaring Weir, which was then known as the Helena Reservoir, was completed in 1902, and when water ran into it during 1903 there was some worry about possible salinity. Although it was not fully proved that the salinity was due to this fact—in an endeavour to increase the run off from the hills surrounding the weir many thousands of trees covering thousands of acres of forest country were ringbarked and killed—it is now a matter of history that the salinity in the weir did increase. I have not the records over the full number of years, but those that I have show that the salinity increases after a long, dry summer; but that it rapidly decreases again after the rains flush out the weir and the water runs in.

In 1914, we had, shall we say, the first drought after the construction of the weir, when very little water ran in after the winter of that year and the salinity rose. It was then expressed in parts per 100,000 of chlorine. It showed that it rose 22 grains per gallon in 1914. But with the heavy rains the following year, it soon got back to a very much lower figure than that. It again rose, however, with the next dry year and so on. Accordingly over the past 50 years we have those fluctuations ranging up to somewhere over 30 grains per gallon and going back to a low figure during the flush of the winter rains.

It is interesting to note where that salt comes from. We have quite a big salt problem in the wheatbelt areas where, of course, the rainfall is much lighter than that in the Mundaring Weir catchment area and the salt accumulates in the soil. The mean rainfall in the catchment area is estimated to be 26in. per year. I think even that estimate is a bit light because for the purpose of obtaining the mean, the department takes an average between the rainfall at Mundaring Weir and the rainfall at York. We all know that when it gets past a distance of 40 miles from Perth, and traverses the slope towards York, the rainfall drops off rapidly. Accordingly I would estimate that the average would be 30in. per annum rather than the 26in. quoted by the department.

Then again, it appears to me that most of the salinity is what is known as cyclic salt; that is, salt carried in the air and in the winds that come over the ocean. Being carried in the air with the moisture, it falls with the rain. I do not think there is any great amount of native salt as we get in some areas which, at one time, were inundated by the sea. As I have said, I think the salt in that area is mostly cyclic salt brought in from the sea by the winds and air currents. Most of what we call the weir catchment is comprised of hills and valleys and there is good penetration of that heavy rainfall in those areas and very good drainage. The soil soon gets saturated and the water washes into the streams, runs down into the river and eventually flows into the reservoir.

To my knowledge there has been very little accumulation of salt anywhere along those streams, with the possible exception of one of them, namely, the Darkin River. Members probably know that the so called Helena River divides up into the Darkin River and the Berricking River together with a lot of smaller streams. The Darkin River rises in flat, swampy country where the water does not run away easily. There is considerable evaporation and, accordingly, there may be some salt accumulation in the top end of the Darkin River and, to a lesser degree, in the land around the Berricking River.

In general there is very little accumulation of salt along those waterways. I would say there is a big concentration of salt once it gets into the weir, particularly when we realise that in an average year 900,000,000 to 1,000,000,000 gallons evaporate from the surface of the reservoir every summer. In fact, it was estimated that in 1953-54 evaporation rose to 1,500,000,000 gallons. Even though the water had a very slight salt content when it ran into the weir, considerable concentration by evaporation took place when the salt was left behind. The salt content of the water in the weir is not governed by the amount of salt that is washed out of the soil and brought into the weir, but by the amount of salt that is brought in every year by the rain and concentrated after evaporation in the summer months.

The figures that I have taken out relating to the salinity content have been collected over comparatively wet and dry years. I mentioned that at the end of the summer in 1914, the salt content was 23 grains per gallon. In 1937-38, which was a fairly dry year, it started off at 22 grains but gradually rose to 28 grains at the end of the season. In 1938-39, which again was a very dry year with no overflow, it started off at 28 grains and built up to 35 grains a gallon. However, in 1939-40, a year of very heavy rainfall, it got from 35 grains per gallon down to 9 grains in a few weeks. It gradually rose during the rest of the season to 15 grains per gallon.

In 1946-47, which was the record wet year, it started off at the beginning of the season at 15.9 grains, but within a month it dropped to 4.3 grains. It is interesting to note that during this year 43,000,000,000 gallons went to waste over the weir. In the following year, 1947-48, it dropped from 16 grains per gallon to 12 grains, but gradually rose to 21 grains. Again there was quite a good overflow. In the 1950-51 season it started off at 29 grains which was after several dry years, and rose to 34 grains before dropping back to 30. There was no overflow at all. The record for 1953-54 showed that the salt content started off around 30 grains and dropped back to 22. Again there was no overflow because the wall of the weir had been raised 32 feet and there was no chance of the accumulated salt being flushed out by any overflow.

Over the years, although there have been fluctuations in the salt content, it returns to a low figure. In the last two years with the heavy overflows, I would say that the salt content has gone back to normal. I feel there need be no great worry on account of salinity in Mundaring Weir, judging by the records of the last 50 years. As the demand for water increases with the development of the northern section of the comprehensive scheme, and with the usual supplies being pumped to the Goldfields, the level of the

water in the weir will sink lower during the summer time. However, the amount of evaporation will be decreased because the surface exposed to the air is smaller. The greater capacity will enable a bigger amount of fresh water to go in during the flush period. I feel no serious trouble will be experienced from salinity. There is no substance in the fears of the Water Purity Committee on account of the clearing which takes place, because the type of clearing done is known as park land clearing, under which method a number of trees are left standing.

In the first annual report of the Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Department in 1912, one paragraph states that increased attention is being given to improving the quality of water in Helena Reservoir by extensive scouring and contemplated diversions of summer flow of certain streams which are unduly alkaline. Apparently, they had some worries in those days, and they did not go on with the diversion of the summer streams. The term "alkaline" is rather a misnomer. The fear was possibly mineral salts including iron. At that time, they were also worried with the internal corrosion in the pipes, and the building-up of iron rust inside. As we know, hills water is fairly highly impregnated with iron and in those days also with lime which was deliberately put into the water to counteract the action of the iron. Their worries were apparently ill-founded because the diversion of the summer streams was not proceeded with.

Mention is also made of the prevention of pollution, but there need be no great worry in that regard. So far as I know, the presence of bacillus coli has never been detected in the reservoir or streams adjacent to it. All the holdings in the catchment area are subject to health regulations and they are policed regularly by a ranger who looks into the need for sanitation and investigates the type of stock run on the holdings. The keeping of pigs near watercourses is, of course, prohibited. At Barton's Mill, approximately six miles from the weir, and fairly close to Pickering Brook, which flows into the weir, many people are concentrated, including the inmates of the prison and the warders. Many of them work out in the bush and, as far as I know, precautions on sanitary disposal in the bush are not taken, yet I have not known of any contamination of the weir from this source.

In the report for the year 1912-13, there is one paragraph on page 28, dealing with prevention of pollution of Helena Reservoir and purity of water. It says—

Careful attention has been devoted to this matter throughout the year, and the purity of the water in the reservoir has been fully preserved. The purchase of Greystones Estate in the catchment area was completed, and

there are now practically no private holdings which can be regarded as possible sources of contamination.

I might point out that Greystones is practically at the water's edge, being a few miles from the wall. The private holdings which were left were many miles away and the nearest one following the stream would be six miles distant. Some of them are along the streams and would be at least 25 miles from the top of the weir, but it was felt then that there was no danger of a possible source of contamination from private holdings.

The next matter mentioned in the newspaper article was the growth of algae and sponges, which was giving the department some concern. It has been explained to me that the result of this growth of algae and sponges tends to accumulate on the inside of the pipes, particularly on the Goldfields water supply main line, which causes a certain amount of friction by reducing the capacity of the pipes and so requiring more power to pump the water. It was also explained that when this algae died in the pipes, it imparted some flavour to the water. We do know that fertilisers have some effect on the fauna and flora of the water. In fish farming we fertilise the water at times, thereby increasing the growth of algae to feed the fish, but the fertiliser is put directly into the water.

The addition of fertiliser does speed up the growth of algae. In the case of the Mundaring Weir catchment area, however, the quantity of fertilisers used is comparatively small and miles away from the reservoir itself. In addition, the main fertiliser is superphosphate and, agriculturally at least, we know that phosphates are not easily washed into the ground or for that matter, out of it. Once dissolved in the water, they penetrate the ground and it is impossible to wash them out again. The contamination is very small, particularly when we remember farmers apply the superphosphate early in the season, either before or with the first rains, and there is no run-off until we have had 8 or 10 inches of rain, by which time the superphosphate has been well and truly washed into the soil.

When the creeks begin to run after the heavier rains, it is not a direct run-off but a seepage of the water, which penetrates and filters through the soil. So I would say that the amount of phosphates that has been carried into the weir is negligible. I feel that the growth of sponges and algae in the pipes is not due to any increase in phosphates in the water of the weir, but more to the fact that in recent years the pipes have been lined with concrete. The old iron pipes did not provide a medium for the growth of these sponges, whereas the concrete lined pipes do.

I asked an officer of the department if any checks had been made of the run-off from the land for increases in phosphates,

and I was informed that there had been no checks at all. I claim that until checks are made to prove otherwise, it is more the use of concrete lined pipes which causes these growths. I asked if there was any comparison between the Goldfields supply scheme water and water drawn from the Victoria and other hills reservoirs but they said there had been no growth reported in the metropolitan scheme undertakings. Because such occurrences are not reported, it does not mean they are not there.

Next, I should like to draw a comparison between the Mundaring Weir with its large catchment and capacity of 15,000,000,000 gallons and the Victoria Reservoir, which is the original hills reservoir that supplied the metropolitan area and has, at the present time, a capacity of 188,000,000 gallons—a mere spoonful when compared with Mundaring Weir. On the catchment area of that weir, I would say there are 12 holdings within three miles, which are operated mainly by Italians. They do not spare the manure and I would say there is more fertiliser used on the catchment area of the Victoria Reservoir than on the catchment area of the Mundaring Weir.

That fertiliser is put on almost adjacent to the weir, so if there is no sponge growth in the pipes leading from the Victoria Reservoir, I would say algae growth is not caused by the use of fertilisers on the catchment area. In dealing with this matter, I would like to refer to an extract from a newspaper head "U.K. Experts Warn On Detergents" and it speaks of their worries when detergents used in households are discharged into the sewers or water channels, as they consider it might be detrimental to the health of the people using that water later.

This committee of experts consisted of doctors, a professor of bacteriology and a fisheries inspector, and those people were asked by the Government to report on detergents and their possible effect on public health. They found that materials in the detergents did not appear to be completely removed once purified sewage was discharged into the rivers on which a quarter of Britain's population depend for their water supplies.

So it can be seen that in the older countries which are more heavily settled than Australia, these people actually draw the water supplies from rivers into which sewage effluent has been discharged. It stands to reason that if sewage effluent is discharged into rivers, all the soluble mineral contents of the sewage must result in quite a build-up of phosphates. They have not worried about algae and sponge growths in Great Britain. If they are having no trouble after sewage effluent is discharged into their water supplies, we have nothing to worry about here.

The Water Purity Committee, which comprises senior officers of several of the departments who undoubtedly are idealists, feels that we must eliminate every possible risk. That is quite all right in theory, but at the same time we must come down to matters of practical politics. Here the committee is aiming to have a settlement-free catchment not only on the Mundaring but on the Victoria, Canning, Wongong and Serpentine schemes and also, I understand, on the Collie scheme. I would say this would cost millions of pounds, and, personally, I do not think the expenditure of that money is warranted.

Mr. Lawrence: Who does the committee consist of?

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

Hon. D. BRAND: I move—

That the hon. member's time be extended.

Motion put and passed.

Mr. OWEN: Thank you.

The Minister for Lands: As long as you know you are going to sit here on the rents Bill, it is all right!

Mr. OWEN: It is suggested that, to resume the properties in the Mundaring catchment, will cost £250,000. There are not a great many properties on the Canning although I am sure it would be quite expensive to resume some of them. There are about a dozen properties on the Victoria Reservoir, all highly improved. On the Serpentine I understand there is practically nothing, but on the Collie River catchment there are quite a number of properties already developed, and also the town of Collie itself with a population, I understand, of 10,000. Does the Water Purity Committee recommend that the town of Collie be uprooted and shifted somewhere else?

Mr. Oldfield: It would be a good idea.

Mr. OWEN: I think the member for Collie would have quite a good deal to say about that. It is impossible to do that, so why not come down to a practical solution of any troubles there may be? The department informed me that no tests for salinity or phosphates had been made in the individual streams in the Mundaring catchment—those where settlement had taken place and those which were virgin streams—but I would say a factor that could be equally as important as the clearing and improvement of land would be the activities of the Forests Department in clearing comparatively large areas for the planting of pines. In the Berraking River area quite a few hundred—possibly thousands—of acres have been cleared and will be planted to pines. It might be said that the pines will replace the native timbers. The habits of pines, however, are altogether different.

Pines are comparatively shallow rooted, and they would also prevent the run-off, so that there would be less water running into the weir. I think there would be a tendency to accumulate salinity in those areas because the run-off would be prevented.

Furthermore, I draw attention to the work of the Forests Department and the Wundowie Charcoal Iron and Steel Industry which needs a lot of timber. The Wundowie industry has, in the last few months, been cutting many thousands of trees spread over thousands and thousands of acres. In the aggregate, it would be equivalent to the clearing of quite large areas. I feel it would be equally as important in educing clearing as the clearing of land, particularly in the style of clearing that we adopt today. I feel that if eventually it comes to pass that there is a need to make the supplies more pure, it will be necessary, possibly, to chlorinate the water. This is a simple process and the chlorination would destroy any germs or bacteria and it would also destroy any growth of sponges and algae.

Mr. Lawrence: Have you ever tasted chlorinated water?

Mr. OWEN: It would not, of course, destroy salinity. I understand that if chlorinated water is drunk straight away, the taste of chlorine can be detected.

Mr. Lawrence: It is not so good, either.

Mr. OWEN: But by the time it goes through the pipes, the taste of chlorine goes off. I would suggest to the department and those who are anxious to resume the land, that they take a lesson from the engineer who was in charge of the Water Supply Department from about 1912 to the early 1920's, namely, the late Mr. Lawson who was a strong advocate for the resumption of properties on catchment areas. I know from personal experience that in 1921 the department was going to resume land on the area of the Bickley Brook reservoir. This is not now used for water supply purposes but as a national fitness centre.

Mr. Lawson first advocated the resumption of all the properties along the Bickley Brook, but after meeting the settlers and going into the question more deeply, he recommended that the Public Works Department should not resume or acquire these properties, but that it should be willing to buy any that were offered for sale. I think that was a very good policy and if it were carried out over many years, the department would get most of the properties; and eventually I feel it would get them all. This policy would spread the cost to the department over a long period and it would not in any way hinder the settlers who are doing their best to wrest a living from their holdings.

It must be realised that if the Water Purity Committee had its way, and the holdings on all these catchment areas were

resumed, something like 1,500,000 acres of land would be tied up as far as agriculture is concerned. Of course, the greater part of that country would be in forest areas, and it is already tied up, but quite a few valuable holdings would revert to bush or would become waste land which would probably breed rabbits and nothing else so that the State would be the poorer by many hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of produce each year. I hope that the Minister, and also the Premier, will take a look at this question. I am sure that the Premier would give favourable consideration to acquiring these properties, only as they are offered for sale.

In conclusion, I would say that the Water Purity Committee has not been consistent. The Minister for Agriculture will know that many years ago we did endeavour to get a piece of land in the Victoria Reservoir catchment area for a research station. It was vetoed by the Water Purity Committee. Since that time, however, an area of land adjacent to that holding has been made available to settlers—I speak of the old railway line reserve. I think it has been made available under lease for 20 years and is being used for agriculture, yet we were denied the use of that land for a research station. Within half a mile of that spot, a big area is being cleared to provide ironstone and bauxite for the Cockburn Sound cement works and so, in effect, although we could not develop that land there is a greater area being developed, apparently with the approval of the Water Purity Committee, and I think that body should be more consistent. I trust the Government will give serious consideration to what I have said and let those settlers know that their properties will not be resumed unless they want to sell out.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

BILL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [8.42]: I take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister for Native Welfare, as this is the first Bill he has introduced since being elevated to the rank of Minister of the Crown. He is fortunate, in that he introduced this rents and tenancies measure in a much calmer atmosphere than has been experienced previously in this Chamber for some years when similar Bills were brought before the House. I imagine that the Minister for Transport, who is not present this evening, thinks of this measure with some degree of nostalgia, because he has been the centre of some of the rather acrimonious debates which have taken place on this subject.

At the outset I wish to make it clear that we are not opposing the principal provision of this measure; namely, the extension of the main provisions of the Act for a further 12 months to the 31st December, 1957. The reason why we are not opposing that portion of the measure is that we feel that the question of rents and tenancies control is, for all practical purposes, a dead letter and if the Government feels that it wants another 12 months in which to taper off the control, the Opposition has no objection to that extension of time. But we cannot see any good reason for waiting to continue the control for a further year after this period expires on the 31st December, 1957.

Mr. May: How would you know that, at this stage?

Mr. COURT: The member for Collie has apparently interjected in a spirit of helpfulness, because he has touched on the point with which I was about to deal. There were, for many years, opposing views on the question of rents and tenancies control. We, on this side, advocated that there should be a steady relaxation of the controls in line with the changing conditions and the altered circumstances that prevailed so many years after the end of the war. The whole attitude on this side has been progressively to relax controls with a view to their eventual abolition and a return to the prewar position where a contractual arrangement was entered into between landlord and tenant.

On the Government side of the House, of course, the view was held that there must be a tight and severe form of control maintained over rents and tenancies. However, due to the insistence of another place this control has been steadily relaxed and it is interesting to look back at the prophecies of the Minister then in charge of the Bill, as compared with what actually happened. He portrayed a picture of great human suffering with hundreds of people out in the streets and said that the Fair Rents Court would not be able to handle the hundreds of applicants who would be lining up to have their cases heard.

But, as predicted from this side, the demand for the services of that court has not been very great. There has been no great upsurge of human suffering due to the relaxation of controls, and I suggest, in all sincerity, that the arrangements between landlords and tenants have in the main settled down to what was thoroughly understood before the war and what is appreciated by all concerned—

Mr. Lawrence: Do you really believe that?

Mr. COURT: I do. There has been a degree of reshuffling of tenants; some have gone and others have taken their places, and there has been a degree of freedom permitted and I think the whole position

is now much more satisfactory to all concerned. No tenant wants to have a landlord he does not like, and vice versa, and during the last year or two there have been facilities for a change and the member who interjected cannot point to any great hardship—

Mr. Lawrence: What rot! If you want facts, I will show them to you. I throw you that challenge.

Mr. COURT: I prefer at this stage to ignore the interjections of the member for South Fremantle.

Mr. Lawrence: I throw you the challenge. Come with me and I will show you.

Mr. COURT: The important point is that the predictions of the Minister in charge of the previous measure have not been borne out by facts. No one in this Chamber can point to great human suffering or hardship or hundreds of people being thrown out into the streets, as predicted. There have been two main reasons for the improvement in the situation. In the first place the relaxation of the control has tended to free a number of houses for letting, and, secondly, there has been an advance made in improving the housing situation to a stage where, in the words of the Minister for Housing himself, the position has been caught up with. As far as the first point is concerned, it follows that when there is a relaxation of control owners of premises are prepared to allow them to be let, knowing that with reasonable speed they can regain possession, and they are therefore more anxious to allow their properties to be let when they go abroad, or under other circumstances, than they were before. One of the most important factors which we have to take into account is that, due to the relaxation of controls, there has been a greater degree of integrity as far as the rents charged are concerned.

Mr. Lawrence: Cut that out!

Mr. COURT: The hon. member can have his say in a few moments as I will not speak for very long. There is no denying that before there was a relaxation of the controls a blackmarket prevailed in key money and rents, and when we removed the controls we got a degree of honesty and frankness such as did not prevail when there was control. It is no use denying that while the controls were clamped on tight, both landlord and tenant entered into arrangements which were outside the law. In some parts of Australia, where they have retained tighter forms of control, there are still clandestine arrangements made between landlord and tenant, which take them outside the law.

Under the system which we have there is no object in the landlord or tenant entering into a private arrangement. On the one hand, there is a reasonable supply of housing and accommodation and,

on the other, there is an encouragement to be honest and frank in their contractual arrangements rather than to try to go behind the law. It is a pity that we have not the courage to face up to a good many more controls on the same basis because I think that such action helps to maintain strong the moral fibre of the people. I would point out that there is a contractual arrangement between landlord and tenant which is in accordance with the law.

I would invite the attention of members to two particular phases of this Bill. The first one deals with the transaction clause in the principal Act and the section of the Act concerned is 20B., the principal subsections involved being (2), (3) and (4). The second provision of the Bill refers to Section 33 of the Act, which is related to the overall measure of rent and tenancy controls. The importance of Section 20B, and particularly Subsections (2), (3) and (4) was to provide some transition machinery when the main restrictions were being removed. Those members who have not studied Section 20B. could, with advantage, see the objects of Subsections (2), (3) and (4). They are rather unorthodox in their form, but they were meant to cover a transition period and not eventually to form a part of the principal measure.

For this reason a date was inserted in those clauses different from that in the principal provision of the Act. Section 20B. had the date, the 31st August, 1955, eventually extended to 1956 and Section 33 had the 31st December, 1955, ultimately altered to the 31st December, 1956. We feel that the special provisions of Section 20B. Subsections (2), (3) and (4), have probably outlived their usefulness and that it is time the Act was allowed to take on its proper form, which would prevail if these subsections were removed and Section 20B comprised only Subsection (1). However, I will at the appropriate time move an amendment to extend the time limit of Section 20B, and particularly Subsections (2), (3) and (4), to allow Parliament—that is, both Houses—to give more mature consideration as to whether those subsections should be continued for a further year.

It must be admitted that this Bill is being introduced with a degree of indecent haste. All of a sudden we are told that this particular section will expire on the 31st August and a Bill is raced in for us to deal with in one day, without a proper chance of research, because only today have we known of the Government's intentions. I feel that Parliament is entitled to time to consider whether these Subsections (2), (3) and (4) of Section 20B. should be retained, extended or dropped out altogether.

Mr. May: Do you think that this Act has ever been used viciously?

Mr. COURT: It all depends on what the hon. member means by "used viciously". I do not know whether he means by tenants, by landlords, or by both.

Mr. May: I mean the provisions of the Act.

Mr. COURT: I think the Act, as it was eventually amended as a result of conferences between the two Houses, has served a very useful purpose during this transitory period.

Mr. May: Then what is wrong with extending it for another 12 months?

Mr. COURT: I had hoped that the hon. member had been listening to my explanation about the special provisions of Subsections (2), (3) and (4).

Mr. May: I did you the honour of listening to every word.

Mr. COURT: They were put in for a purpose and the special purpose has, in our opinion, disappeared. Obviously then, there is no object in continuing those particular subsections. However, I was just foreshadowing, for the information of the Minister, an amendment that I will move at the appropriate time. I shall move to insert a date in place of the 31st August, 1957, in order to allow the protection—if that is what the Government thinks it is—to remain longer than the 31st August, 1956. That means we will not be interfering with any current matters that are before the court and it will be a date sufficiently far ahead—say, the 31st December, 1956—to give the Government ample opportunity during this session to bring down another Bill to obtain the opinion of this House as to whether an extension should be made to August, 1957, or longer.

Mr. Lawrence: Will you repeat that?

Mr. COURT: I suggest that if, as a result of more mature deliberation, it is decided to continue the special provisions of Section 20B. longer than this year, the date should be brought into line with the principal provision in the Act, namely, that contained in Section 33. With all sincerity, I put that to the Minister for consideration as being a more satisfactory way of dealing with this measure. If he obtains the temporary cover that he wants beyond the 31st August, 1956, it will allow ample time for more mature consideration of the ultimate fate of the special transitory subsections of Section 20B.

Quite apart from any provisions in this particular Bill, and quite apart from any provisions in the principal Act, protection for tenants is already provided under the Local Court Act. Discretion to deal with cases of hardship is left in the hands of the magistrate and if, in his opinion, some extension of time in regard to eviction should be granted, he can agree to it. We should bear in mind that we do not need the rents and tenancies legislation to grant

a degree of protection to tenants because such protection is already included in the existing law of this country.

Before I conclude, I wish to make this observation: In considering the overall problem of rents and tenancies, and any upward pressure on rents and tenancies, there are two things we have to take into account. Firstly, there is the fact that with the present conditions in the building industry we have seen a decline in the cost of building which we hope will find its way eventually into the rents structure. The figures given by the Minister for Housing this evening were most illuminating because it means that every 10 houses built now are costing roughly what nine houses cost two years ago. That is a very considerable gain.

The other point I want to stress is the fact that home ownership, and parallel with that the cost of rentals, is being seriously affected by the acts of Governments themselves. It follows that when the land tax is pushed up, water charges are increased, municipal rates go up and other governmental charges are increased, they are adding directly to the cost of owning or renting a home. I feel that Governments have a special duty when they are considering governmental charges to realise that any interference with those charges has an immediate effect in forcing rents up. Of course, at the moment there is one counteracting measure which helps a little and that is the fact that there is a greater availability of private homes than there used to be. Once there is a greater availability and some competition in letting those houses, it follows that the rents automatically come down without any controls or without the need for any controls.

This downward movement, or better treatment for tenants, takes several forms. It might be a small easing of the rent charged, but more often it takes the form of a better tenancy arrangement where the landlord is prepared to keep the premises in a better condition and generally do more to make the premises attractive so as to maintain or retain suitable tenants. As far as the Opposition is concerned, we support the second reading. We will support the main provision of the Bill, but we will attempt, at the appropriate time, to move an amendment to modify the date in regard to Section 20B.

MR. ANDREW (Victoria Park) [9.0]: I am keenly interested in this Bill being re-enacted, because I think it is far better to have legislation, even with only a few provisions to afford protection to tenants, than to have no Bill at all. In the past we have been accused of playing politics when discussing rents and tenancies legislation. In 1953 we failed to re-enact a similar Bill, although the previous Government had brought down a continuance

measure each year. In the following year this Government held a special session to introduce a rents and tenancies Bill, and we were bitterly attacked and accused by the member for Dale of just playing party politics.

Such an attack was most unwarranted, because apparently the leaders of the Liberal Party in those days were not aware of the great hardship that was being borne by a great section of the community. I will venture to say that great hardship has prevailed in the community since that date, although not to the same extent as previously. During the course of my remarks, I will deal with some of the points that have been raised by the member for Nedlands.

I think it can be truly said that good government is achieved by holding the balance of the scales fairly between all sections of the community or, as in this case, between landlord and tenant. What we have to do is to endeavour to enact legislation that will be fair and just to all individuals. What are these vicious controls of which the member for Nedlands speaks? What we sought was equitable treatment for both landlord and tenant. None of us will say that all landlords are bad individuals. There are many who are very fine types. Nevertheless, there is a rapacious section of landlords, and that is the section which the Opposition has assisted to exploit the people. We desire that fair rent should be assessed by a tribunal which we call the Fair Rents Court, and that either party should have the right to approach that body for assessment of a fair rent.

Mr. Court: That provision is in the Act now.

Mr. ANDREW: Although either the landlord or the tenant could approach that tribunal, in the main it would be the tenant who made application to the court. However, I know that landlords have approached it for the assessment of a fair rent, such applications, in most instances, being granted. We also consider that a tenant should be given some security of tenure. Today he has but little security.

Although most tenants know that they can approach the court for a fair rent assessment, they recognise that if they are successful in their application to the court, the landlord, after three months, can give them 28 days' notice and evict them. However, if the rent is reduced to 80 per cent. of the figure ruling prior to the application being made to the court, or even below that percentage, he has 12 months of protection, and it is that provision that we want to retain in the present Bill. I had hoped that the Minister would attempt to re-enact some amendments to grant further protection to tenants.

A statement was made by the member for Nedlands that we could not point to any great hardships that were being borne by tenants at the present time. I wish

to point out to him that recently a working man approached me and told me that he was earning £14 a week and renting a four-room weatherboard house in Thorogood-st., Victoria Park, which was 40 years old, and for which he was paying £5 10s. a week. He said to me, "I have four children, and they have to go without the necessities of life because of the high rent I have to pay." He asked my advice, and I told him to make application to the Fair Rents Court. He did so, and his rent was reduced to £3 10s., but, in my estimation, it was still £1 a week too much. The house which that man occupies is the first in Thorogood-st. It is a timber-frame structure, and is at least 40 years old. It is in a bad state of repair, and yet, despite all those facts, this man was paying £5 10s. a week for it.

During an election speech which I made in Victoria Park, I referred to that house; and shortly afterwards I received a telephone call from somebody who desired to see me at Nos 18 and 20 Mackie-st. I discovered that these two houses were semi-detached. They were among the first houses built in Victoria Park, and were extremely dilapidated. They were unfurnished, and the rent that was being paid, by working people, for each one of them was £7 a week. That is an answer to our friends on the opposite side of the House who said that we could not point to any hardship among tenants which necessitated the re-enactment of this legislation.

Mr. Court: That is not fair comment, and there is a Fair Rents Court provided for in the Bill.

Mr. ANDREW: The hon. member mentioned that we could not point to any instances of great hardship at the present time. The owner of the two houses which I have just referred to is A. D. Greer. He has a tea and coffee establishment in Milligan-street and I told him he was a blood-sucker. I did not beat about the bush with him. I told him he was exploiting his tenants.

Mr. O'Brien: I was with you at the time.

Mr. ANDREW: Yes. The hon. member was with me when I saw Mr. Greer. That man has purchased many houses, and he has increased the rents of all of them to a high degree. He bought a house in Fremantle the rental for which was originally 16s. a week. It changed hands and the new owner increased the rent to £1 a week. The house was then bought by A. D. Greer and he let it at a rental of £5 5s. a week. In view of the facts outlined, the Opposition should have no doubt about the high rents which workers are paying.

Mr. Court: I suppose you noticed the figure given by the Minister about the number of people who went into State houses following evictions.

Mr. ANDREW: The member for Nedlands is talking about eviction. I have already told him that many tenants do not seek relief because they are afraid of being evicted, and it is extremely difficult for them to find another house. When I lived in Great Eastern Highway, I knew of people in Victoria Park who were evicted and had to pay £8 8s. a week for a house in South Perth. The wife was obliged to go out to work in order to pay the extra rent.

Mr. Court: That is not necessary today.

Mr. ANDREW: Those people considered that they had to do it, because otherwise they would not have been able to get a house. Last week some people wanted a house in Victoria Park. They searched high and low and eventually managed to get one. I went out and had a look at it. It is a neat four-roomed house of wood and asbestos, and the rent is £5 5s. a week. That is far too high. Why should the rents charged be exorbitant? If it is not a fair rent, why not let the court assess it and give the tenant protection if the rent is reduced? Members opposite want to load it against the tenant and make it impossible for him to have his rent reduced because if it is the landlord will immediately evict him.

Further, the member for Nedlands mentioned that the Minister for Housing had said that he had caught up with the housing lag. The Minister never said he had fully caught up with the housing problem, because there is still a big demand for homes, due largely to the lack of finance. The programme which the Minister for Housing was carrying out had to be drastically reduced because he did not have the money to continue building at the previous rate.

Mr. Court: During the election, he said he had solved the housing problem.

Mr. ANDREW: To all intents and purposes he had. The member for Nedlands knows as well as I do that the rate of building of State houses this year and the programme mapped out has had to be greatly reduced because the Federal authorities have not provided enough finance. Half a loaf is better than no bread at all. This Bill will give a small measure of protection, though it will not give nearly as much protection as is fair to the tenants. We must support the Bill, and I hope it will be passed.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [9.13]: I want to make it quite clear, if it is necessary for me to do so, that over the years I have been here I have been opposed to controls generally. In times of emergency, however, it is necessary for controls to be enacted; and following the end of the war this Parliament, in its wisdom, continued controls relative to rents and tenancies. The personnel returning from active service found that their families were inadequately housed, and it was necessary to maintain certain controls

over rents and tenancies. But this has been gradually tapered off until today, when we have a Bill before the House that provides for tenants to appeal to a judicial tribunal if they feel they are being penalised in any way.

Over these postwar years, the State Housing Commission has become the State's greatest landlord. By comparison today there are very few private landlords. The State Housing Commission is not always as lenient with tenants as the member for Victoria Park would have us believe. I have known instances of tenants in State rental houses being served with eviction notices; and these people have had large families. In one case there were seven small children involved, whose ages ranged from a babe in arms to a child of 12 years, one of whom was a spastic child.

The tenant came to me in a sorry plight and said that he had an eviction order, for which he did not know the reason. There were certain circumstances involved, and I got in touch with the authorities at the State Housing Commission, and discovered that for some reason or other, which I am not going to explain now, his rent had fallen into arrears. The matter was adjusted, and this person was allowed to continue his tenancy. But the viciousness of this State landlord is far greater than anything I have experienced with private landlords.

It would be a good thing if a Bill were introduced to make it obligatory for the State Housing Commission, when serving a notice of eviction, to state the reason for the eviction; and if it is due to arrears of rent, the amount of the arrears should be also stated in the eviction notice.

Mr. Andrew: They have every opportunity.

Mr. BOVELL: My experience has been otherwise. I would also like to say that I object to the haste with which this Bill has been introduced. We find the Government introducing a Bill, asking for the suspension of Standing Orders, and wishing to rush the measure through all its stages in one sitting of the House. I hope the Government will not adopt this dictatorial attitude on future occasions during this and forthcoming sessions of this 22nd Parliament.

The Minister for Health: This is only a re-enactment.

Mr. BOVELL: That makes no difference. In my opinion there is no need for such undue haste in any measure.

Mr. Ackland: The Kalgoorlie races are far more important than giving this measure proper consideration.

The Minister for Native Welfare: What about country shows? Are those not being held next week?

Mr. Ackland: No, none whatever.

Mr. BOVELL: I believe it is necessary for this measure to be re-enacted in order to prevent certain of its provisions becoming obsolete. However, I would ask the Government, when introducing future measures, to give some consideration to the matter so that we may have time to study the facts and provisions of the measures generally.

The Minister for Health: You have had plenty of time to study it since it was enacted.

Mr. BOVELL: It is the principle to which I object. The member for Victoria Park threw into the ring the fact that tenants of all private landlords are presumably being penalised, and that exorbitant rents are being charged. I would like any member on the Government side of the House to refute the fact that both in and outside this Chamber the Minister for Housing has claimed in the last 12 months that the housing position has been solved. In view of the Minister's repeated statements, any tenant of a private landlord should be able to go to the Housing Commission and obtain a house from that source. If the Minister's statements are correct—and I disputed them in the last session of the previous Parliament—there is no reason why tenants of private landlords should be subjected to any inquisition whatsoever. I repeat this, my last appeal: Let the Government give members an opportunity to study legislation when it is being introduced. We do not want a sausage-machine technique; we want the opportunity to study the effect of legislation on the community generally.

MR. WILD (Dale) [9.21]: Like my two colleagues, I rise to support this measure; but I cannot let the opportunity pass without saying that the Minister's introductory speech this evening was a great vindication of the attitude that was adopted by the Opposition during the past three years to the continued re-enactment of this legislation.

Refreshing my memory from Hansard, we were told last year, and in the previous year, by the Minister for Housing when introducing the continuance Bills that there would be hundreds and possibly thousands of people thrown out of their homes if the Bills presented to the House, were passed as amended by the Opposition. When one looks at the figures quoted by the Minister this evening, and at the report of the officer presiding over the Fair Rents Court, it is pretty evident that the fears expressed by the Government at the time were wide of the mark.

Only a short while ago I was looking through the Pocket Year Book, copies of which were placed before us this evening. It indicates how wide of the mark were the fears of the Government when one finds in the last census that of the 108,000 people who occupied houses in the metropolitan area only 441 had been evicted. Of those

441, only 295 sought assistance from the State Housing Commission. So, from a percentage viewpoint, the number of evictions were very minute.

When we read the report further, we find that—quite contrary to the Minister's fears that there would be hundreds if not thousands of people applying to the Fair Rents Court because of the action of the vicious landlords that we on this side of the House were supposed to represent—Mr. Wallwork indicated in the report, tabled this evening, that in the last 12 months only 59 applications for review of rents were made; and of these, 20 were withdrawn and determinations were made in 42 cases.

When those figures are examined, there do not seem to me to be too many rapacious landlords. Looking at the figures in the report, it is noticeable that they have decreased progressively, because in the first three months of the operation of this court, only 18 applications were made; in the second three months, 26 were made; and in the last three months, up to the 30th June, only 12 were made.

Although the member for Victoria Park quoted a few instances where tenants were charged extremely high rentals, I suggest the figures I quoted speak for themselves. The legislation is on the statute book; and if tenants are being charged an unfair rent, they have the liberty to apply to the court. Yet we find that in toto only 59 applications have been made to the court in the nine months of its existence. So there do not seem to me to be a great many of these cases if only 59 tenants out of 108,000 house occupants—admittedly possibly 40 per cent. of them owned their dwellings and approximately 60,000 lived in rented houses—applied to the court because they thought they were being charged an unfair rental.

When the Bill was introduced last year, we were also asked to consider making this a permanent Act. I submit that the decision of another place, even though it was not palatable to the Government, was very much on the ball. As we were told by the member for Vasse this evening, members on this side of the House dislike controls. We knew full well over the years that, if the Government progressively eased this legislation, then with the passage of time things would catch up. We know that at present there are empty houses in this city. I do not say there are many of them; but if members look through the "To Let" column of the newspaper as I do, because I have been interested in housing all these years, they will find many houses to let.

This evening we were told that the cost of building a home is some £300 less than it was two years ago. I would point out further that rentals today are lower than they have been for many years. One need only cite the flats in Adelaide Terrace

owned by Krantz and Co. Two years ago, when many of these flats were first occupied, one could not be obtained for less than £6 15s. a week. If members like to go down and inquire, they will find no difficulty in getting one of them for £4 15s. a week. All these things add up to the point which has been made in this House and repeated year by year when this legislation was re-enacted: and that is that the time is ripe when the legislation should be repealed, because the old law of supply and demand catches up.

However, the Government in its wisdom is determined to re-enact this legislation for a further 12 months. Personally I do not think there is any necessity for it to remain on the statute book. Speaking personally and not for the Opposition, I am prepared to give this legislation a further 12 months; but if it comes up again after that time, unless there are very changed circumstances, I shall not be prepared to support its continuance.

THE MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE (Hon. J. J. Brady—Guildford-Midland—in reply) [9.28]: I thank members for the contributions they have made to the second reading debate on this Bill. I am very sorry to have to inform the member for Nedlands at the outset that we on this side are not prepared to accept any amendments other than those set out in the Bill. I would like to answer one or two of the comments which have been made, firstly, to show members that it is necessary for this Act to continue; and, secondly, to show the effect which the lifting of controls has had on rentals, and what is happening in other States. I shall do that as I proceed.

Dealing with the number of evictions firstly: The figure of 569 indicated by members opposite was said to be very small when compared with the total number of tenants. But what they overlooked was this: While only 569 tenants have actually been evicted, hundreds of others had to get out of their houses with the greatest inconvenience to themselves. In some cases it resulted in the breaking down of health, in domestic upsets, and in families being separated, all because those tenants could not afford to go to court and contest the cases, which would involve them in the necessary legal expenses. Without any exaggeration, there are hundreds of those cases.

Many a businessman today finds himself in a most difficult position because of the fact that he has been evicted. I know of two firms which at the moment have had to borrow money at a very high rate of interest in order to get premises to save themselves, together with their businesses, from being evicted on to the street within the next few months. In this State where we have relaxed controls of rent, an amazing position is arising.

If we take the rental figure of 1,000 in the 1923-1927 period we find that in March 1954, when controls were being lifted, the figure in Perth was 1,230; but in March 1956, it had gone up to 1,962. In other words, there was an increase of 732 points, or approximately a 50 per cent. increase in rents. I have checked the figures for Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, and Hobart; and I find that the rental increase in Perth is the highest in Australia. I mention the matter here because the member for Nedlands pointed out that by lifting controls we would save all these difficulties.

Let us deal with the position in Hobart, Tasmania. Controls were lifted there last year; and the figure from 1954 until the end of last year had been practically fixed. The figures for the March, June, September and December quarters were the same, at 1,271. In the March quarter for 1955, it had risen to 1,272, only one point increase; but in December, when rental control was lifted, the figure went to 1,282. In June, 1956, it went to 1,684, an increase of 413 points in about six months. So the argument adduced by our friends opposite that, with the lifting of controls, rentals find their own basis, is not proved by these figures.

I am not sure about Sydney, but I have an idea that New South Wales still has controls in many respects. I do not know whether rent is controlled there; but it is strange that in Sydney, which has had one of the greatest increases in population in Australia, the rental figure is almost consistent right through. This indicates, possibly, that controls could be the reason for it. The point I want to make in reply to the member for Nedlands is that when controls are lifted, rents are not pegged, nor do they come down to the levels which people would expect.

Mr. Court: You do not believe that the Sydney figures are correct, do you?

THE MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: Well, I got them from our statistical department, and I cannot imagine that the officials there would deliberately try to cook these figures because of the debate tonight. The statistician's officers are responsible for the figures I have quoted, because these are the figures they have given me. The rent figure has gone up by 732 points as against what it was in 1954 when we started to lift controls. That is another serious fact which is reflected in the basic wage.

The rental figure in the basic wage is most important. If we took the correct basic wage figure today as distinct from what is classed as the frozen basic wage, we would find that the basic wage in Western Australia today would be £14 4s. 9d., and out of that amount, no less than 16s. 9d. is attributable to increases in rent.

This is one of the difficulties which industrial and commercial concerns have to face, and also residents in houses. Rentals have got out of hand and are going up considerably and so are increasing the costs of manufacturers and producers in this State. It can thus be seen that even from the point of view of industry it is not advisable to encourage an increase in rentals.

I want to deal with the haste aspect. I am inclined to think that when the date of August, 1956, was placed in the Bill, it was inserted so that the House would have an opportunity to deal with the matter of rentals early in the session. I do not think we could have dealt with it much earlier than this. It was argued in another place that by making the date December, we would be leaving it close to the end of the session when a lot of confusion could arise, but if it is made earlier the House would have an opportunity to deal with it.

Last night we gave notice that we would introduce the Bill, and we advised that it would be only a continuing measure so that members would know that we were simply going to extend the date for 12 months. In order to co-operate with the Opposition, we gave an advance copy of the Bill to leaders of both parties as early as 3 o'clock this afternoon. We also gave an adjournment this afternoon so that members of the Opposition could not only prepare an opposition debate at the second reading stage, but could also peruse the figures which were placed on the Table of the House this afternoon.

This side of the House, and the Leader of the Government in particular, has been twitted by the Opposition with not having given sufficient consideration to country members when adjourning the House from time to time; particularly at Christmas time. I understand that one of the reasons for getting the Bill through this week is to give country members in another place a chance to go to the country next week. The Government, for its part, could well have held this matter over until next week; but in a spirit of co-operation with country members of both parties, the Bill has been brought down, and we have also tried to help by making copies of the Bill available at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Bovell: The apology is accepted; but do not let it happen again.

THE MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: So that members will know what Section 20B in the Act deals with, I point out that it is in Part VI which is concerned with the recovery of the possession of premises. As the member for Nedlands pointed out, it is a peculiar aspect, inasmuch as there is a form of legislation here which is not usual. But in the circumstances, it was found desirable; because if a person is to have his rent increased or is

to be evicted, he must first of all be given 28 days' notice. If the case goes to the court and the rental is not decreased more than 20 per cent., the tenant has the protection that he cannot be evicted from the house under three months; in other words the lessee may go to the court and ask for protection. He might get a reduction of a few shillings in his rent, but the landlord would have the opportunity the next week of giving him 28 days' notice so as to get even.

But the legislators, in their wisdom, thought that was not a fair go. They considered that the tenant should not be evicted for at least three months; and that appears in the Bill. But the unusual legislation here is this: If the man on going to the court gets a greater reduction than 20 per cent., and the court finds his rent should not be more than 80 per cent. of the rental he is charged, on the one hand he gets a reduction by the court; and, on the other, he cannot be evicted for more than 12 months. So that a man may go to the court and ask for a reduction in rent with the assurance that if the landlord wishes to be vindictive as a consequence of a reduction being granted he has, if it is a substantial reduction, protection for 12 months. We feel this is a desirable form of legislation, as it would cut out the avariciousness and profiteering which I do not think anyone wants to perpetuate.

There is also another provision whereby, if a man wants to recover possession of his premises, he has to give the lessee 28 days' notice; and then, if the court is so disposed, and believes there is any hardship to be imposed on the lessee through eviction, it has the right to grant a further three months' notice. I believe that provision could be of great importance for the next six months, particularly to unemployed people. A man might become unemployed and unable to pay his rent, and the landlord might seek recovery of the premises. If the tenant could point out to the court that he was out of work, although wanting to pay his rent, he could be given temporary protection.

Mr. Bovell: I hope you will take up with the State Housing Commission my suggestion in regard to evictions of that sort.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: In fairness to the Minister for Housing, it must be admitted that, were it not for the generosity shown by his department, many people in our community would have been forced to pay high rents. It is due only to the activities of the State Housing Commission and the Minister that so many houses have been built in the last few years as against the much smaller number built by the previous Government, thus saving people from having to pay £5 or £6 per week rent, a figure not unusually charged by landlords. As it is, many tenants of commission houses pay £2 10s. or

£3 per week, which is a reasonable figure in view of the capital cost of the houses and the interest to be paid.

Hon. D. Brand: Can it not be attributed also to the generous amount of capital provided by the Commonwealth Government?

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I do not wish to take any credit from the Commonwealth Government in that regard, and I hope it will continue to be generous and help our unemployed. I think members would be well advised to accept the Bill in its present form. I am sorry I cannot promise to accept the amendment proposed by the member for Nedlands. There are people who went to the court recently and had their rents reduced, and who believe they have protection for another 12 months; and I think they are entitled to it under this legislation. If we agreed to the proposed amendment, it is questionable what would happen to those people at the end of three months.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Moir in the Chair; the Minister for Native Welfare in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Section 20B amended.

Mr. COURT: I move an amendment—

That all words after the word "substituting" in line 8, page 2, be struck out and the words, "for the words 'thirty-first day of August' in lines 3 and 4 of Subsection (4) the words '31st day of December,'" inserted in lieu.

The effect of the amendment, if agreed to, will be that in place of the date, the 31st August, 1956, in Section 20B., the words "31st day of December, 1956" will appear. The reason for putting forward that date is to bring it into line with the other expiry date in Section 33 of the principal measure. It is important to remember that the provisions of Subsection (2), (3) and (4) of Section 20B. were put in as a transition measure, and were never intended to be part of the permanent structure.

I do not think the Minister was fair in his reference to the reasons for the 31st August being inserted. That date was used because it coincided with the time when the main measure was under consideration—I think in 1954—and it was always understood to be a transition measure. If the extension provision in Subsection (4) is taken out, it will mean that Section 20B. will have only one subsection in it, and that will be Subsection (1). The import of that is that if Subsections (2), (3) and (4) eventually disappear, or become ineffective, the tenant

will still be protected in respect of the Fair Rents Court, the rent inspector and the minimum notice he must receive.

We therefore consider that to enable the Government to overcome its predicament of having to get the measure through before the 31st August, it should agree to an extension of time in respect of Section 20B. to the 31st December, 1956, and re-submit the measure in ample time to permit a proper examination of it by both Chambers in respect of Section 20B. and the proposed extension in respect of Section 33.

THE MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: For reasons which I advanced at the second reading stage, I do not intend to accept the amendment, because I think it will only confuse members in dealing with this measure. This is not an easy Bill to follow, even when one has studied it for some hours. As one member said to me, it is worse than the Companies Act, with all its amendments. I do not think members fully understand the import of the amendment, which will cut down the 12 months further protection for landlords and tenants. Already on the notice paper there is a long list of Bills to be introduced, and if this amendment is agreed to it will necessitate the introduction of a further measure towards the end of the year. Although the hon. member might be quite sincere in trying to help the Government, I do not think the amendment should be accepted.

Mr. BOVELL: I would like some clarification of the Minister's statement that this Bill is more difficult to follow than the Companies Act. I do not know whether he means the Bill or the Act. If that be so, I would have thought that he would have accepted the amendment because we want to consider this matter in a more leisurely fashion. If the amendment is carried, it will give us that opportunity. Although the Minister said that he would not agree to the amendment, in effect his remarks substantiate the necessity for adopting it.

THE MINISTER FOR NATIVE WELFARE: I can appreciate the member for Vasse supporting the member for Nedlands in this matter; that is only to be expected. But if this amendment is accepted, it will mean that in another three months' time we will have to consider the whole matter over again, and that, in my opinion, would be a waste of time. This Bill is to provide protection for both landlords and tenants for a further period of 12 months; and I think that owing to present circumstances, that is desirable. I hope the hon. member will not try to force his amendment; because if he does so we will have to deal with it as we think fit.

Mr. COURT: I want to clarify one point. In proposing the date of the 31st December, 1956, I have not at this stage declared, on behalf of the Opposition or myself, what we propose to do eventually; and I have

certainly not said that our aim is to defeat Subsections (2), (3) and (4) of Section 20B. All we want is more time to consider the matter. This Bill will be sent to another place, and I understand that it will have only tomorrow to deal with it. It is a contentious subject, and surely to ask for more time in which to consider it is not unreasonable. If this amendment is agreed to, it does not follow that Subsections (2), (3) and (4) will be defeated; it will simply tide us over the critical period—the 31st August, 1956.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I doubt very much whether the hon. member is right when he says that the only reason for moving the amendment is to give members more time to consider the subsections he mentioned. I think it is quite clear that his one object is to embarrass rather than help the Government.

Mr. COURT: Definitely not.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: My reason for saying that is that the hon. member has known for 12 months that this Bill would come up for consideration before the 31st August.

Mr. COURT: That is why we cannot understand your reason for hurrying its introduction.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have had these arguments in regard to landlords and tenants, and the problems associated with rents and tenancies, over and over again; and unless this measure is agreed to, one of the most vital provisions in the Act will go out of existence.

Mr. COURT: We are not opposing that.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: What the hon. member is seeking to do is to get the Government to bring down a further Bill during this session in order to deal with the subject.

Mr. COURT: That is right.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: In my view, the hon. member is not sincere when he says he wants to assist. When the Bill was discussed in Cabinet, the Government gave serious consideration to all the matters which have been raised this evening. From our point of view, it is not a hurried Bill, and the Government does not want any further time to consider it.

Mr. COURT: We are not asking for you to be given further time, but for the Committee to be given it.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Opposition knew that this matter was coming up before the 31st August.

Mr. COURT: Then why did you leave it so late? We thought that because you were so late in introducing it that you were going to abandon that provision.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Opposition knows that Parliament does not meet until early in August, and three or

four weeks are spent in discussing the Address-in-reply, and that debate has to be adjourned to allow a discussion on this measure. If the amendment is carried, it will merely embarrass the Government; and that is what it was aimed at. There is something suspicious about it. We consider that this protection is required for a further 12 months and the Government is not going to stand for the sort of thing the hon. member is putting up. We have introduced the Bill to extend the provision concerned, and the actual life of the Act for a further 12 months. That will give protection, bearing in mind all the inequalities which still exist between landlords and tenants.

Hon. D. BRAND: On my feet for the first time whilst you have been in the Chair, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment as Chairman of Committees. I am amazed at the Minister for Lands lecturing us—for a moment I thought it was the Minister for Works—about the lack of co-operation. When we sat on the other side, in dealing with a similar measure, we listened to claptrap for hours and hours and hours.

Mr. Lawrence: And you are still listening to it.

Hon. D. BRAND: It amazes me to hear the Minister for Lands talking about the lack of co-operation from this side of the Chamber. The member for Nedlands has one objective in mind—

The Minister for Lands: Yes, and I know what it is.

Hon. D. BRAND: Yes, in order that another place might be able to give reasonable consideration to the decision of the Government. The Minister himself said that he would accept no amendment here tonight and that he would just wipe the Opposition off. In view of the fact that we have hopes of a better hearing in another place, we have decided that this amendment should be moved. The Minister said that consideration had been given to the request for the suspension of Standing Orders in order that country members might go to the Kalgoorlie races, or something of the sort.

The Minister for Native Welfare: I never said anything of the sort!

Hon. D. BRAND: The trip to the country coincides with the Kalgoorlie races; and over the air and in the Press, the suggestion has been made that another place might sit on Friday next; and I do not think that this action is justified.

The Minister for Lands: I think it smells a bit.

Hon. D. BRAND: This amendment does not aim at robbing the Bill of any of its protective clauses. In view of the rapidly changing times, it will give members in another place an opportunity to give more reasonable consideration to the Bill than

we are able to do because of the dictatorial approach and the "pushing through" tactics of the Government in this Chamber.

Mr. Lawrence: Rot!

Hon. D. BRAND: Is the hon. member awake again?

Mr. Lawrence: Yes; I have been awake to you all the time.

Hon. D. BRAND: Therefore, I think the Minister should accept the amendment. I think it should be appreciated that the point of view that has been put forward by the parties on this side of the Chamber over the years has caused the housing position in this State to be the envy of every other State in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Heal: Because we are paying the highest rents in Australia.

Hon. D. BRAND: If we are paying higher rents than people in other States, I would suggest that, in view of the statement made by the Minister—that the cost of houses is now £300 cheaper than it was two or three years ago—it should not be long before the rents for houses should come down. I would point out that that state of affairs exists in this State where there is no control; and that whilst there are controls existing blackmarketing will continue to be rife.

The Minister talks about Sydney and the rent level that is maintained there. Let us look behind the scenes. We all know of the blackmarketing and the racketeering that goes on in Sydney as the result of controls. I have much pleasure, therefore, in supporting this amendment in the hope that this extremely vital question will receive just treatment and that sufficient time will be allowed for reasonable debate on the issue.

Mr. JOHNSON: Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on the first Bill that you are conducting through this Chamber.

Mr. Bovell: The Chairman has been presiding before. He was in the Chair while the Supply Bill was going through Committee.

Mr. JOHNSON: Of course! I consider that the Chamber is now getting into a fairly interesting state to take notice of what is going on. The member for Nedlands has asserted that he has put forward an amendment that is designed to improve the Bill. Although the amendment appears to have some specious value, it has one drawback—namely, that in making the dates coincide with the dates in the other sections, the hon. member happened to overlook the year. If he had wanted to be helpful, this amendment would have read, "December, 1957."

Mr. Court: You were not listening. I explained that.

Mr. JOHNSON: As usual, the hon. member's explanations are exceedingly hard for an intelligent person to follow.

Hon. D. Brand: I bet you are pretty hazy on it, then.

Mr. JOHNSON: I listened to every word uttered by the member for Nedlands.

Mr. Court: Even the Minister understood what I said.

Mr. May: He has drawn his own conclusions, too.

Mr. JOHNSON: I still believe that had the hon. member been keen to assist, his amendment would have included the year 1957. As he has omitted it, I think we can disregard any suggestion that he has been trying to help. Members probably noticed the remark that if we are to get rid of blackmarkets, all we have to do is to repeal any Act that enforces controls. In theory, that would be good morally, even if it is not good law. It indicates the type of thinking which emanates regularly from the members of the parties for which the member for Nedlands speaks. His argument is that if we cannot make people moral, or make them obey the law, we should change the law so that they will follow it. That is a highly moral attitude, and I am sure it is one that would be supported by any church on any Sunday!

High rents have been one of the major causes of the increase in the basic wage, regarding which there has been some complaint, and to which notice has been drawn. What this legislation seeks is to prevent rents from rising any further. However, the prime control has been one which has not been acknowledged by the Opposition. It has not been the building of houses for rental by private individuals, but it has been the erection of houses for rental by Government instrumentalities. The fact is that as soon as a person gets into a position where he is being exploited by his landlord and is eventually evicted because he seeks relief, he immediately applies to the State Housing Commission; and, after a fairly lengthy period, he eventually receives assistance from that source. I doubt the truth of the statements made by those on the opposite side of the Chamber that a number of houses have been built by private individuals for rental purposes. I doubt if any have been built.

Mr. Court: There has been an increase in the number of places built by private individuals for letting. For a start the hon. member knows that a number of flats have been built over the past few years.

Mr. JOHNSON: Yes; we know that many flats have been built. But there again, rents have been controlled to a certain extent because of expensive flat-building by a Government instrumentality. While I agree it tends to hold down rents and prevent utter exploitation, there is no doubt that it is not private enterprise that has done it. When we talk about the cost of a house being reduced by £300, members opposite overlook

the fact that at present interest rates have increased severely, and the interest demanded for any type of accommodation is such that it increases the amount required to render the necessary return on any normal house to more than a saving of £300 in capital value. One of the causes of these increases in rents resulting from interest is the policy of the Federal Liberal Party. It is also its policy that has caused the basic wage to rise.

Hon. D. Brand: What policy put tram fares up?

Mr. JOHNSON: The policy of the Federal Liberal Party caused it.

Hon. D. Brand: What policy put water charges up?

Mr. JOHNSON: The same Federal Liberal policy which took value out of the £ and caused all charges to rise. It did not cause profits to rise in proportion; they rose out of all proportion, and theirs has been a percentage rise. If the amendment had been meant to be helpful, it would have been cast differently. It has been moved to embarrass so that the member for Nedlands could get up in a last-minute flurry of the December sitting and say that he did not like the rush and pretend that he had nothing to do with it.

Hon. D. Brand: Surely the administration of the Labour Party would not allow that to occur.

Mr. JOHNSON: It would not be wise to support the amendment.

Mr. PERKINS: If the Minister thinks that the speeches made by members on the Government side of the House which impute bad motives to members on this side will help him get his legislation through, he has another think coming. We do not like that sort of thing, and we could make similar remarks in return. I would like the Minister to give us some more figures. He should justify his refusal to accept the amendment with firmer evidence than has been produced so far. He quoted figures applying since controls were lifted in 1954.

At that time, many of us criticised the fact that a limited section of the public was being asked to carry considerably more than their share to hold costs down. It was the people who put their money into houses for rental purposes during the depression days when money was hard to save. They then found that they got a poor return compared with the person who invested his savings elsewhere.

Figures concerning the position in Sydney have been quoted by the Minister, who compared our figures with those of that State. The figures for Sydney are not true ones. Ours are true figures which are considered when the basic wage is fixed whereas, in Sydney, it is fixed on a fictitious level of rent. Are members opposite in favour of the workers being given something less than the cost-of-living index fixed by the Arbitration Court?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the hon. member to speak to the amendment; he is making a second reading speech.

Mr. PERKINS: With due respect, Mr. Chairman, this amendment deals with the expiry of the Act; and we have to endeavour to justify, or otherwise, the benefits of the Act. It is a question of whether the fixing of a fictitious basis of rents for consideration by the Arbitration Court, when it decides what the basic wage shall be, is a fair way to deal with the position. We all want to keep costs down, and I have spoken along those lines on many occasions. We should deal with true figures if it is possible to obtain them. I object to the Minister quoting figures relating to the real level of rentals in Sydney which he knows to be untrue. I am particularly interested in obtaining the index figures relating to the other items I mentioned.

Mr. POTTER: I oppose the amendment. The member for Nedlands supports the deletion of certain clauses, but that would defeat the Bill. The member for Roe questioned the figures quoted by the Minister, but I would assume that he received them from the Commonwealth Statistician. If that is the case, only certain types of houses are included. The problem of rent control is world-wide and we saw what happened elsewhere when controls were lifted.

It was suggested by members opposite that quite a number of landlords and businesses adopt a moral attitude towards rentals; but it must be remembered that in the community there are many others without that moral sense, and as a consequence we find rentals of £5 to £10 per week being charged. I have a case of a two-unit family in mind. They have grown-up children; and because they educated and supported their children, they were unable to purchase their own home. The breadwinner is on the basic wage, but he is asked to pay a rental of £5 to £8 a week out of that.

I would point out that the State Housing Commission cannot be expected to provide accommodation in all such cases. It must be remembered that a moving population exists in this State. Migrants from overseas are being exploited in regard to rentals. I know of Dutch families in my electorate who are grossly exploited and paying from £8 to £10 per week for rent. The reason why they have not been before the Fair Rents Court is that they are unaware of the existence of the Act. As a result, they are tied to leases for two or three years. Some of the adverse publicity being given to this matter overseas would perhaps surprise members. Others exploited are those who come from the Eastern States to secure work and live in this State temporarily.

Some of the interests and people represented by members opposite have a moral sense, but there are many hundreds of

others who hide behind that facade to exploit the rental position. Real estate agents and legitimate businesses in that line know what is a fair rental to be charged; but on the other hand a number of house owners will exploit their tenants. Today there are still insufficient houses to meet this demand for accommodation. I saw a woman today who was seeking accommodation and who found houses to let at from £5 to £10 a week. Admittedly those at £10 a week had some furniture in them.

Under those circumstances, I urge all members to give this Act another 12 months' trial, and I trust that will be the view taken by members in another place. The Act is not administered viciously, and a return of from 2 per cent to 8 per cent. of the capital outlay is permitted. I suggest the average return would be 6 per cent., after allowing for repairs, maintenance, rates, and taxes. That return is better than the bank rate of interest, and the asset is one which has appreciated over the years.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I am somewhat disturbed by the remarks made by members opposite, especially those made by the member for Nedlands. He said that no tenant had been thrown on to the street. No one has yet stressed the point that tenants have been thrown out on the street. The fact is that they will be thrown out on to the streets because of the policy of the Commonwealth Government in relation to housing loans. He knows that to be a fact. Both he and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition can be smug in their attitude.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That has nothing to do with the question.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I suggest that the hon. member address his remarks through the Chair. Regarding agreements between tenant and lessor, we find that in the metropolitan area conditions are far from bright. Employment is decreasing; and when that occurs some people cannot pay their rent, and therefore they are evicted. Is it not reasonable to suggest that we should allow further time for this order to go through?

Mr. Court: I cannot follow what you are getting at, because we have not suggested that it should go out.

Mr. LAWRENCE: The hon. member has suggested that it should finish.

Mr. Court: No; we ask for a chance to reconsider it again this session. In the meantime, we have offered to protect the position past the 31st August.

Mr. LAWRENCE: To the 31st December.

Mr. Court: I think we are at cross purposes.

Mr. LAWRENCE: We suggest it should go through for a further annual period. That should be done in fairness to everyone, having regard to the unemployment situation today, which makes it difficult for the tenant to pay; and the position is also difficult for the State Housing Commission and for a person who owns a house. So, is it not feasible that we should say, "Let us do it?" Why cannot we put on this control?

Mr. Court: We have not suggested that it come off.

Mr. LAWRENCE: The hon. member does not believe for one minute that there has not been prostitution of the Act in regard to the rents of flats. I can show the hon. member five-story flats without lifts, and I can also take him to Wandana where there are lifts. The flats without lifts were built two years before Wandana.

Mr. Court: I can demonstrate to you why there are no lifts in those flats; under the health regulations or the building by-laws, they did not have to put in lifts.

Mr. LAWRENCE: Five storeys?

Mr. Court: No.

Mr. LAWRENCE: They were shown in the plans. I can take the hon. member down tomorrow if he likes to accept the challenge.

Mr. Court: I will go down.

Mr. LAWRENCE: The Chamber should accede to the request for this portion of the Bill to be passed. If members are fair-minded they will put it through.

Point of Order.

Mr. Oldfield: On a point of order, Sir, I would like a ruling from you. If the amendment moved by the member for Nedlands is agreed to, and further time is given for consideration of the Act, is it permissible under Standing Orders for the matter to be reintroduced during the session?

The Chairman: It comes under the Interpretation Act.

Mr. Oldfield: I understand that if the amendment as moved by the member for Nedlands is carried, the Act, or Section 20B of the Act, will cease to exist on the 31st December, and there will be no chance of having the matter reintroduced prior to that date for further consideration, as has been suggested.

The Chairman: It is in order.

Mr. Oldfield: They will be able to reintroduce the matter?

The Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Oldfield: I understand from previous rulings given in this Chamber that matter can be introduced only once during the same session of Parliament.

The Chairman: This is relating to an Act, and probably the member is confusing Bills with an Act.

Mr. Oldfield: Yes; but we have a Bill dealing with Section 20B. If the amendment is carried, Section 20B will remain in force only until the 31st December, 1956, and it will not be possible to introduce another Bill dealing with Section 20B during the current session of Parliament.

Mr. Court: When I checked today, I was told it was quite in order.

Mr. Lawrence: Why do you not be quiet and allow the Chairman to give the ruling?

Mr. Oldfield: I am asking whether it will be in order to reintroduce the matter later in the session.

The Chairman: The hon. member has already got the ruling.

Mr. Oldfield: Yes; but I have four verdicts.

The Chairman: I have given my ruling.

Committee Resumed.

Mr. OLDFIELD: At this stage I would like to see the Minister in charge of the Bill report progress. A period of 24 hours will not delay its passage unduly. We have another week before the present section expires.

Mr. Nalder: Another place is not sitting next week.

Mr. Ackland: Members there are going to the races next week and will not sit.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Surely the affairs of State come before the Kalgoorlie round!

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Move that progress be reported.

Mr. OLDFIELD: What I am disturbed about is that if the amendment moved by the member for Nedlands is successful, and this matter is not reconsidered during the current session, Section 20B (1) will lapse, and it is still an essential provision for the well-being of a great number of tenants in this State today. Although the housing situation has greatly eased over the past few years, and the Minister for Housing and other people claim that the problem has been solved, I know from experience within my electorate that the housing position is not as easy as some people would have us believe. Unfortunately housing—I say, unfortunately, on behalf of both the tenant and the landlord—is being made a political football each session, and this has continued for the past five years since I have been a member.

Subsection (1) of Section 20B provides the 28 days' notice of cessation of tenancy, and I think that is a reasonable time. If that provision ceased on the 31st December next, as from the 1st January any tenancy could be terminated within seven

days, which would not be sufficient to allow a tenant to find suitable alternative accommodation. The hardship would be greater on those in lower income brackets, as most of the accommodation available today is at a rental greater than those people could afford to pay. I know of instances where new Australians have bought homes and required possession of them and the tenants have been old-age pensioners who have occupied the premises for many years.

The hardship is greater still when the pensioner is a single unit, because he is not eligible for assistance from the State Housing Commission, not being able to pay the rent; and, as a single unit, he cannot be helped by the McNess Trust. I believe that, in all the circumstances, 28 days is a reasonable period from the point of view of both landlord and tenant. I would like the member for Nedlands to indicate how we could retain the 28 days' provision.

Mr. COURT: Subsection (1) of Section 20B would remain even if the Government had not brought forward the measure to extend the application of Section 20B beyond the 31st August, 1956. Subsection (4) only puts the time factor on Subsections (2) and (3), and it was always intended that Subsection (1) would continue so long as the principal Act governed by Section 33 prevailed. It has not been proposed by any member on this side of the Chamber to defeat Subsections (2), (3) and (4). All we ask is that both Houses of Parliament be given further opportunity, between now and the end of the session, to decide whether the provisions of Subsections (2), (3) and (4) should be retained for the extended period to December, 1957, as proposed in the measure.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	15
Noes	20

Majority against	5
------------------	---

Ayes.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Brand	Mr. Owen
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Court	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Wild
Mr. I. Manning	Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. W. Manning	(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Lawrence
Mr. Brady	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Evans	Mr. Norton
Mr. Gaffy	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Hall	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Heal	Mr. Potter
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Lapham	Mr. May

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Kelly
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Hawke
Mr. Watts	Mr. W. Hegney
Mr. Mann	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Thorn	Mr. Toms

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. E. K. Hoar—Warren): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put.

House adjourned at 10.53 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, 23rd August, 1956.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Assent to Bill	835
Questions : Traffic, convictions and revenue	836
Basic wage, annual cost of rise to departments	836
Timber, haulage and freight on Esperance-Goldfields line	836
Bill : Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Continuance, all stages	836
Adjournment, special	854

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

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Supply Bill (No. 1), £19,000,000.