

# Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 29th September, 1954.

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

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

(a) Minister for Works and Correction in "Hansard."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I desire to make a personal explanation. When I was speaking in this House on the 15th September on the motion moved by the member for Fremantle in connection with the extension of the Fremantle harbour, I was asked by the member for South Fremantle whether I could give some estimate of the probable cost of the erection of a temporary wooden bridge. I gave a reply which in effect was that the cost of a temporary wooden bridge would be so much less than the cost of a steel structure. When I received my proof from "Hansard," the figure mentioned in it as being the difference was £1,000,000. I was absolutely certain I had not said it would be £1,000,000.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: Yes you did.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But I was uncertain what figure I had actually used. I was completely certain I had not said £1,000,000; so I altered my proof to the figure of £350,000, which is the figure

shown in the report. There would be no advantage to be derived by my deliberately misquoting the figure because, within seconds of my making the statement, I handed to the member for Fremantle the Dumas-Brisbane report and said, "It is in the report."

If it had been my intention to mislead the House in any way, my satisfaction would have been very short-lived, because I was putting into the hands of the member for Fremantle the information that would enable him immediately to refute any statement I was making. When I heard that some objection was being made to the fact that I had altered my proof, I endeavoured, by inquiry, to get the opinion of other members as to what figure I had actually used.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: It was £1,000,000.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I went to members who I assumed would be rather against me in this matter than with me, so that I could, by that means, get a more reliable opinion. The members I approached in the matter had no recollection of any figure I had used. Subsequently, I asked my clerk, who was present in the gallery during the whole of my speech, what figure I had used, and he was perfectly certain I had not said £1,000,000.

I make this explanation to indicate that there was no purpose in my using a wrong figure. If I did use the wrong figure, I felt that the record of the speech should be factual, and the figure I was using was one which was easily checked by reference to the report upon which I was basing my argument. I mention this matter now in case some members might be concerned about it. As it appears in "Hansard," the figure is £350,000; and that is approximately the difference in cost as shown by the Dumas-Brisbane report.

If the figure of £1,000,000 was actually used by me—I cannot deny it, but I do not think it is likely, and I cannot see any purpose in my having used it—I want it to be understood that such a figure would be misleading, and that the real figure can be obtained by any member by reference to the report which has been made available to the House.

## (b) As to Availability of Copies of Speeches.

Mr. SPEAKER: This matter was brought to my attention by the member for Fremantle. I consulted the Chief Hansard Reporter who said that according to the transcript of the shorthand notes the figure of about £1,000,000 was probably inadvertently used by the Minister; but as the Minister explained it looked so obvious that the correct figure should have been used, as appeared in the report, the Chief Hansard Reporter allowed the alteration to be made.

This brings up the matter of a member getting a transcript of another member's speech before that member has had a chance to correct it. So I have advised the Chief Hansard Reporter not to allow this practice to be continued. Henceforth, no member will receive the transcript of the speech of another member or a Minister until it has been corrected. These mistakes will not, therefore, occur in the future, nor will a member be able to make a speech based on an uncorrected report. If members who are interested in a particular subject take their own notes, they will not have to rely on the transcript.

I would also ask Ministers, particularly, to correct their reports as soon as possible out of a sense of courtesy and consideration for other members who may have to debate the subject matter later. By this means most members will have access to a corrected transcript before having to continue the debate. If members are clear on the subject, there should be no more misinterpretations of what is said here.

### QUESTIONS.

#### WHEAT.

##### *As to Premium on Exports.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Under the proposed wheat stabilisation plan, does the 3d. per bushel premium on Western Australian wheat operate—

(a) On all wheat exported from Western Australia?

(b) On only that proportion sold above a certain price?

(2) If the answer to No. (1) (b) is in the affirmative—

(a) What is the price?

(b) Is it reasonable to expect this price to be received for all Western Australian wheat exports?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied:

(1) (a) 3d. per bushel above the average pool realisation in any one year will be paid to growers in Western Australia on wheat exported overseas from Western Australia.

(b) Answered by No. (1) (a).

(2) (a) and (b) See answer to No. (1) (a).

#### NARROWS BRIDGE.

##### *As to Selection of a Name.*

Mr. YATES asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Will he give immediate consideration to the selection of an appropriate name for the new bridge to span the river from Mounts Bay-rd. to Mill Point, South Perth?

(2) If the answer is "Yes," will he give consideration to the bridge being named "Mill Point Bridge" because of the historical associations connected with Mill Point?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

#### TRESILLIAN HOSPITAL.

##### *As to Continuance of Institution.*

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

(1) Does he know that the Tresillian Hospital, Nedlands, will cease taking other than midwifery cases after midnight tomorrow (Thursday), and that only midwifery cases already booked will be accepted thereafter?

(2) Has he any proposal to ensure either the continuance of the hospital, or an alternative?

(3) Does he know that two nursing sisters are prepared to run the hospital if they can lease it on satisfactory terms from the Government, should the Government purchase it from the present owner?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) Yes.

#### BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Corneal and Tissue Grafting.  
Introduced by the Minister for Health.

2, Mines Regulation Act Amendment (No. 2).  
Introduced by the Minister for Mines.

#### BILL—FAUNA PROTECTION ACT AMENDMENT.

##### *Message.*

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

##### *First Reading.*

Introduced by the Minister for Mines and read a first time.

#### BILL—GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (PROMOTIONS APPEAL BOARD) ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

#### BILLS (3)—REPORT.

1, Bush Fires.

2, Radioactive Substances.

3, Health Act Amendment (No. 2).  
Adopted.

# **BILL—POLICE ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

## **MOTION—"M" AND "E" CLASS HOUSES.**

*To Inquire by Select Committee.*

**MR. NIMMO** (Wembley Beaches)  
[4.50]: I move—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the conditions on which the prices at which "M" and "E" class houses are being sold to purchasers, and whether or not these prices and conditions are in conformity with those anticipated by the occupiers when they first took possession, and whether any, and if so, what action should be taken to secure just terms for the people concerned.

I have been approached by a number of people in my district, and they are complaining about the final assessments that the State Housing Commission has presented to them in connection with the purchase of "M" and "E" class homes. As most members know, these houses were built to cover cases of emergency.

Firstly, I shall try to give the House some reasons why I have moved this motion. I have with me the conditions set out by the State Housing Commission and which these people purchasing "M" and "E" class homes have to sign before they take possession. The first condition reads—

I agree to purchase the property referred to hereunder at the capital cost to the commission when ascertained.

If I passed these conditions around to each member, he would immediately say, "I would not sign that paper because it would mean I was signing a blank cheque." To my mind, that is what it means; these people, when they sign these agreements, are signing blank cheques.

As we all know, when these places were built, people were anxious to get into homes because of the conditions in which they were living. Because of that, I think a number of people said, "We will sign because we want a home." I have approximately 71 of these places in my district in the Scarborough area, and for the benefit of members, I may inform them that there are 19 in Ashfield, 21 in Bayswater, 45 in Hilton Park, 20 in Midland Junction, 13 in Mosman Park, 11 in Swan View and 35 in Willagee Park. I have visited most of the homes in my district and the people concerned have rather mixed views. Some of them have told me that when they went to sign for their homes they were told that the cost would be in the vicinity of £1,200

—maybe £5 or £10 more or less. But, unfortunately, they have no proof in writing. They received only verbal information.

I have discussed the problem with these people individually and have met them in groups; they all tell me the same story and some of them must be right. They are not all fools. However, they could have been misled in some ways. I have with me a rent book, and when the book was given to these people it showed the amount of loan on the top as £1,200. I have explained to a number of them that that does not mean that the house will cost only £1,200. I said, "You must be fair. This is just a loan." The next line shows "Liability," and the next book I have shows a liability of £1,200.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much loud conversation in the back bench.

**MR. NIMMO:** The gentleman concerned thought that the price was £1,200 and he has received a bill for £1,547, and cannot make it out. One book shows the land as costing £160, and I mention that to show members the variation in the price of the land. This man has an assessment for £1,750. The next place is in Caley-rd., and the bill for it is £1,700. The man told me that he has to pay extra for a fence. He approached the Housing Commission to find out about the fence, and they told him that it was included in the amount of £1,700. The next man I visited in Caley-rd. was charged £125 for the land, £1,609 for construction costs and £24 for fees, making a total of £1,758, and he has to pay half the cost of the fence.

The next person's assessment was almost the same and, to my astonishment, in that house I found a boy of 14, a girl of 13, a boy of nine, a boy of eight, a boy of seven, a girl of six and the father and mother, all living together. The house comprises a living-room, 16ft. x 11ft. 6in., with kitchen combined, a bedroom 11 ft. 6 in. x 11ft. 6 in. and a sleepout 15 ft. 5 in. x 7 ft. 9 in. The health authorities are most concerned about it, and I do not blame them.

**MR. HEAL:** How long have they been living like that?

**MR. NIMMO:** I do not know, because I have not had time to check on that point. But I hope that a lot of information on such matters will come out if the House agrees to an inquiry. There is another case in Holbeck-st., Killarney Estate. The cost is £1,762, and another in the same street is £1,730. In this house, a girl of 18, a boy of 17 and a boy of six are all sleeping in the one room. These people also have to pay half the cost of the fence.

**MR. YATES:** What is the cost of the fence?

**MR. NIMMO:** I will come to that in a minute. The lowest price I have been able to find in the district is about £1,538. All these people, whom I have visited individually, have told me the same story.

When they signed the contract they said they were informed that the price was to be in the vicinity of £1,200. As these prices have gone up, their terms of payment have been extended to 40 years. That has left a nasty taste in the mouths of some of these people. They imagined they were going to buy these houses at £1,200 or thereabouts. All the people I visited said the same thing and one man told me he was under the impression that it would be a little under £1,300. One of the ladies in the district received a letter from the State Housing Commission regarding the question of fences and it was estimated that the fence would cost £180, and she has to pay an extra monthly instalment of 18s 8d. But a certain amount of that money would come back to her when the boundary fences were completed.

I think the House can see why I am asking for this select committee. I could go on talking for some time on this matter, but I do not wish to do so. A number of other members have received similar letters from people in their districts complaining about exactly the same thing that I am now mentioning. If a select committee were appointed, it might be possible to recommend something to the present Government with a view to helping these poor unfortunate people. It may be that the amounts could be spread over ten years or something like that. I do honestly feel, however, that we must give these people some relief and help them in some way.

Mr. May: How long ago were these houses built?

Mr. NIMMO: I have not checked the date; perhaps two or three years ago. A lot of this land was resumed, and I think I know why. In several instances the land was resumed for a very small figure and in some cases a charge was certainly made for the roads. But I think the State Housing Commission is still making a profit on the land. If a select committee were appointed all these facts would emerge. I do not want to intrude politics into this matter; I view it very seriously, and I think it is up to us to try to help these people.

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. H. E. Graham—East Perth) [5.5]:** I am not unaware of what has been going on in recent weeks, and because of the political flavour surrounding this matter, I decided it would be in the interests of the entire situation that members of the general public should learn the full unvarnished truth with regard to the terrible shacks that were erected by the McLarty-Watts Government, and foisted upon these hapless people. I say there is a distinct flavour of politics about this because it is obvious from the statement of the member for Wembley Beaches that he has busied himself in moving about from suburb to suburb, looking for trouble.

Mr. Nimmo: That is wrong and I beg to differ. I would ask the Minister to withdraw that remark and show me where I have moved from suburb to suburb.

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** I am sorry if I have made a mistake.

Mr. Nimmo: You have made a mistake, and a big one.

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** I would like the proof of the speech made by the member for Wembley Beaches to be very carefully checked regarding that point. I am merely commenting on remarks which I honestly believe he made in this Chamber. If I have made a mistake and have been inaccurate in referring to what he said, I am sorry. I understand the hon. member invited the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr. Nimmo: To my district.

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** —to accompany him for the purpose of inspecting these premises. The point I wish to make is that there has been no form of representation whatever to the Government in respect of this matter, so far as the members of the Opposition are concerned but a number of approaches have been made by members on this side of the House.

Mr. May: You think it has been engineered, do you?

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** I have all sorts of opinions on this matter, but, by quoting from official facts and documents, I hope I shall be able to establish the exact position. Let me say that I welcome the introduction of this subject for the purpose of letting the public, and particularly these unfortunate people, know a few details concerning the situation that was created for them by the previous Government and by the previous Minister for Housing.

Personally, I agree with the member for Wembley Beaches that these people were called upon to sign a document that was tantamount to writing a blank cheque, agreeing to buy places in respect of which the purchase price was not known. That was something which was introduced by the Government that the hon. member supported. Worse still, the capital cost was assumed to be £1,200. When the final figures came to hand it was revealed that the cost was considerably in advance of that amount. Accordingly, if these people are disturbed or feel they have been misled, then it can only be as a consequence of the administration under the previous Government in supplying misleading information to them.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That does not help the people much.

**The MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** No. If the member for Mt. Lawley will be patient perhaps he could learn something with respect to that.

Mr. Hutchinson: He is always patient.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There is no need for an inquiry. The facts are well known, and perhaps, so far as the Opposition is concerned, there is a little too much that has been committed to paper in the files of the State Housing Commission. I feel that some members are not familiar with what all this is about. Mention is made of "M" and "E" class houses. I notice that in one of the documents the word "houses" is placed in inverted commas. After having had a look at them, I agree heartily. I know it was not done out of a sense of humour but because the officer concerned made a proper assessment of them. When I referred to these places as "chicken houses" the member for Subiaco corrected me and said "dog-boxes."

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: You did not say "chicken houses." You said "dog-boxes;" and I replied that if I had one, I would put you in it.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I feel the hon. member has a very poor memory because she is referring to a previous occasion.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: I am not.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: All these houses have been erected in the metropolitan area; none of them has been erected in the country. The State Housing Commission, under the previous Government, erected a number of semi-detached kitchens, and adjoining them there were canvas tents. These were the places into which unfortunate and emergent cases were drafted by the previous Government. I am informed, whether rightly or wrongly, that this was the brain-child of the member for Subiaco. Subsequently, because of the elements, these tents were torn into shreds and some additions were made—something a little more substantial—which consisted of two rooms separated from the kitchen block by a passageway. Of course, the womenfolk were suffering.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: Might I ask the Minister whether he said it was my brain-child? If he did, I would like him to withdraw that remark.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot ask that! She was not even listening; she was reading a book.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: I was only pretending to!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I said that subsequently two bedrooms were built in a more solid structure and they were connected by a passageway.

Mr. Yates: Where was this?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: At Allawah Grove. Because of complaints from the housewives, some form of protection and some sort of walls were built,

and people lived in these places. They were charged rent at the rate of 10s. and 12s. 6d. a week. Then there was the "EI" type of house constructed, which lets at a rental of £1 a week. These comprise three rooms and they occupy an area of 3½ squares. They consist of a kitchen, living room with the lavatory at the front door; they contain no bath and no washbasin; no bath-heater and no lining to the walls; there is no guttering and, generally, they are no good.

These are the types of places—the emergency or evictee houses—erected by the McLarty-Watts Government. They were made available to people by way of a weekly rental, and I suggest it was not the intention of the member for Wembley Beaches to embrace them in his motion. His concern is in respect to those humble dwellings that were erected for purposes of sale and passed over to people by the medium of an agreement to purchase them when the cost had been determined.

First of all I want to say that there were about 150 of these terrible structures I have described erected by the previous Government; a number were erected at Allawah Grove, or South Guildford, and at Woodman's Point, Naval Base. It is interesting to read from the files that on the 17th April, 1951, the member for Dale, as Minister for Housing, recommended to the Government the erection of a further number of these places. Cabinet agreed to the erection of 50, and on the following page these significant words appear, "No publicity. A.F.W." The hon. member for Stirling was acting Premier at the time, so it appears that the Opposition, which was the then Government, was rather ashamed of what it was foisting on the public. Then the Government, presumably realising the attitude of the people to these houses, decided on something more pretentious.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do you not think that the reason for no publicity to be given could possibly be due to the fact that the Government knew that owing to the acute housing shortage, it would be inundated with applications from homeless people?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I was not present at the Cabinet meeting and cannot be aware of the reason for that minute. Nevertheless, it is highly significant. Subsequently the "M2" type cottages were built, that initial standing for "Modest". Of these, 127 were erected in the suburbs outlined by the member for Wembley Beaches. They were erected for sale, and have a total squarage of 5.8. Each comprise a kitchen, a bedroom and an unlined sleepout. The lavatory is in the bathroom; there is no bath-heater, no sink cupboards or fly wire. They are terrible looking places to say the least.

Shortly afterwards the Government decided to erect the "M3" type of dwelling and 97 were built. They contain a total of six squares, being almost identical with those previously described, with the exception that the lavatory is separate from the bathroom. These are the types of places which are the subject of complaints made by the member for Wembley Beaches and others. These cost the Government about £350,000 and in the majority of cases the best thing that can happen will be to put a bulldozer through them. Many of the occupants have spent money of their own, and others have committed themselves still further to improve them. Generally speaking, in very many cases they have made manly attempts to convert these terrible little places into dwellings of more reasonable proportions.

It is interesting to refer to the official papers of the State Housing Commission. This was the reaction of the then Minister for Housing, contained in a minute dated the 1st November, 1951, addressed to the chairman—

As reported to you verbally yesterday, I think the new houses at Ashfield are excellent but in view of the position brought about by the increased wholesale evictions during the past two or three weeks, I consider it would be advisable to ascertain from Mr. Clare if the number of men engaged in this pressing work could be increased.

The Premier accompanied me on an inspection of these places at Ashfield and I shall leave it to him to give expression to his own views. I daresay they will be anything but complimentary. The member for Dale, the then Minister for Housing, seemed to have developed a fancy for these places because on the 19th November, 1951, so anxious was he to proceed with their erection, that he addressed a minute to the Premier in Cabinet stating—

The chairman and secretary of the State Housing Commission have had repeated conferences with various road boards and municipal councils in the metropolitan area and have now reached a deadlock. The Bayswater, Bassendean, Mundaring and Perth Road Boards have agreed to the erection between them of 55. In order to cope with the number of evictions already recorded—

They amounted to 675, of which approximately 50 per cent. had been given accommodation.

—it is therefore urgently necessary to provide at least 150 to 200 houses. The houses being erected are of a very reasonable standard and to which no road board should take exception except in the case of brick area. I therefore recommend that Cabinet approve of the State Housing

Commission exercising its power as a Government instrumentality in overriding the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act and the Road Districts Act in regard to building on land in areas other than brick under the jurisdiction of this instrumentality.

The Minister was backed up by his Government because this minute, signed by "R. McL." and dated 19/11/51, appeared—

Subject to ministerial approval in each case, Cabinet approves.

There we have the blessing of the Government that these terrible little evictee cottages should be erected in various parts of the metropolitan area at the whim and fancy of the Minister for Housing, irrespective of the wishes or requirements of local authorities. This file shows some very interesting particulars. There is a minute signed by R. J. Bond, acting chairman, and dated 9/11/52, in which he says—

The Hon. G. P. Wild inspected the cottages being erected for evictees in the Scarborough district and was generally satisfied not only with the type of cottage, but with their location.

We shall hear something about the member for Wembley Beaches as we proceed. Here is another minute by Mr. Bond, acting chairman of the State Housing Commission at the time, dated 27/3/52, addressed to the commission—

The Hon. Minister felt that we should not depart a great deal from the existing standard and indicated that he was prepared to discuss the problem with local authorities in the area selected.

There are a couple more quotations I would like to refer to in the file, so as to indicate how wholeheartedly behind this type of dwelling was the then Minister for Housing. On 26/5/52 in a minute to the secretary of the State Housing Commission, he wrote these words—

Please push on with all programmes covering evictee cottages with the utmost speed.

It will be seen that he asked for more and more of them to be built by his Government. That permission was granted. He also asked permission to override local authorities, and it was also granted. He asked the State Housing Commission to press on post-haste with the erection of these cottages, which are the subject of dispute at present, and this was noted by the commission in the following words—

Noted and the commission considers the necessity to provide modest houses which will comply with all by-laws.

It will be seen that the State Housing Commission was not very happy with the situation, but the Minister was so pressing on this matter, and being in a position to dominate the commission, that his will prevailed.

Mr. Wild: Has the Minister the power of direction as regards the State Housing Commission?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes. We have discussed that situation before. Notwithstanding that the member for Dale was Minister for Housing for a number of years, he is apparently unaware of the fact that the Minister has complete authority over the State Housing Commission. Section 7 of the State Housing Act says—

This Act shall be administered by the Minister, and under the Minister the Commission is hereby authorised to carry out the provisions of this Act.

Then Section 8 says—

For the purpose of this Act there shall be a housing authority called "the State Housing Commission" which, subject to any directions of the Minister, shall be charged with the administration of this Act . . .

The file contains a note by Mr. Brownlie, chairman of the Commission, dated 7/7/52, which states—

#### M3 Type of House (for Evictees).

At a conference with the Hon. G. P. Wild (Minister for Housing) this morning, regarding the policy in respect of the building of the "M3" type of house, the following decisions were issued:—

- (1) The M3 type of houses commenced at Scarborough to be completed—  
22 at Killarney;  
6 at West Park.
- (2) An arrangement made to erect eleven M3 type of house at Midland Junction was confirmed.
- (3) It was decided that a further twenty-five M3 type of house (in lieu of fifty) be erected at Willagee.
- (4) At Hilton Park—twenty-five new houses to be erected, as already decided upon.

Mr. Nimmo: Did the Scarborough Road Board give permission for that type to be erected?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I shall come to that presently. Let us have a look at the reaction of other people directly interested in this particular type

of house. This is a letter from the Mosman Park Road Board dated the 22nd November, 1951, addressed to the secretary of the State Housing Commission—

re S.H.C.—3 Roomed Cottages.

In acknowledgment of your letter of the 14th instant relative to the proposal to erect 10 houses under the above heading in this Board's district.

I am now directed by my Board to advise the uncompromising opposition to the suggestion of your Commission and that the proposal is not acceptable to this Board.

Then I come to the gem of them all. This is a letter dated the 28th March, 1952, from Mr. J. H. Willcocks, M.I.A.M.E., I shall read the relevant portions of it. The first portion reads—

Since the inception of the Liberal Party I have been an active member, for some time at Bassendean on the finance committee of that branch and later in the western districts, but my intention is to resign and support the Labour Party unless your Government can show more intelligence in matters such as this proposed Road Boards amalgamation.

As to the erection of these two-room huts that the Housing Commission is building in Baring Street, Mosman Park. This is nothing more than a confidence trick on somebody's part.

Then he refers to the timbers used. The next portion reads—

These houses of two rooms built on limestone outcrop in which nothing will grow are to be sold I understand for the sum of £1,250 and I am also given to understand that before a tenant can occupy one of these places he must buy it no matter how small his deposits and payments. It is obvious that the Government does not wish to retain ownership of these tinder boxes for obvious reasons.

It seems that the Housing Commission is seeking to show results (which will no doubt be lauded by L.C.L. candidates at election time) at the expense of poor unfortunates who, through circumstances, will be glad to buy anything in which to house their families, although at a time not far distant these places will be absolutely worthless, and in an endeavour to retain their equity, they will be kept poor making repairs.

Please investigate these items and advise me of your findings and future attitude, as I am loth to support anyone who would be a party to a thing like either of these.

There are, of course, a number of cases where the State Housing Commission, apart from the information already quoted from the file, has objected to these "M" type houses. There is a report by the chairman of the commission dated the 7th May, 1952, in which the commission makes this comment—

Refer to Minister with expression of opinion that 500 "M3." types should not be built in the metropolitan area next year. Commission favours standard type of timber-framed house.

As already indicated, the then Minister for Housing, backed by the Government of the day, chose to proceed with the erection of still more of these houses.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the Minister is coming to the point of the motion.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I am rapidly coming to the point, but it is most desirable and necessary to explain to the House, and I trust to the public, how these places came into being, who was responsible for them, who passed opinions upon them at the time and generally what everyone thought of them.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: And gain as much party political advantage as you possibly can.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: If the member for Wembley Beaches had sought to do something for these people, surely he would have waited upon the Minister for Housing and requested some form of relief for them! But no! He prefers to raise the matter in this House and seek an inquiry all for the purpose of endeavouring to put the present Government on the spot.

Mr. Nimmo: Nothing of the kind!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It will be obvious before I have finished my remarks, that the present Government can be proud of what it has done and what it proposes to do in connection with these unfortunate people. If I may continue and reach the final part of my speech, members will learn something. On the 25th June, 1952, a letter was addressed to the Premier by the Western Australian Builders' Guild, stating—

At a general meeting of this guild last night, members were alarmed at the practice of the Government in erecting substandard houses on choice building lots, and instructed me to bring the matter to your notice in the hope that no further buildings will be commenced without a conference of the various trade, local governing and governmental bodies concerned.

It was pointed out how, in many cases, good quality houses being erected by builders for sale as ready-made homes had dropped in value to such an extent as to make them an unpayable proposition to the builder.

Members also expressed extreme surprise and disappointment that the State Housing Commission, which had previously erected a most desirable type of home for the different localities, should now go to this extreme, particularly in view of the fact that when this guild recently requested assistance regarding land for speculative building, the commission stipulated a condition that plans and specifications of all speculative houses should first be submitted to the commission to ensure that they would not detract from the value of the adjacent properties.

The guild feels so strongly on this matter that it intends taking various lines of action in protest, but wishes to avoid this if possible. Members are of the opinion that there is ample land of poor value on which these cottages could be erected to the advantage of the general district.

Representatives from the guild inspected various areas this morning and were shocked to find out that conditions were considerably worse than they expected even from the caustic criticism at the meeting last night. As a result of the inspection, those present respectfully suggest that one or two Ministers make a personal inspection at an early date.

It would be appreciated if this matter could be given immediate attention.

Yours faithfully,

R. C. MATTISKE,

Secretary.

So this unhappy business went on. The file shows that the member for Wembley Beaches had something to do with it in July, 1952. The chairman of the Housing Commission in a minute dated the 1st July, 1952, stated—

Evictee Houses: On the morning of the 30th June, I conferred with Mr. Nimmo, M.L.A., regarding the building of the "M3." type of house at Scarborough.

Mr. Nimmo stated that the opposition was developing in strength, and that the longer the question of continuing with the building of that type of house by the commission remained undecided, the opposition would continue to develop.

There was a Mr. Hepworth, a member of the Perth Road Board, who was also present at the inspection and he expressed himself rather forcibly because, when informed of the subsequent decision of the Minister not to erect any more of these houses at Scarborough out of consideration for the member for Wembley Beaches, he asked, according to the file, "that the houses partly constructed be demolished;



alternatively that they be substantially improved." It is worthy of note that the Minister, in deference to the objection of the member for Wembley Beaches, decided that no more of these houses should be erected at Scarborough, but a decision was made to build more of them in other districts.

Then the stage was reached when there was a State general election. I think it was the 23rd February, 1953, when the Hawke Labour Government assumed office. A few days afterwards, the member for Fremantle introduced to me a deputation representing a sub-branch of the R.S.L. whose members complained about these houses. According to the notes—this was eight days after I became Minister—I informed the deputationists—

It is not the commission's intention to erect any more anywhere. A limited number are being completed, and when they are finished, that will be the end of this type of structure.

On the 9th April, I conveyed that information to the member for Fremantle in these words—

In connection with matters raised by the deputation from the Fremantle City sub-branch of the R.S.L. which you introduced to me several weeks ago, I wish, in the first instance, to confirm that when the programme, which envisages the erection of about a dozen more of the small evictee cottages, is completed, no more of this type of structure will be erected.

I went on to say that these places were not satisfactory from an artistic or a utilitarian point of view. Thus the building of houses, the subject of this motion, was put an end to eight days after the present Government assumed office.

I recall that a few months ago, I was taunted in this Chamber by the member for Dale. There was an inquiry by a Liberal member of the Legislative Council who desired to know what the Government was doing in the way of erecting these emergency houses, and the reply of the Government on that and other occasions has been that it is a far wiser and saner policy to erect permanent and substantial structures rather than waste the State's money on these almost substandard types of home. This is the policy that has been pursued by the Government during the period of its term of office.

Mention has been made of the cost of these houses. The file shows that in October, 1951, an estimate was made of the "M2." type of evictee dwelling and the amount was £1,026 13s., and if erected by the Public Works Department, which would be less the builder's profit, the estimate was £955. On the 9th June, 1952, a further estimate was prepared—for the "M2." type £1,335 and for the "M3." type £1,388. Those estimates were for the buildings only.

On the 12th August, 1952, the member for Melville asked the then Minister for Housing—the member for Dale—what were the present prices at which the State Housing Commission was making "M2." and "M3." expansible houses available to evictees, and the Minister replied, "M2., £1,335; M3., £1,388." Actually not one single house was being made available to any person at those figures at that time. The final figures were not known. Only in the past several weeks have the final figures been assessed, and the interested parties advised.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What is the average cost now?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The average cost was given in reply to a question asked by the member for Wembley Beaches the other day—including land and fencing, £1,660. I have not worked out the details, but I estimate that the average cost of all those places would be in the vicinity of £1,350 or £1,400.

The Premier: That is for the buildings alone?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes, and with all the disabilities and the missing parts that I outlined earlier. On the 3rd February, 1953, the accountant of the State Housing Commission had this to say in a minute to the secretary of the commission—

It appears that the cost of the cottages has been under-estimated and no allowance made for the cost of land, interest and administration.

I emphasise that this was prior to the change of Government. It has now been found upon an examination of the costs that they range from £1,288 9s. 6d. to £1,579 12s. 2d. for the structure alone. Without any cupboards under the sink, or fly-wire doors—a two-roomed structure with an unlined sleepout, excluding paths, fences and the cost of the land—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Is that the Public Works Department cost?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Those are the minimum and maximum costs of these places built by both the Public Works Department and private contractors. The average selling price, as assessed by the State Housing Commission, is £1,660, including everything. It is unfortunate that it has taken so long for these costs to be finalised, and in respect of that, in case a member of the Opposition thinks he can score a point on that issue, I might mention that certain changes have been made of recent date and will result, so far as work performed by the Public Works Department is concerned, in the occupiers having to wait only two or three weeks instead of from a year to two years for the final accounts from the State Housing Commission.

The Opposition cannot, therefore, draw any consolation from that state of affairs. I feel that it is necessary now to recapitulate that these structures were built by the previous Government, following the incessant demand by the then Minister for Housing that they be constructed, notwithstanding protests which emanated from a number of sources.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You are not suggesting that the price given by the Public Works Department is unreasonable, are you?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I have made no suggestion, pro or con, in that regard.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You think the Public Works Department cost is reasonable, then?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I feel that the whole conception and design of these places were such that they should have been condemned before they were commenced.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Yes, but that does not answer the question I asked.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Whether they cost that figure or less, they are a type of structure which does not lend itself to proper expansion or improvement without a great deal of expenditure and work.

What has the present Government done in this regard since it assumed office? Let me say, first of all, that we inherited this situation. These structures had been approved by the previous Government and contracts had been let for their erection—with complaints galore, as already indicated. The present Government, within eight days of assuming office, made, through the present Minister for Housing a decision that no more of these structures should be built. In order to reduce the burden of the monthly commitments of the unfortunates who occupied these dwellings, I discussed with the board of the State Housing Commission the question of the 25 years' repayment period. To me it did not make sense because practically all the other transactions of the commission cover a 40-year amortisation period. I asked "Why 25 years in connection with these structures?"

Mr. Nimmo: They thought they would be of lower cost.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I cannot help what the Government of that day thought, but in my view these people should not be put at a disadvantage as against any others who purchase homes through the Housing Commission, and I think the most generous and easy terms should be made available to them if they so desire. I was able to prevail on the board of the State Housing Commission

in that regard. Of course, if any purchaser wishes to pay off his debt in a shorter time, he is at liberty to do so.

The third point is that I waited upon the board of the State Housing Commission and requested it to agree to the proposition that additional financial assistance should be made available to these unfortunate people in order to allow them to extend or improve their homes.

Mr. Nimmo: How long ago was that?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: A matter of some six months ago, from memory.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Would that not considerably increase their debt?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes, but it would resolve the proposition outlined by the member for Wembley Beaches, who said that teen-agers of different sexes were compelled to live in the same room. The previous attitude of the commission had been that if the £700 or £800 necessary to expand these dwellings was loaned, there would be a greater sum of money lent to these people than the completed houses were worth.

I spoke frankly and said, "The Government or this commission has been responsible for compelling these people to get into this situation, and I feel there is a moral obligation on the Government, through this commission, to give these people an opportunity of turning their little boxes into something of the nature of houses," and so that decision was made. Then again, I also found there had been a decision—whether it had ministerial sanction or not I do not know—that fencing material would not be supplied, so that those concerned would have either to do without fences or get the commission to erect them. As soon as I heard of that decision I reversed it. At that time I was erecting a picket fence of my own and did not estimate my skill as being above that of others. I felt that these people would be just as handy with a hammer and nails as I would be, and I could see no reason why they should not be assisted in that regard, particularly where children were involved.

Mr. Nimmo: Will the State Housing Commission give them pickets?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It will provide finance for the erection of fences.

Mr. Nimmo: But will it get the pickets for them?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Do not forget that the houses belong to these people if they conform to the agreement they signed—

The Premier: The member for Wembley Beaches wants more socialism for them.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: He might well have bestirred himself in their interests when his colleague was Minister

for Housing. Where an ex-serviceman had been placed in the position of being virtually the owner of one of these houses, and therefore unable to avail himself of war service homes funds for the purpose of erecting a decent and substantial dwelling for himself and his family, I authorised the commission to waive the purchase agreement so that such houses could come back to the commission, thus allowing the person concerned to take advantage of the generous terms offering under the war service homes scheme.

The land has been made available to these people in the terms of the notices they received, at valuation in accordance with the provisions of the State Housing Act, which lays down the procedure, because these places are being sold under the terms of that Act. However, they are at a most conservative valuation and it is estimated that, averaging the 224 cases concerned, these people will receive their land at an average of £100 less than should have been charged them.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What do you think would be a fair price for these houses?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: We may deal with that in a moment. It will be realised that the State Housing Commission has already made a gesture to these people to the extent that I have mentioned, but they are still left with these unsightly dwellings, and in areas such as Ashfield, which I visited recently, they are feeling their position keenly, because modern and conventional homes are being erected all around them. Of course, they feel they are in a position of inferiority, and no wonder. This matter has been the subject of discussion for some time, and if the member for Wembley Beaches had taken the appropriate and proper course of discussing it at ministerial level—because it is only at that level that a decision can be made to depart from the formula laid down in the Act—he might have been made aware far earlier of what has been done and what is being considered. But no, he chose this method.

I have indicated six ways in which, since it assumed office, the present Government has set about clearing up the mess that it inherited, but, in addition to that, I am pleased to be able to inform the persons concerned that irrespective of what they have been charged for these houses—their accounts are made out according to what the dwellings actually cost to erect, with no profit margins added—no one occupying the "M2" or "M3" types of dwellings that I have been discussing will be required to pay more than £1,250.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is the legal position, is it not?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is not.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It is the moral position, anyhow.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Nowhere have these people been told what the purchase price was—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Yes, they were told it would not exceed £1,250, and that is marked in their books.

The Minister for Works: Since when has that type of contract been enforced?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Often. Have you not heard of representations—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! These interjections must cease so that the Minister may proceed.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The fact remains that, due to these ill-conceived plans of the previous Government, the taxpayers of Western Australia will be called upon to bear a substantial burden in order to meet what the present Government considers to be the excessive cost of the type of dwelling into which these people were placed at a time when they had virtually no option of doing anything but accept what was offered to them.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: We considered it an excessive cost, too.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: But nothing whatever was done about it by the previous Government.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It would have been—make no mistake about that.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is easy to say that, but the fact remains that the present Government is doing something, and not one single approach has been made by any member opposite.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Not even the member for Wembley Beaches?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is all right—

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The first I heard of that member in respect of this matter was when several questions were asked in this Chamber last week, followed by his moving his motion this afternoon.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: At all events, it seems to have done some good.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Let us be perfectly clear in regard to that. The member for Fremantle, the member for North Perth and others, who are directly or indirectly interested in the plight of these people, have discussed this question with me over a period of some weeks and particularly during the more recent period when the final assessments have gone out to the people concerned.

It should therefore be obvious to everyone that a wrong decision was made by the previous Government and repeated, notwithstanding counsel to the contrary,

with the result that the present Government has had to step in in order to relieve the situation and give these people some measure of justice. I repeat that none of them will be called upon—in respect of these “M” type houses—to pay more than £1,250 for their dwellings. I want that distinctly understood. Naturally they pay for the land which, as I have said has been generously priced in order to assist them. Extras such as fencing are, naturally, a liability to be borne.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Did they have to pay for the roads?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The cost of a road is one of the factors included in the price of the land.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Do they not have to pay rates on it?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Naturally.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I mean to service the cost of the roads.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Naturally, anyone who purchases a property has to pay rates on it.

Hon. D. Brand: Would not some of the deficit be made up by land being resumed at taxation valuations and sold at auction to the highest bidder?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not want to deliver a lecture to members of the Opposition on the procedure under which the State Housing Commission operates. It is obvious that the member for Dale knows precious little about it, and I wonder whether the member for Greenough knows any more. I do not know whether members realise that the State Housing Commission is a trading concern and has to balance its own budget because no State funds are made available to it. It handles its own affairs, pays its own staff from its own funds from the profits it makes on its transactions, and so on.

Mr. Nimmo: Were not these houses known as “E” class for a period?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I believe there has been some misunderstanding. I fancy that some “M” type houses were called “E” for a period, but subsequently they were all referred to as “M” class. The member for Wembley Beaches knows the type of house to which I refer. The maximum amount that these people will be called upon to pay will be £1,250. Where the lavatories are in the bathrooms, there will be some slight reduction, and if there are any anomalies regarding the price, sympathetic consideration will be given to the submissions made.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: Lavatories are always in the bathrooms at the best hotels.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes, but I suggest that the member for Subiaco look at these places. I wonder if she has

been in one of them. I hope that members have a clear view of the situation. I desire to make one further comment on the purchase price. It was necessary that an estimate in round figures should be made of the price of these houses upon which to base the monthly instalments, and the figure selected was £1,200. Generally speaking, that is. It was on that amount that monthly payments were calculated and a debit was raised accordingly. The Housing Commission knew that this was a preliminary estimate and until the final accounts were received no one knew what the actual price would be.

Surely the facts are obvious, and, in my opinion, there is no need for any inquiry because those facts are well known. In advance of this motion being submitted, the Government had already dealt with the matter on a most generous scale, not only in regard to the selling price but also in regard to other factors I have already outlined. I want to make the position perfectly clear to the public, and that is why I say again that the present Government had nothing to do with the decision to erect these homes. It is in no way responsible for the cost factor of these houses. I understand that in order to meet the urgent need for houses, which was stressed by my predecessor, some of this work was done at week-ends for which penalty rates were paid. I have not checked that information but, if it is correct, that factor alone would tend to inflate the costs.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: There is no doubt about that.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: This Government has done its utmost to iron out the difficulties surrounding the situation, and the public generally can feel very satisfied that there is such a sympathetic Government occupying the Treasury bench in dealing with the position as it has.

MR. WILD (Dale) [6.5]: I take it that the Minister will now table the files from which he has quoted so that members of the Opposition can peruse them. Mr. Speaker, will those files be tabled?

Mr. SPEAKER: Members are entitled to have the files made available to them.

Mr. WILD: On behalf of the Opposition, I wish to state that we desire to have the files tabled for perusal. The motion moved by the member for Wembley Beaches reads as follows:—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the conditions on which the prices at which “M” and “E” class houses are being sold to purchasers, and whether or not these prices and conditions are in conformity with those anticipated by the occupiers when they first took possession, and whether any, and if so what, action should be taken to secure just terms for the people concerned.

From the wording of that motion, I can see the reason for the protests that have been made by the hon. member, and also by members on the back bench on this side of the House, and by others on the Government side. Apparently, all it has achieved is to bring forth from the Minister a political speech, because that is all we have had. It was a dissertation on the reason why these emergency-type houses were introduced by the McLarty-Watts Government while it was in office.

The vital point of the motion, namely, the cost of these houses, was discussed by the Minister for only a few minutes during the hour and a quarter that he spoke on the motion. So I am going to endeavour to leave politics out of it and confine my remarks as much as I possibly can to the subject matter of the motion. It seems rather strange to me that the Minister, having at his command all the files on the subject—we have none at our disposal, and I have only my memory to go by—endeavoured to give me a hammering on the fact that the Minister can direct the State Housing Commission to do something. There was not a peep out of him in regard to any direction by me to the State Housing Commission that it should erect these emergency-type houses about which he was complaining.

The Minister for Housing: I think you had better read my speech, then.

Mr. WILD: I think the focal point in this debate is whether the charges that are being made to these people are fair. Possibly the Minister is reflecting on his own loyal officers of the State Housing Commission when he says that the cost of these dog-boxes ought to be £600 or £700. In the first place, who designed them? Does he think that I, as Minister, got to work with pencil and paper and then said to the officers of the State Housing Commission, "Now get to work and build these dog-boxes"? If one could look at the file, it would probably be found that I asked the chairman of the State Housing Commission to arrange for plans to be drawn for a small emergency-type house which was to cost somewhere in the vicinity of £1,000 or £1,100. I would remind the Minister that these houses, which he refers to as dog-boxes, were designed by his own officers. Having got the design, who built them?

Some information that I have here shows that one was built for £1,673 and another, which was referred to me by the member for Wembley Beaches, is quoted at £1,715. Does the Minister think that the members of the Government at that time went round at the week-end with hammer and nails and put these houses up themselves? No, the work was done by good, honest, Australian workmen. They built those houses under the direction of the officers of the State Housing Commission. So, if the Minister thinks they are too dear—I certainly think they are,

because it was never intended that they should be this price—the only thing he can do is to review the price and reduce it to the figure which the people were told it would be when they went into them.

I do not think there is any doubt that when these people took possession of the "M2" and "M3" type houses, they had a pretty fair idea that they would cost approximately £1,200 or £1,300 because, looking through my papers this morning, I happened to come across a minute to the chairman written by Mr. Bond, who was then the secretary of the State Housing Commission. This dealt with the preparation for a meeting of finance heads of the State of Western Australia who were to discuss the reduction of the loan programme in Western Australia.

At that time, each department was asked to send a representative to this committee and state the minimum amount of money it would require for the forthcoming year. As a result of this, I notice that Mr. Bond submitted to the chairman that the cost of the evictee houses for the year 1952-53 would be as follows:—

500 new-type houses—"M" ..... £675,000.  
Underneath that he went on to say—

Purchase of land, etc., ..... £25,000.

Those figures were submitted by a most responsible officer to Mr. Brownlie, who attended that conference, together with Mr. Reid, the Under Treasurer; Mr. Hall, the Commissioner of Railways; Mr. Townsing, the Assistant Under Treasurer, and Mr. Lancaster, the Government economist.

Arising from that conference, I made a note on the file agreeing to the figures submitted by the State Housing Commission. When one examines those figures, it will be seen that the reliable officers of the State Housing Commission said that this type of house was going to cost £1,350 and the blocks of land £50 each. What an extremely different picture is now painted by the people who were handling this matter in regard to the costs which were the subject of discussion at the Under Treasurer's office! It is observed that they state that the actual cost of erecting this type of house is £1,608 12s. 1d., and the land £125. The Minister has stated today that he wants to do the right thing by these people and give them the houses at cost. He cannot have it both ways. He is complaining that the price was too dear for this emergency type house. He is trying to gloss over the fact that these houses were designed by his own officers and the work was done under the direction of his own officers. Yet we have the chief administrative officer of the State Housing Commission submitting to Mr. Brownlie, the chairman, that this type of house is going to cost £1,350 and the block of land will cost £50.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr. WILD: Prior to the tea suspension I was discussing the considered opinion of officers of the State Housing Commission as to what these houses would cost, and particularly the statement that they had made to the conference with Treasury officials on the amount of money that would be required for this particular purpose, among others, by the State Housing Commission.

I want to retrace my steps and say that the first occasion when these houses were erected—which was at Allawah Grove—was during the term of Sir Ross McDonald as Minister for Housing. At that time there was a state of great national emergency in Western Australia. Migrants were coming into this State in numbers the like of which had not been known before. As a result, quite apart from any normal evictions which might have taken place following upon amendments to the Increase of Rents (War Restrictions) Act, which I think I am right in saying operated at the time, a large number of people were required to be housed.

In consequence, the Government of the day did what it thought fit and proper, and that was to provide some sort of accommodation for these people even though the accommodation might not be what we all would ultimately desire. There were very great restrictions at that time, firstly of money available, and particularly in respect of the shortage of building labour and materials. So the Minister for Housing had no alternative but to cut his cloth according to the amount available. Accordingly he put up very modest houses of three and three-quarter squares at Allawah Grove, and later on an improved type known as the "M2" of 5.8 squares and "M3" of 6 squares.

Let us be realistic about this. If the "M3" type was of six squares, and the "M2" of 5.8 squares, surely we are not expected to believe that the cost of the whole project worked out at about £300 per square! That is what it amounts to. I have no knowledge as to how the Allawah Grove houses were built, because I was then a private member sitting behind the Government. I do know that when the State Housing Commission decided to build the "M2" type, I concurred in that policy because there was an astronomical number of migrants entering the State, and, in addition, materials, and labour were short. I had to do exactly the same as my predecessor, Sir Ross McDonald, did.

Speaking of those I have knowledge of, I can say that many of the houses were built by private contractors. To the best of my knowledge—I think that is very well borne out by the minute I read out by Mr. Bond—it was considered by the State Housing Commission that the most these houses would cost would be £1,350 each, plus an amount for the value of the

block which, in its view, was to be in the order of £50 per block, not £125 and, in another case, £165 now being charged.

Hon. A. F. Watts: That point alone is worthy of inquiry.

Mr. WILD: Yes, that is the point I was coming to. Surely if the State Housing Commission resumed the land for £50 a block, even though it had to clear the block, it should be sold at much less than £165! I do not know what happened in this instance, but I do know that the State Housing Commission has, from time to time, lent money to local authorities for the purpose of building roads. Surely the tenant who buys such a block in a district alongside a road which has been built by the local authority, cannot be charged for the cost of building that road!

The Minister for Works: What happens in the case of private subdivision?

Mr. WILD: I am not very interested in private subdivisions.

The Minister for Works: You ought to be.

Mr. WILD: I am referring to what actually happened in regard to these houses. The proposed inquiry will bring out this point: What should the blocks in Scarborough cost, because that is the district referred to by the member for Wembley Beaches? We know that the land originally cost about £50 per block, yet today we find that people are being charged as high as £165.

The Minister for Works: You ought to know that in the case of private subdivisions where the owner pays for the cost of building a road, that cost is spread proportionately over the blocks.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But the Government did not subdivide.

Mr. WILD: Seeing that so many houses were built by private contractors and the cost would be known, I do not see why, even though the Minister, during his political outburst, told the House what he did eight days after he was in office, it has taken all that length of time to finalise the cost. There has been an intervening gap of 18 or 19 months, yet we cannot be told how much those houses cost when built by private contractors, but we will be when the file is laid on the Table of the House. If my memory serves me right very few of those houses built earlier would cost more than £1,200 each.

At least one good result has emanated from the motion by the member for Wembley Beaches and this is that the Minister has been spurred to action because, within 24 hours of notice having been given of the motion, he has decided that these people are paying too much for their houses and is going to bring the price down to no more than £1,250.

We hear much talk about these so-called dog-boxes and the type of slums they will become. Let me tell the Minister that I was a frequent visitor to the areas where the evictee houses were being built. In company with the then Premier, Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, and the Deputy Premier of the day, Hon. A. F. Watts, I went out to the area the Minister has said he visited, namely, the Ashfield Estate. No doubt Sir Ross McLarty and Mr. Watts will bear out what I say that when we entered those houses, the people told us they were exceedingly happy to know that they had a roof over their heads and were quite satisfied.

Rightly so at that time, because they believed they were going to be charged a fair and equitable price in the vicinity of £1,200 or £1,300. Would any member like to think that, after the lapse of two years and in some cases three years, those people were to be charged £1,600 or £1,700 when they were told that the cost would be in the vicinity of £1,200? Consequently, I do not blame them in the slightest degree for approaching the member for their district and informing him of what was emanating from the Housing Commission.

There is still an urgent need to investigate this matter. I consider that the public is entitled to know exactly under what conditions the occupants went into those houses, what the cost to the Housing Commission was and exactly what the land cost on which the houses were erected. Even if it has spurred the Minister to activity in adopting the very course that the previous Government would have done, we do not want the occupants to pay exorbitant prices. We built those houses during an emergency in order to put a roof over the heads of those people and give them an opportunity under the State Housing Act to improve their homes if and when they could.

Mr. YATES: Many of them have done so.

Mr. WILD: Yes; I, too, have been looking around. Not long ago I went to Ashfield and to Scarborough and conversed with some of these people. Members would be amazed if they could see how some of the occupants have improved these alleged dog-boxes. When a man went into one of those homes, he did so in the belief that he would be able to buy it at a fair and equitable price, and that is all he should be asked to pay. For a modest £500, a man would not expect to get a £2,000 home any more than when a man paid £1,200 would he expect to get a home worth £3,000. These people knew exactly the type of home they were getting and they did not expect to get anything more. A majority of those people are more than satisfied with the action of the Government at that time. It gave many of them an opportunity to own a few square feet of

this country, and they have shown their appreciation by the way in which they have since extended those houses.

There is an urgent need for the whole of this matter to be ventilated. The public is entitled to know the facts. We have heard from the Minister his tirade of political abuse, his vendetta against the member for Dale, what he did and what he did not do. The people are entitled to know exactly what these houses cost the commission, under what conditions occupants went into the houses and what the land cost the Housing Commission. I entirely support the member for Wembley Beaches in his motion.

On motion by Mr. YATES, debate adjourned.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** In response to the request of the member for Dale, I make the papers available for the perusal of members and move—

That the papers be laid on the Table of the House for one week.

Motion put and passed.

### **MOTION—FREMANTLE HARBOUR.**

*As to Extension and Railway Bridge Construction.*

Debate resumed from the 22nd September on the following motion by Hon. J. B. Sleeman:—

That this House requests the Government to go on with the outward to the south extension scheme instead of the upriver scheme for the Fremantle harbour, and also that this House does not agree to the building of a short-life wooden structure railway bridge downstream and adjacent to the present traffic bridge as per Messrs. Brisbane and Dumas's report.

**MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [7.47]:** This matter has been the subject of considerable attention by this House over a period of several years. The question of the merits and demerits of extending the harbour upstream or seaward has been discussed from many angles, and it has also been the subject of many reports by eminent engineers, and the names of such men as Alexander Gibb & Partners, Brisbane & Dumas, Tydeman and others have appeared in reports over a number of years. It is only natural that all of those engineers have not reached the same conclusion. Some have dealt with the merits and demerits of both schemes, and I think it would be presumptuous for a layman like myself to enter into any controversy regarding their opinions. In fact, I believe that would be presumption in the extreme.

The motion by the member for Fremantle requests the Government to proceed with the outward to the south extension scheme instead of the upriver

scheme and expresses disagreement with the proposal to build a short-life wooden structure railway bridge downstream adjacent to the present traffic bridge. I was interested to note that the member for Fremantle in the course of his speech did not suggest that the berth now under construction at Fremantle should not be proceeded with. In fact he went further and agreed that the construction of the two extra berths envisaged in the Government programme should be proceeded with. I understand that there are 19 berths in the Fremantle harbour, and the one under construction and the other two proposed to be built will bring the number to 22.

It has been stated that the 22 berths could meet the requirements of the port of Fremantle for some considerable time. So, this evening it is my intention to support the motion moved by the member for Fremantle, but I do so for reasons totally different from those that have been discussed here. I can see Fremantle being the greatest overseas port in Australia for Europe, and I believe the time is coming when the whole of the inside harbour at Fremantle will have to be utilised for overseas passenger traffic. The time will come when it will be necessary to construct an additional harbour outside the river. With the experience gained at Kwinana over the next few years we will be able to prove whether or not such a scheme outside the harbour—preferably at Kwinana—would be practicable.

For a long time I have wondered what was going to happen regarding the congestion which must occur at Fremantle. I have given consideration, in my own layman's way, to the terminal of the railway being at North Fremantle without crossing over the bridge at all. It has been stated in this House that the proposed new railway bridge will be built somewhere adjacent to the new traffic bridge, and it has been said, also, that it will require a great number of piles. It seems to me that with the obstruction already caused by the traffic bridge together with what would follow from the great many thickly-placed piles for the new railway bridge, we would be inclined to form a dam in the river at this point, and there would be such appreciable silting upstream of the traffic bridge that the flow of the Swan River would be greatly impeded.

The Minister for Works: Do you think the railway bridge should be dispensed with?

Mr. ACKLAND: I say the railway line should terminate at North Fremantle.

The Minister for Works: That is not proposed by the member for Fremantle.

Mr. ACKLAND: No, but it is one of my reasons for supporting the member for Fremantle.

The Minister for Works: Yes, but his scheme involves a railway bridge.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: And the Minister's scheme involves a temporary one against the traffic bridge.

Mr. ACKLAND: My reason for coming to this conclusion is that quite recently, when a parliamentary party visited Fremantle and was shown over the north and the south wharves, I was surprised to hear from officials of the Fremantle Harbour Trust that 90 per cent. of the traffic in and out of the port was moved by road transport. It was surprising to see how little activity existed in the railway adjacent to the wharf. We had proof of this contention, because on the North Wharf there were convoys of heavy-duty trucks lined up to load rock phosphate and coal from ships which had berthed at that wharf.

On the south side of the harbour, many trucks were standing waiting until after a stop-work meeting in order to go on loading the general cargoes that had been delivered there. With the increased traffic that must come to Fremantle, there will not be sufficient space at Victoria Quay for expansion to cope with general harbour work. I believe that if the railway station and the marshalling yards were done away with, sufficient room would be available for the expansion of harbour facilities at that spot.

I also envisage that in the future—I hope in the very near future—this Government will make arrangements with the Federal Government to extend the 4ft. 8½in. gauge railway line from Kalgoorlie to North Fremantle. I believe that when that is done, Fremantle will need every inch of space that can be obtained for harbour facilities, because Fremantle can easily become the greatest port in Australia for the European passenger trade; and if the 4ft. 8½in. gauge extends from Fremantle to Broken Hill, it will be possible, with the use of fast diesel locomotives, for Fremantle to be the terminal for a great deal of heavier freight as well.

With the movement of the railway yards from Fremantle proper, there must be port expansion on the North Wharf as well. Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. is using many acres of valuable land between that wharf and the sea. Its horizontal sheds are taking up space which will need to be occupied by transit sheds, etc. for the harbour works. I suggest to the Government that it give early consideration to establishing facilities to handle all bulk cargoes, such as grain, somewhere further south—preferably at Kwinana. Areas should already be reserved for these works, and preliminary plans set in motion.

Even with the removal of the railway from Fremantle, and the removal of the bulk handling facilities and possibly all oil installations, with the exception of those required for bunkering, there will be



hardly sufficient space to meet the needs of the port of Fremantle in our time. These suggestions should receive the consideration of the Government. I understand, although I have not seen it, that one of the engineers in presenting his report to a Government of Western Australia, suggested that North Fremantle should be the railway terminal. I can see the whole of North Fremantle, some day in the future, being given over in its entirety to harbour works and marshalling yards for the handling of shipping which will be moving in and out of Fremantle. I have not made any reference, other than that, to the engineers' reports, as it would be the height of presumption for me to do so, but I believe many members of this House will live to see Fremantle, if not the greatest, at least one of the greatest and most important ports in Australia.

Mr. Lawrence: It is great now.

Mr. ACKLAND: It is essential that the port of Fremantle should have space in which to grow and as far as I can see, the most practical way of ensuring the availability of that space would be to remove the railway across the Swan River, which I think is quite unnecessary. A railway will definitely be required to serve Kwinana and the south, even if no further shipping facilities are made available there. I do not know how many acres of land are at present occupied by the railway, but if 90 per cent. of the traffic is now being transported by motor-trucks, with the increase in road transport that must be expected, the percentage will rise.

One can envisage that ultimately North Fremantle will be obliterated as a residential and business suburb and the ground taken up entirely to meet the accommodation needs of a vastly bigger port. I trust that the Government will give consideration to these suggestions. Firstly, I believe that a bigger harbour is necessary at Fremantle and that if two bridges are built close together there, they will cause silting and possibly the ultimate blockage of the Swan River. Secondly, it is most desirable, not only in the interests of defence, but also in the interests of trade and commerce, that we should have a 4ft. 8½in. gauge railway all the way from Fremantle to the capital cities in Eastern Australia—

The Minister for Works: I thought you were going to terminate the railway at North Fremantle!

Mr. ACKLAND: That is right.

The Minister for Works: And you have just said, "from Fremantle."

Mr. ACKLAND: I will certainly have the opportunity of correcting my speech in due course, just as the Minister for Works had in another instance.

The Minister for Works: That is a nasty and unjustified reference.

Mr. ACKLAND: I think the Minister's remark was unjustified.

The Minister for Works: You said "North Fremantle" first and subsequently, "Fremantle" and I want to know which you mean.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Who is making this speech?

Mr. ACKLAND: I am attempting to make my speech and I think I have made myself clear to the Minister and to other members. I support the member for Fremantle in his motion.

On motion by Hon. D. Brand, debate adjourned.

### MOTION—BASIC WAGE.

*As to Cost of Living Adjustments.*

Debate resumed from the 22nd September on the following motion by Mr. Brady:—

That in the opinion of this House wage and salary-earners and their dependants, by being deprived of all cost of living adjustments, are being called upon to bear more than their fair share of whatever burden it might be necessary for the community as a whole to carry to maintain economic stability.

to which Hon. Sir Ross McLarty had moved the following amendment—

That all the words after the word "House" in line 1 be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

MR. COURT (Nedlands—on amendment) [8.5]: If the motion moved by the member for Guildford-Midland is correct in what it states, it points out clearly that the Government has failed in its responsibilities. The situation, as I see it, is this: The Government is the State's biggest single employer, in addition to which it has at its disposal all the departmental facilities necessary to assess the economic condition of the State and make a reasonably accurate appraisal of the indications for the future in that regard.

Therefore, if we accept the proposition that has been put forward—that the employer should submit evidence as to the capacity of industry to pay—why did not the Government, as the largest single employer in this State, with adequate opportunity and facilities available, make the necessary representations to the court? In my view, the Government tried to have it both ways. On the one hand, it tried to appease certain of its followers by supporting the increase in the basic wage, but at the same time making it almost impossible for the court to grant the increase, by withholding vital evidence requested by the court.

The Government said to the court, in effect, "Give this increase in the basic wage and we can then get reimbursement from

the Commonwealth, through the Grants Commission." I suggest that that was a rather selfish and narrow approach because there was in it no thought for the impact of an increase on private industry which, as a group, employs by far the greater proportion of Western Australia's workers. By its attitude the Government more or less said, "Let the taxpayers of Australia pay for us and private industry can work out its own destiny."

Mr. Lawrence: Is it not selfish for bigger companies to pay over the margins, on the same principle?

Mr. COURT: If the hon. member wants to peg wages, he will put that theory forward.

Mr. Lawrence: You want to peg wages.

Mr. COURT: No, I am opposed to the pegging of wages. The principle in this State is that a minimum wage is fixed and the employer is free to pay more, as many do.

Mr. Johnson: Very few.

Mr. COURT: Throughout the debate, certain members on the other side of the House have avoided making a clear statement on the finding of the Arbitration Court and the reasons behind it. To the best of my knowledge they have at no stage attempted to demonstrate that the decision of the court might have been very much in the interests of the worker, nor have they attempted to show whether the economy of the State could stand the increase sought.

Mr. Johnson: You must have missed most of the debate as we spent a lot of time on that.

Mr. COURT: Nor have members on the Government side given any explanation of the effect on the pending margins case of a steep rise in the Western Australian basic wage. The whole of the case submitted by supporters of the Government seems to be centred around the current profit disclosures by companies in this and other States for the year ended the 30th June, 1954. I often wonder how long it will be before supporters of the Government realise that profits are vital to the progress of industry and that they are one of the most important sources from which it is capitalised, by the ploughing back of those profits into industry through the limiting of dividend rates. I would point out to them also that profits are one of the main barometers of employment—

Mr. Johnson: Is that a fact or an opinion?

Mr. COURT: Companies making healthy profits, do not think in terms of retrenchment. If the overall average of the dividends paid in Australia were reduced from its present level to Commonwealth bond rates, for instance, which even the member for Leederville would not deny give a fair return—

Mr. Johnson: I think it is too high.

Mr. COURT: If we then accept 4½ per cent. as the Commonwealth bond rate, and reduce the average rate in Australia at present to that level, the effect on selling prices can hardly be measured. It would be something in the vicinity of about 2d. in the £, which is less than 1 per cent. How that is to be passed on in small items of less than £1 is beyond my comprehension. I make that statement to illustrate the rather indifferent thinking that goes on regarding the effect of profits on the cost of goods to the consumer.

Mr. Johnson: Now start with a few facts.

Mr. COURT: I have just stated a fact, and the hon member cannot disprove it.

Mr. Johnson: That is only an opinion.

Mr. COURT: In other words, it is a figure so small that it could not be passed on, as I have said before, in items of less than £1.

Mr. Johnson: That is only your opinion.

Mr. COURT: If the hon. member likes to sit down and make a few calculations and spend as much time on the subject as he did in drawing up his graph, he will find that what I have said is a fact.

Mr. Johnson: I find it differs very much from your statements.

Mr. COURT: During the debate, the member for Leederville made what I felt was a most unfortunate attack on the president of the Arbitration Court. It is our duty, as I understand it, to uphold the dignity and integrity of the Crown, this parliament and our courts.

Mr. May: You just complained that the Government did not interfere with the Arbitration Court.

Mr. COURT: I did not. I complained that the Government did not make the submissions that had been requested. It had all the information available.

Mr. May: You intimated that it should have interfered with the court.

Mr. COURT: I did not. I made no such intimation.

Hon. D. Brand: It could pay what wages it liked above the minimum.

Mr. COURT: In my opinion, the attack of the member for Leederville on the president of the Arbitration Court was on completely illogical grounds. It is fantastic to say that the court should not have required evidence in support of the unions' claim for a basic wage increase. It is equally wrong and improper to say that the president has acted improperly or without sound knowledge of his duties and responsibilities.

Mr. Lawrence: Do you consider he acted properly on this occasion?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I think he has a lot more sense than the member for South Fremantle.

Mr. Lawrence: I did not ask you! You be quiet!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Leederville has had his opportunity.

Mr. COURT: I wonder what an outcry there would be if the court made a finding against the unions on an application by the employers, and the court said, "Do not bother to submit evidence. We will get it ourselves, and let you know what we have decided." Can members imagine a more fantastic situation than that? According to the ideas submitted by the member for Leederville in this debate, it would be perfectly proper for the court to do just that.

Mr. Johnson: It is entitled to get the information and produce it.

Mr. COURT: The hon. member says it is all right for the court to get information from one side, so long as it does not want it from his people. That is where the proposition breaks down.

Mr. Johnson: If the court were impartial—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Leederville has had his opportunity.

Mr. COURT: I have asked myself, "Why is there no real agitation from the great majority of workers with respect to this matter? Why are the Government and other Labour leaders finding it so hard to stir up a strong feeling of resentment?" I think that the following points explain why there is this lack of agitation by the great body of workers. Firstly, I think the wage and salary-earners, on the average, have a great respect for the decisions of the Arbitration Court. They have all learned from long experience, that its decisions are detached and impartial and aimed at the common good.

Furthermore, the dominant thought in the minds of wage and salary-earners affected by the basic wage adjustment is not the wage level; on the contrary, in my opinion anyhow, their dominant thought is security. An involved survey of this has been made in New South Wales, and it is significant that in this survey, made from 3,000 employees, rate of pay was given first priority by only 18 per cent. of the workers. A big majority, namely, 48.9 per cent., named security as the vital need. This result was reflected regardless of the age, sex, status or length of service of the employees concerned. Throughout the whole of the submissions from this survey, the dominant thought was not the wage level but the question of security.

I feel that many of these wage and salary-earners, in fact the great majority of them, appreciate what is good for their security as distinct

from an immediate and temporary advantage through a basic wage adjustment. A further point which explains why there is no great upsurge of resentment about the court's decision is the fact that more and more salary and wage-earners are becoming shareholders. Every day we see a greater spread in the shareholdings of our public companies, and that is a good thing. These people, whether they are small or large shareholders, expect the company to make healthy profits in order to give a good return on capital invested, to act as a buffer against unemployment and to encourage industrial expansion.

A still further point is that an ever-increasing number of wage and salary-earners are getting further away from the basic wage and therefore are not so vitally interested in its movements, except to the extent that it might lessen the value of their earnings through inflation. Another point is that through the improvement in our standard of general education and understanding by the people of this country, the average wage and salary-earner can appraise his present state of well-being and is not misled by any propaganda which suggests to him that he is not as well off as he was.

Mr. Johnson: You had better not try to tell that to housewives.

Mr. COURT: Apart from the factor of meat, it is surprising how few wage-earners are affected by the movements in rentals. I suggest that the following categories of people are not directly affected by any movement that has taken place in rentals during the period since the 1st May, which is the contentious period in this respect. Firstly, we have the home-owner; then there is the occupier of a Commonwealth-State rental home; then follows the group who have had their tenancy arrangements made for the first time since the 1st January, 1951.

A still further group comprises people who have board and lodgings and are not directly affected by any movement in rents. There is another group of employees who have accommodation found for them as part of their jobs, and in few cases does that accommodation charge move. Then we get a substantial group of people who are single and living at home. Of course, they are not directly affected, although they draw the full wage scale.

Another reason why there is less agitation than the supporters of the Government would have us believe is the fact that many wage and salary-earners have satisfactorily and mutually agreed upon the bases of their weekly remuneration, bonus and profit-sharing schemes and superannuation and are not greatly concerned with the court's decision. This reduces the field to a figure much less than 20 per cent., even if we disregard those not dependent on the basic wage movement

for wage and salary adjustments. I feel that the foregoing is a fairly satisfactory and complete answer to the query why there is not the agitation that some people would have us believe.

Mr. Brady: It may be the calm before the storm.

Mr. COURT: If those members on the other side of the House keep on inciting people as they have done, there really will be a storm.

Mr. Lawrence: When did we incite them?

Mr. COURT: I would point out to the member for South Fremantle that the member for Guildford-Midland, when he introduced this motion, said that possibly there could be an industrial upheaval because the court did not agree to this adjustment.

Mr. McCulloch: Do you want that?

Mr. COURT: I do not believe there will be if we leave the people to rely on their own good sense. I will now deal with the subject of company profits which has been bandied about by members on the other side of the House during this debate. I consider that the approach made to this subject by some of the supporters of the Government is unfair and shows their failure to understand the true position. To the best of my knowledge none of the companies quoted during this discussion have been guilty of any abuse of price decontrol nor are they relying on rental incomes.

If members had paraded before this House the names of companies dependent on meat profits or those dependent on rental incomes, that would be something to which we would have to give more thought. However, among all these companies that have been mentioned, I cannot find any that have abused the price structure. The company results for 1953-54 represent a return to a desirable state of affairs and it might interest members to know that the results for 1953-54 are not yet up to the percentage of the return received for the year 1950-51. The significant feature about that is that, in 1950-51, I think all States, without exception, had a series of fairly rigorous controls operating.

Mr. Lawrence: Did they show an increase on 1952-53?

Mr. COURT: Yes, they did, and they had need to because after 1950-51 the hon. member will recall that there was a recession. What was the first reaction to that recession?

Mr. Lawrence: At that time your Government said that there was no recession. You look back in "Hansard" and see.

Mr. COURT: Neither the Commonwealth nor the State Government has disputed the fact that there was a mild recession at that time.

Mr. Lawrence: You look in "Hansard."

Mr. COURT: There was a mild recession and the first thing that happened was that there was an increase in the number of unemployed persons registered in Australia. Quick corrective action was taken and we have now reached the stage where there is a fuller state of employment than ever before. A further point on the question of the much-publicised profits made by companies is the fact that it is the successful companies that parade their figures before the public.

I can assure members that there are many companies in this State that are not doing as well as they would like, but they do not parade their figures in "The West Australian" and other newspapers if they can avoid it. It is only natural ego that the companies with the spectacular results desire to parade their profits before the public. In my work, it has been my experience that one of the greatest problems for auditors is to keep the figures of these less successful companies before the full view of their shareholders so as they can see the bad results as well as the good.

Mr. Lawrence: What a weak argument!

Mr. COURT: It is not a weak argument. If the hon. member examines the average dividend performance of companies he will find that it bears only slight relationship to the performance of the several companies that have been high-lighted in the recent statements made by several members.

Mr. Johnson: Give us figures.

Mr. COURT: If the hon. member so desires I could quote them, but I do not want to weary the House. Nevertheless, if I have time I will gladly indicate to the hon. member the overall figures in Australia. It is a fairly clear index to follow. Another point that always amazes me in regard to profits is that people seem to overlook the fact that, no matter whether they are made by companies or unincorporated traders, they provide the money to produce taxation and other income.

If we do not get ever-increasing revenue from these private companies and traders, where are we to obtain the funds that are so necessary to operate this great country of ours and at the same time grant these ever-increasing social benefits that are being sought by the community throughout Australia?

Mr. Lawrence: Who do you think produced the profits that go towards paying taxation?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: We all do.

Mr. COURT: I would like to think that we all make our contribution.

Hon. D. Brand: No matter how good the worker is, a badly administered company does not do very well.

Mr. COURT: Would those members on the Government benches prefer less profits and, as a result, advocate a reduction in social and other benefits? The question boils down to that simple proposition.

Mr. Johnson: Would an increase in wages reduce profits?

Mr. COURT: The Premier said that the only tribunal with powers wide enough and varied enough to distribute the economic burden fairly over the whole community is the Commonwealth Parliament. I have asked myself whether this is so because, to the best of my knowledge, the Premier did not clearly state how the Commonwealth Parliament would give effect to his suggestion. He has to state whether he wants increased taxation, with or without increased social benefits; he has to say whether he wants wage pegging, coincidental to price and other economic controls. However, he has remained silent on these matters and only inferred—he did not state it—that less tax reductions and some price reductions might assist. This is an extraordinary idea when it is followed to its logical conclusion.

I suggest the Commonwealth Government has achieved a great deal of overall stability. We must not overlook the fact, sitting here in a State Parliament, that the Commonwealth Government, regardless of its political colour, must have regard for the overall effect on the Commonwealth, and not merely single out one particular State. Taking the overall view, the Commonwealth Government could claim that economic stability in Australia has been achieved, and that we now have an economic condition delicately poised between violent inflation on the one hand and recession on the other. I pose this question to the Government: Does it want us to come down violently on the side of marked inflation with its consequent dangers to Western Australia, Australia and the people of Australia?

That is what could very easily happen if this delicate economic mechanism, so carefully stabilised throughout Australia, were to become unbalanced. The member for Leederville put in a lot of time to present to this House a graph dealing with the wage and salary-earners' share of the national product, and one must acknowledge that to prepare such a document requires a lot of research and time. The graph as presented to us was of some interest to me personally because I like to see attempts made to analyse the national product; with this reservation, that it is a very brave person—even if he be a skilled and highly qualified and experienced economist—who would have dogmatic views as to what happens to the national product.

It is a subject on which the best and most outstanding economists disagree. The study of what really does go to make the national product is still in its infancy.

There was one unsound premise in the graph submitted by the member for Leederville. To merely relate proportions of the product to the whole is not necessarily a true reflection of the actual deterioration or improvement in a selected group. I would like to make it clear that I am not putting this forward in a spirit of criticism, but merely expressing my own views, which I trust the member for Leederville will accept as being constructive.

Let me try to illustrate this point. If we accept the premise of the member for Leederville, we would be wanting to increase all rents and interest nearly three-fold on the 1953-1954 level, to keep pace with the relative movement in the national product. I feel sure we would do this very reluctantly, particularly as far as the member for Leederville is concerned. If members exclude the farm income from the 1938-1939 and the 1953-1954 figures of the national product there will be a better basis for comparison.

It is axiomatic that in all comparative considerations the first thing to do is to remove abnormalities, and if there is one phase in our national product which is an abnormal factor as between 1938-1939 and 1953-1954, it is the farm income. Accordingly it is desirable to remove the abnormality factor in order to have a sound basis for comparison. If that is done, we will find that there has been an overall improvement of at least 7 per cent. in the return to the wage and salary-earner out of the national product.

Mr. Johnson: If you pick your own figures.

Mr. COURT: No, I do not. If the hon. member will sit down and think over it, I feel sure he will privately agree. He knows that the basis of economic comparison is to remove all abnormalities. The hon. member did make some play on the farm income. If we apply this simple test, the figure arrived at is approximately that disclosed by the excess in the basic wage figure as it is today over a strict interpretation of the needs basic wage, allowing for all known increases to the 30th June. In addition, we cannot overlook the value to the wage and salary-earner of the improved social services situation that has been created since 1938-1939.

One must take all those factors into account to properly appraise the distribution of the national product or income. I invite the attention of members to the increased proportion of wages and salaries in the net production of industry in Western Australia. If we take a three-year average before the commencement of the war we find that the wage and salary proportion was 51.93 per cent. If we take the figures for the last known four years, we will find that the average is 58.2 per cent. In other words, there has been a sharp

increase in the proportion by 7 per cent. in favour of wages and salaries. I think that is some further evidence—

Mr. JOHNSON: What is the source of your figures?

Mr. COURT: —to confirm that my statement regarding the national product is a sound one. The source of my figures is the Government Statistician's factories data. It is also significant that the national income increased during this period from 1939 to 1954 by 384 per cent. The farm income excluded, there was an increase of 337 per cent. During that period wages and salaries increased by 380 per cent. Whilst wages and salaries were increasing overall by 380 per cent. the amount per head increased by 218 per cent. and the price index increased by 153 per cent. It is also significant that during this period the dividends in Australia—and after all the dividends are a reflection in part of the profit being made in Australia—fell back as a percentage of the national income. Although they have increased in money value by 240 per cent., the fact is that as a percentage of the whole they fell back.

I favour a complete review of the basic wage and the method of its compilation. I feel that this is the only way of ensuring that it is in line with our changing standards. I do not agree that we should be wedded for all time to a standard that we had in 1932, 1938 or even in 1945. This review is available to all the unions if and when they want it. There is machinery laid down for it, and it amazes me that they do not set that machinery in motion and have a complete review of the standards on which this basic wage is based. Whilst they are academically fairly sound, index adjustments do become outmoded by changing conditions.

It is my considered opinion that the further we move away from the base calculation, the less true is the reflection received from the index adjustment. I consider that the mover's presentation of the motion was an emotional rather than an analytical utterance on a matter of great importance to this State. Utterances of this nature do nothing other than stir up the feelings and stir up class consciousness. I felt that he made out a very good case for the basic wage decision to be left with the court and to be kept away from this political atmosphere which is inseparable from Parliaments during the debates of this kind. I find that the average wage and salary-earner is much more of a realist in respect of this issue than are some of the members opposite and some trade union leaders. I oppose the motion.

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

Ayes	....	....	....	15
Noes	....	....	....	17

Majority against 2

The House divided.

Ayes.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Naider
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Brand	Mr. North
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Court	Mr. Watts
Mr. Doney	Mr. Wild
Mr. Mann	Mr. Yates
Mr. Manning	

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Moir
Mr. Brady	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Heal	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Styants
Mr. Lapham	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Lawrence	Mr. May
Mr. McCulloch	

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. J. Hegney
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Guthrie
Mr. Owen	Mr. Norton
Sir Ross McLarty	Mr. Hawke
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Hoar
Mr. Oldfield	Mr. Graham
Mr. Perkins	Mr. O'Brien
Dame F. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Jamieson

Amendment thus negatived.

MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland—in reply) [8.45]: Reference was made by some members to my soap-box oratory and my Esplanade type of address to the House. Some members, like the Leader of the Opposition, drew red herrings across the trail by inferring that the Government did not accept certain propositions of the Opposition in regard to rent and did not provide for adequate meat supplies. Some members tried to justify the attitude of the Arbitration Court and its decision, but strangely enough no member opposite attempted to deal with the 21 points I raised in support of the motion. They appeared to speak about everything else but the matter referred to in it. The basic part of the motion was that the wage and salary-earners were being asked to carry an unfair burden of the economics to bring about stability in the financial position of Australia, and in particular Western Australia.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You did not put up any facts to support that.

Mr. BRADY: Probably I did not put up as many facts as I would have liked. If I have put up a weak case, as has been suggested by the member for Nedlands and inferred by the member for Mt. Lawley, I must apologise to the wage and salary-earners of Western Australia, because in a major issue like this I did hope to do them justice.

Because of circumstances over which I had no control, such as the shortage of time, I found I could not cover as many points as I intended. Nevertheless, in reply I hope to cover some of the weaknesses of my original address. I feel sure that I can pull to pieces many of the arguments put up by the Opposition as to why this

motion should not be carried. I want to thank members on the Government side for the great support they gave me. They proved in no uncertain manner the warranty for my making this motion.

Hon. D. Brand: Did you not know they were going to support you?

Mr. BRADY: I did not know they were going to support me. I did not ask any member in the House to support me. The decision was left to individual members. However, I felt that from their convictions, from their knowledge of electorates and their association with workers, they knew that the decision of the Arbitration Court was a harsh one, if not a bad one. In reply I want to cover the arguments of the Opposition so as to prove to this House the advisability of supporting the motion.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But the Government did not produce any evidence in court, so how can you now?

Mr. BRADY: The Government went as far as it could under the circumstances by directing its advocate to appear in court and stating that the Government was prepared to accept any increase awarded.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Then you do not think that the Government could have given any evidence?

Mr. BRADY: Having regard to the position the Government was in at the time, and the far-reaching effects of the decision of the court, I think the Government went as far as it could.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: In other words, you do not think that the Government considered it desirable.

Mr. BRADY: I believe the Government considered it was desirable, but that it was more desirable that the court should give the decision.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Without evidence.

Mr. BRADY: With or without evidence, because the court has certain jurisdiction, and its fundamental jurisdiction is to act in good conscience and do justice to the people represented before it.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: On a guess.

Mr. BRADY: When the court could find that after tradesmen had been forfeiting increases in margins over a number of years and were paying £2 or £3 a week rent when the amount allowed in the basic wage is £1 7s., and when they have to accept a basic rate below that fixed by the court in 1947 and 1950, I consider that the court made a bad decision.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Do you think that a rise would necessarily give them an effective increase in income?

Mr. BRADY: It would compensate them to a large extent. If industry passed on the increase, the snowball effect would cause the powers-that-be to realise that some protection must be provided for the

wage and salary-earners as well as for vested interests and the captains of industry. Despite the attempt by the member for Nedlands to prove that companies have not been making huge profits, there are piles of evidence to the contrary on every hand.

Reference was made to the prosperous times at the opening of the Federal Parliament, and by the Prime Minister on the eve of the last election, while the figures compiled by Commonwealth and State statisticians, the figures compiled by stock exchanges, by the Chamber of Manufactures, by the banks and by hosts of other people, all go to prove that the wage and salary-earners should have been granted at least the last increase, if not the previous one.

The member for Mt. Lawley has tried to lead me off the track and I do not want to dodge the issues raised by speakers on the Opposition side. To a large extent, the Opposition is to blame for the fact that rents have risen so steeply, and rent has been a major factor in the increase in the cost of living. Members of the Opposition both in this House and in another place have been responsible by reason of their attempt to prevent the fixation of rents during the debate on the legislation dealing with that matter. The Leader of the Opposition spoke of the Government's failure to protect the people by ensuring that adequate meat supplies were available. That would have been of no avail unless the prices had been fixed. The meat has been available, but the price has been, and continues to be, out of hand.

Mr. Yates: The quantity is not available.

Mr. BRADY: It is available. There has been nearly as much meat slaughtered around the suburbs as in the abattoirs.

Hon. A. F. Watts: In New South Wales where there is control, the price of meat is higher than it is here.

Mr. BRADY: I do not know about New South Wales, but here the price of meat is exorbitant, and I am not sure that some of our farmer friends are not benefitting from the resultant increase in price?

Hon. D. Brand: Do you really believe that?

Mr. BRADY: Yes. When amounts up to from £45 to £50 per head are paid for stock, it is time that the people asked questions.

Mr. Manning: You are a long way out there.

Mr. BRADY: I read the prices in the newspaper and speaking from memory, beef was bringing 179s. per 100lbs. I did not expect to have to mention that figure, but I believe it would work out at 1s. 8d. or 1s. 9d. per lb. wholesale, and yet people have to pay 4s. 6d. to 4s. 11d. per lb. retail.

Mr. Nalder: According to an advertisement in tonight's "Daily News," beef may be bought at Victoria Park at 1s. 9d. a lb.

Mr. Ackland: Why does not the member for Guildford-Midland start a butcher's shop?

Mr. BRADY: If the hon. member would lend me the money, I might do so.

Hon. D. Brand: What about mutton?

Mr. BRADY: I decline to be led off the track because I wish to deal with the basic arguments. The member for Katanning and the member for Moore had opportunities to discuss this matter and both failed to do so. They had an opportunity to deny the contention that the wage and salary-earners constituted the only section of the community singled out to maintain the economic stability of the country.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That is a ridiculous statement.

Mr. BRADY: I shall prove it. Some of the figures advanced by the member for Mt. Lawley, with which he tried to bolster up a case, were ridiculous.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: They were accurate.

Mr. BRADY: The hon. member told us that, according to the thirty-second annual report of the Commissioner of Taxation, 2,867,000 workers earned £1,592,000 as income during a certain year. Here is the amazing part. When we analyse those figures and divide the number of people into the total amount, we get an average of £550 or approximately £11 a week. The hon. member advanced those figures to show that one-fifth of the number of people earned £997,455,000 in income and paid twice the amount by way of taxation. What he did not tell us was that the average income for the 524,984 people was £1,899 per person against an average income of £550 for 2,867,000 people. This showed that one-fifth of the people of Australia have a stranglehold over the other four-fifths and in the ultimate are making the four-fifths bear the burden of maintaining the economic stability of the country. Why did not the member for Mt. Lawley complete the story?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I did.

Mr. BRADY: The masses are becoming poorer and the minority are getting richer.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You are not getting any poorer.

Mr. BRADY: Vested interests and monopolies are applying pressure greater than ever before.

The Minister for Works: The member for Mt. Lawley really advanced an argument in support of your case.

Mr. BRADY: He certainly did so without realising it. In fact, the whole of the speakers on the Opposition side advanced

arguments in support of my contention, thinking they were boosting up their own case.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I showed that if you split it all up and took your £600 or £700 away, it would give an increase of £2 13s. 5d., but you did not agree with such a reduction.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BRADY: I have dealt with the address of the Leader of the Opposition, and I shall now pass on to that of the member for Dale. I am sorry he is out of the Chamber, because he made some very wild statements, as we could expect. He tried to prove that the people were not getting these very big profits out of industry as a result of the workers carrying the burden. He endeavoured to discount my argument that they were the people who were investing in oil and uranium by saying that quite a lot of these wage and salary-earners were investing in this manner.

He based his argument on a conversation that he overheard in a railway carriage when travelling to Armadale. He tried to discount my argument that Wunderlich and others were making big profits, by showing that whereas galvanised iron in 1951 cost £55 a ton, today it is costing £85. I think he advanced that argument to show that further increases would step up the price of iron. He did not proceed to say that probably B.H.P. was making greater profits out of the sale of galvanised iron than it should, because that concern has almost a monopoly of iron and steel in Australia. That company would do well to consider making less profits and giving smaller dividends to its share-holders.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Is not the price of iron fixed?

Mr. BRADY: Despite the fact that we are supposed to have reached a stage of stability, and that the Arbitration Court has pegged wages so that prices will not be increased, B.H.P. is now threatening, if it has not already done so, to increase the price of its goods. These are the people that the Arbitration Court is helping to protect, because it is trying to give them economic stability, but without any warning at all this company announces in the Press that it must get bigger prices for its goods. It justifies its argument by saying that it has so much money invested in industry.

It is a poor look out for the workers if they, the workers, have to pay the profits; because there can be as much maladministration as possible, and bad investments can be made but, because the shareholders have put capital into industry, they must be guaranteed a return of 7, 8 or 9 per cent., according to what the directors of B.H.P., or some of the banks who are tied up with it, feel should be made. I refer



to B.H.P. because it is a classic example, but what I have said applies to a dozen other industries. What I have said about mismanagement in industry is not just imagination on my part, because the last report of the Tariff Board points out that there could be better administration in industry than there is.

Mr. Court: That will always be so, no matter how good they get.

Mr. BRADY: Of course it will. If there is weakness in one section, why try to make it apply to the whole? This is no reason why all workers should suffer. The member for Dale also made the point that when he was Minister for Housing an increase of 1s. in the basic wage meant an added £6 in the cost of a house. He concluded by saying that if the court had given the 13s. increase, it would have meant that £100 would go on to the price of a house. I wonder whether the hon. member inquired as to whether the £100 had already been included in the price without the basic wage being increased.

I have been amazed to find comparatively young men—men not in their fifties—who have retired from the building industry. Some of them had not been in the industry for more than 25 years. How did they do it? They are building houses in eight weeks, as a result of efficiency, not only on the part of the management but the workers, too. The question for the member for Dale to ask is whether the profit is already on the house before the workers have it in their pockets.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What about the Public Works Department? Perhaps they do not work as hard there.

The Minister for Works: They work very well in the Public Works Department.

Mr. BRADY: The member for Nedlands has opened up a question that I did not touch on the other night. I did not want to go into details and highlight the profits of companies operating in Western Australia, but I have had my attention drawn to one or two such companies. The firm of Cox Bros. is a classic example of what is going on. This company, in 1945, made a profit of £130,896, and in 1954 the total reserves and undistributed profits amounted to £735,417. In addition, in 1954, it added £71,485 surplus to other reserves not shown in the column to which I have just referred. This information has appeared in "The West Australian" since the motion has been before the House.

I am advancing this argument to show that had the president of the Arbitration Court—I am not referring to him in a personal sense, but in his judicial capacity—just looked around in the merest way, he would have found that on all

sides profits were being made and production stepped up, and this would have justified him in awarding the last 13s. 8d. increase. The Denaro Concrete Block Manufacturing Co. more than doubled its operating profits in the year ended the 30th June, 1954, compared with the previous year. The net operating profit was £5,184 as compared with £2,517.

The net profit of Bunning Timber Holdings Ltd. for the year ended the 30th June, 1954, came out at £63,478 as against £45,000 the previous year—just a mere increase of 50 per cent. The dividend was unchanged at 7½ per cent. on ordinary stock, but the directors recommended a bonus of 2½ per cent. The chairman of directors, Mr. H. P. Downing—I seem to have heard his name before—went on to deal with the activities of the mills and show how they had stepped up production considerably. The next company I want to refer to is Hearn Industries, which had a record year. The net profit made by that firm for the year ended the 30th June, 1954, was a record £25,754, after tax provision of £12,000. This compared with a profit of £16,825 for the previous year—just a mere 50 per cent. increase again.

Mr. Yates: Of course they operate to make profits.

Mr. BRADY: That is obvious. W. Drabble Ltd. for the year ended the 31st May last made a net profit of £54,000—£21,000 better than in the previous year. To June, 1954, A.P.M. made a record profit of £1,456,708, nearly three times more than in the previous year. With an increase of 300 per cent. in its profit the firm had a successful year. It made only £186,000 after providing for working expenses and £121,000 for taxation—

Mr. Yates: You do not tell us what capital is involved.

Mr. BRADY: I will tell the hon. member later and if he is honest when he hears the details he will vote for the motion, but the chances are he will be dishonest and vote with his party. Peters Ice Cream Ltd. for the year ended the 30th June, 1954, earned a net profit of £43,953 after allowing for depreciation and so on, and the proprietors are the people who sell ice-cream to children. For the year 1953-54, Carlisle & Co. and subsidiaries earned a total income of £49,304 as against £40,000 in the previous year.

For the last financial year Edments Holdings Ltd. made a profit of £178,655, plus a big capital profit and paid a dividend of 10 per cent. Lawley Finance Ltd. doubled its profit—£22,000 as compared with £11,000 the previous year—and lifted the dividend from 8 per cent. to 14 per cent., yet the workers cannot get justice in regard to their basic wage. My reason for quoting these local companies is that I was twitted the other night with

not having referred to local concerns. I have now shown that they are just as much involved in big profit-making as are companies in the Eastern States.

Mr. Nalder: Do you not want them to make profits?

Mr. BRADY: Fair profits, but I want the wage and salary-earners to receive a fair return for their effort and, after learning a trade and making it their life's work I think they should receive sufficient to provide for their old age after allowing them to do the right thing by their families, whether in regard to holidays, education or a start in life for the children when they marry. The wage and salary-earners are just as much entitled to be able to do that for their families, as are the farmers, pastoralists, captains of industry or other vested interests. Those people are entitled to fair profits, but not to take an unfair share of what is produced by the worker—

Mr. Yates: How many basic wage-earners are in those companies?

Mr. BRADY: I would have liked to hear the member for South Perth and others who are coming in like dingoes and having a go and trying to get on top of the crow or whatever else it is that dingoes get on top of. Why did they not do it at the right time? I have here the "Financial Review" for September, 1954, which I think represents the people who make the large profits.

For the information of the member for South Perth and others who are so concerned about the return on capital investments, I will quote what this journal has to say. It compares the results of 228 companies for 1952-53 and 1953-54. Leaving out the details the shareholders' funds in 1952-53 were £264,000,000 and in 1953-54 £280,000,000.

The ratio of net profit to capital, which the member for South Perth is interested in, on the 1952-53 investments of 228 companies was 11.8 per cent. and in 1953-54 it was 14.8 per cent., rather a substantial increase for the year in which the State Arbitration Court—I do not reflect on the president personally as I have a lot of time for him and think he was in a bit of a spot in this regard—refused to make the quarterly adjustments. Had the president looked around he would have seen plenty of justification for the payment of the 13s. 8d. The member for South Perth has become quiet since I gave those figures—

Mr. Court: Read out the next ones.

Mr. BRADY: The member for South Perth had an opportunity to put the case for his side. The member for Nedlands the other night said that, after all, people in industry today are so generous that

they pay above union wages, but tonight he did not advance that argument. I do not know whether he found that there would not be 1 per cent. of industry doing that. For 25 years I was part-time secretary for five or six unions and in that time I knew only one company that paid above union rates and in that case it paid only four or five men. The member for Nedlands had every opportunity to prove his case, but did not do so.

The other evening another member indicated to me what happens in some industries to a worker who is conscientious and who has fought for his country. A young man who recently resigned from his employment with a certain well-known firm in Murray-st. after 20 years' service, in order to take up farming at Bruce Rock, was granted a £20 bonus on condition that he purchased goods to that value from the firm. That is a classic example of how these magnanimous firms look after their employees. I think the member for Nedlands really believes in the system that he advocates, just as I do in the system I represent. In our respective spheres we both encourage people to do the right thing, but when he advocates doing 80 or 90 per cent. of the workers out of what is their due, that is quite wrong.

I do not say that justice should come only from the Arbitration Court. I think that the Commonwealth Parliament is the right authority to do justice in this matter because, largely, the State Arbitration Court has followed the Commonwealth court in its decision. If this motion is carried tonight, and I hope it will be, we should notify the Prime Minister and the Minister for Labour in the Federal Parliament of our views and urge them to do something regarding the method of wage fixation, particularly regarding the basic wage.

Mr. Court: What do you want them to do?

Mr. BRADY: I want them to agree that workers are not getting their fair share. All sections of industry should be carrying some portion of the burden, no matter how small it is.

Mr. Court: Say they agree. How will they implement it?

Mr. BRADY: If the Federal Minister for Labour, the Prime Minister and Cabinet agree on the point, legislation can be introduced in the Commonwealth Parliament to grant the Federal Arbitration Court certain powers to enable it to review the basic wage, having regard to the economic position of the country.

Mr. Court: But that is done now.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order; I would draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that he is introducing entirely new matter.

Mr. BRADY: I am sorry. Members opposite have tried to upset my arguments and have tried to lead me from the beaten track.

Mr. Manning: If we do not get more rain, the farmers will not be able to carry their fair share.

Mr. BRADY: For the hon. member's sake, and for the sake of all farmers, I hope that we do get rain, and then the farmers can thank God for it. If that happens they, too, should see that justice is done to the workers.

Mr. Yates: You do not want to be completely biased about these matters.

Mr. BRADY: I am not. President Jackson must accept certain blame in this matter but there is also the Federal tribunal. Of course, the member for South Perth specialises in this type of debate instead of getting up and debating the subject properly. Instead of speaking for himself, he likes to come in and have a bit of a snip here and there. The hon. member might be effective in that way, but I doubt if he is getting very far.

Mr. Yates: You do not speak to every motion that is introduced in the House.

Mr. BRADY: I do not want to weary members by quoting a lot more figures but I think I should quote from one or two other papers. In an issue of "The Australian Financial Review," dated the 16th September, there is a heading "Big Production Gains but Import and Capacity Doubts Ahead." The big production gains show that on that ground alone the Arbitration Court did not have the right to withhold the recent increases in the cost of living. In that particular issue there is a graph showing that production of iron and steel had increased, as had the production of domestic refrigerators, motor-bodies, cotton piecegoods and cement. On the ground of production alone the court could not justify its decision in withholding the increase.

Earlier, regarding the increase in the production of galvanised iron, I quoted the Broken Hill Pty. Co. Ltd. The net profit of the company for the year 1951-52 was £1,957,011. On the 17th July, 1954, the "Age" had this to say—

The Broken Hill Pty. Co. Ltd. shows an appreciable increase in net trading profit for the year ended May 31st. The company has decided to increase paid up capital by about £7,500,000. Net profit from all sources for 1953-54 was £2,546,321 against £2,364,096 for 1952-53.

That illustrates that in the year 1952-53 the company made an additional £600,000 profit on the profit made in 1951-52.

The only other paper I wish to quote from is the "Monthly Summary of the National Bank of Australasia Ltd." for

March, 1954. It shows that there has been a step up in production throughout Australia and it states—

For this season Australian primary producers, and particularly those engaged in agriculture, can claim a satisfactory achievement. After a doubtful beginning, the wheat prospects improved steadily and culminated in a total production of approximately 199 million bushels, the largest for four years, with an average yield per acre little short of last season's record. The barley and oat crops this year are also satisfactory as to volume. The barley harvest, estimated at 36 million bushels, is about one million bushels greater than last season's record. The oat harvest of about 34 million bushels, though not equal to the 43 million bushels harvest of last season, is much above the average of previous seasons.

I quote that to show that, generally speaking, all production has increased. I quote the bank figures because it could not be said they were biased in favour of the workers.

As regards retail sales, the Australian News and Information Bureau showed that for the quarter ended December, 1952, the retail sales in food and groceries, clothing, hardware, electrical goods, furniture, motor-vehicles and other goods were £535,000,000, and for the quarter ended December, 1953, the total figures were £584,000,000. The only reason I quote those figures is to show that there was an upward tendency in retail business.

With regard to production trends, for the second half of 1953 there was an upward tendency in practically every conceivable commodity, including black coal, clay bricks, superphosphate, steel, domestic refrigerators, cattle hides, refined sugar, beer, newsprint, electricity, boots and shoes and blankets and similar articles.

I will conclude on that note and hope that I have convinced the House that, in regard to profits in industry and production trends, the Arbitration Court, to do justice to wage and salary-earners, should have given the latest increase in the cost of living. If the present trends in arbitration continue, wage and salary-earners in Western Australia will be at a great disadvantage because while boom conditions exist in Western Australia, wage and salary-earners are entitled to some benefits from such conditions. But because of the system that operates in our Arbitration Court, they are denied that right. I think that is entirely unwarranted. I hope the motion will be carried and if it is I shall consider, at a later date, moving a further motion that it be sent to the Prime Minister, and the Minister for Labour in the Commonwealth Government, with a view to trying to grant some relief to wage and salary-earners in this State.

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

Ayes	16
Noes	15

Majority for ..... 1

**Ayes.**

Mr. Andrew	Mr. McCulloch
Mr. Brady	Mr. Moir
Mr. Heal	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Styants
Mr. Lapham	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Lawrence	Mr. May

(Teller.)

**Noes.**

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Brand	Mr. North
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Court	Mr. Watts
Mr. Doney	Mr. Wild
Mr. Mann	Mr. Yates
Mr. Manning	

(Teller.)

**Pairs.**

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Bovell
Mr. Norton	Mr. Owen
Mr. Hawke	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Hearman
Mr. Graham	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. O'Brien	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Jamieson	Dame F. Cardell-Oliver
Mr. Sewell	Mr. Hill

Question thus passed.

# **BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it insisted on its amendment.

# **BILL—JURY ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Council's Further Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council, and had appointed Hon. C. H. Simpson, Hon. N. E. Baxter and the Chief Secretary as managers for the Council, the President's room as the place of meeting and the time 12 noon.

[Mr. Moir took the Chair.]

# **BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

## *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR POLICE** (Hon. H. H. Styants—Kalgoorlie) [9.36] in moving the second reading said: The Bill proposes to amend the Traffic Act, 1919-53. The first amendment is to restrict the farmers' concession licences to one licence for each farm or holding, irrespective of

the number of vehicles used. The proposed amendment has been requested by and has the full support of the Road Board Association of Western Australia, which is mainly representative of farming interests.

During the 1953 session of Parliament, authority was given for the funds necessary for the rehabilitation of the Perth-Guildford-rd. to be made a charge on the Traffic Trust Account. Three local authorities were involved, viz. Perth, Bayswater and Bassendean Road Boards. When submitting the amendment, the Local Government Department was of the opinion that the Perth-Guildford-rd. commenced at the Mt. Lawley subway, and the amendment was framed accordingly.

It was subsequently found, however, that part of the Perth-Guildford-rd. is in the territory of the Perth Road Board, commencing at the intersection of Lord-st. and Walcott-st. So whilst Bayswater and Bassendean have been entirely relieved of the responsibility of any upkeep on the Perth Guildford-rd., a small section of approximately four chains is still left within the Perth Road Board area. The amendment to Section 14 is to relieve the Perth Road Board of the responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of this small section.

In 1952, new Subsection 2 (a) was added to Section 14 of the Traffic Act authorising the Minister to approve of the provision and maintenance of such traffic lights and signs in the metropolitan area for the direction of traffic as he thought fit and to authorise payments not exceeding £20,000 in any one year for the foregoing purposes. When the original suggestion was made, it was desired that a definite amount of £20,000 be made available each year.

The Crown Law Department has ruled that, in the event of the full amount of £20,000 not being expended in any one year, the balance cannot be made available in any subsequent year. It is now desired to provide that if in any one year in which the payments authorised by the Minister do not reach £20,000, the difference between the amount actually expended and the £20,000 be made a legitimate expenditure if any subsequent year. The special committee set up by the Government to recommend priority for installation of lights and signs is in full agreement with the amendment now sought.

At present learners' permits are issued free of cost. The Commissioner of Police advises that for the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1953, the Traffic Branch issued 4,654 learners' permits. Of this number, 1,463 did not return to be tested for a motor-driver's licence. The commissioner points out that considerable time was involved in the preparation of the application for the permit, testing of

the applicant and the preparation of the permit itself. The learner is permitted to drive a vehicle under instruction for a period of up to 60 days free of charge. It is felt that a charge of 2s. 6d. for a learner's permit is quite reasonable.

The provision in the Act as it stands at present makes it necessary for all applications for overwidth loads to be submitted to and recommended by the Commissioner of Police. This causes a great deal of inconvenience, particularly in country districts where farmers wish to transport overwidth farm machinery from place to place and where, on occasions, it is necessary for ordinary carriers to transport overwidth loads.

When the Traffic Act Amendment Bill was before Parliament in 1953, notice of an amendment was given to delete the words, "given on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Police" and to insert "or other persons authorised by him." The amendment now sought will result in the Minister being able to authorise local authorities to issue permits for overwidth loads on conditions to be specified. It will enable the Minister to authorise a local authority to issue permits for farm implements provided the usual safeguards such as daylight travel, red flags at extremities of implements being towed, and any other general precautions thought desirable were complied with.

It is desired that the Second Schedule to the Traffic Act be restated in order that the numerous new models of vehicles may be clearly set out in that schedule. At the present time caravans have one definition, but as the scale of fees for caravans provides for different fees for a motor-propelled caravan, and a trailer type caravan, it is desired that the two classes be specified in the Second Schedule.

Another provision seeks to include in the definition of "motorcars" the type of vehicles commonly known as estate cars, countryman, station wagon or similar classes of vehicles. These vehicles are designed mainly for the carrying of persons with some extra room than is normally found in the luggage compartment of a motorcar.

It is also desired to include in the definition of "motor carriers," motorised wheel chairs used only by incapacitated or crippled persons. Although these licences will still be issued free, by including them in this definition, it makes clear that the minimum of 10s. will only be payable for third party insurance.

At the present time a road tractor is defined as follows:—

A vehicle which is a tractive unit designed for the hauling of a trailer or semi-trailer.

It is desired to distinguish between a hauling unit of the semi-trailer as compared with a trailer, and for this purpose to substitute the following definition in the schedule:—

- (a) Tractor (prime mover type)—a motor-vehicle which is a tractive unit designed for hauling a semi-trailer.
- (b) Tractor—any motor-vehicle not designed for the carriage of passengers or goods on roads and used primarily for such purposes as agricultural pursuits, clearing, earth moving, forestry, forestry pursuits, industrial pursuits, road making and various other machines such as graders, rollers, tar sprayers, etc.

At present, the licensing fees payable on caravans are included in the regulations and appear practically at the end of the regulations. This causes complications with some licensing authorities in their location. The Third Schedule sets out the fees payable for various vehicles under the Act, and it is quite obvious that the scale of fees for caravans should quite properly also be included in the Third Schedule. It will be noted that no alteration is made in the fees for these vehicles.

Other amendments are included, because the fees on miscellaneous implements such as graders, rollers, mobile cranes, excavators, etc., have never been clearly understood, nor has the Crown Law Department been able to give an interpretation of the provision in the Act at present whereby these machines have been licensed as traction engines. It is pointed out as regards one of them, that the scale at present provided in the Act is so uncertain that even after obtaining legal advice, a decision could not be arrived at; and in 1947 the Government authorised a circular to be despatched to all local authorities stating that for the tractor class of vehicle £50 should be the maximum fee payable, and this maximum is included in the new scale. The scale as set out is in accordance with charges that have been made in the past, with the maximum of £50.

Another amendment is included to make it definite that a dual wheel shall be treated as a single wheel for the purposes of assessing a passenger or carrier's licence fee. The last amendment is consequential upon an earlier one in connection with implements such as graders, rollers, mobile cranes, excavators, etc. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Nalder, debate adjourned.

*Sitting suspended from 9.46 p.m. to 2.15 p.m. (Thursday).*