

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER (North): I have much pleasure in formally seconding the motion.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 3.42 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 6th April, 1954.

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MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

The Legislative Assembly met at 3 p.m., pursuant to proclamation by His Excellency the Governor, which was read by the Clerk (Mr. F. E. Islip).

SUMMONS FROM THE GOVERNOR.

The Speaker and members, in response to summons, proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber and having heard His Excellency the Governor deliver the opening Speech (*vide* Council report *ante*), they returned to the Assembly Chamber.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

(a) *As to Financing Proposed Flats, Subiaco.*

Hon. SIR ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Treasurer:

(1) From what source is the Government providing the finance to construct the proposed flats at Subiaco?

(2) If loan money is being used, is the amount available because funds have been withdrawn from other urgent public works?

(3) What is the rate of interest?

(4) If, as a consequence, he is short of loan funds next financial year, is it proposed to enter into fresh contracts of this nature?

(5) Was any authority obtained from Parliament for the expenditure involved in these contracts and, if so, when and in what part of the Estimates?

The TREASURER replied:

The question of financing the construction of the proposed flats at Subiaco has not yet been decided by the Government.

(b) *As to Tabling Papers, Subiaco Flats.*

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

Five months having elapsed, according to the report in the paper, and as proceedings are not now to be continued, will he lay on the Table all relevant papers in connection with the Subiaco flats proposal?

The MINISTER replied:

The question of the Subiaco flats, as I announced when Parliament was last in session, is the subject of litigation between the State and the Commonwealth, and the relevant papers are at the present moment in the hands of the Crown Law Department.

(c) *As to Inspecting Files.*

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

Further to my previous question about the Subiaco flats, will the Minister make arrangements for me to look at the relevant files at the Crown Law Department?

The MINISTER replied:

I desire first to assure the member for Dale that there are in connection with that project no papers to which I would not give him ready access but, as the question is sub judice, I feel that it might be undesirable for there to be any political activity in connection with it. However, I am prepared to discuss with the Crown Solicitor, who is handling the matter for the Government, the subject of the hon. member's question.

(d) *As to Tenders for Subiaco Flats.*

Hon. SIR ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

Without knowing where the finance is coming from for the building of the Subiaco flats, have tenders been called for the building of the flats and have any tenders been accepted?

The MINISTER replied:

Tenders have been called and the tenders are at present receiving the consideration of the Government. It might be pointed out, however, that building programmes of considerable dimensions are of necessity laid down by the State Housing Commission in anticipation of funds being made available. That is a practice that has always been followed and that is the situation in this particular instance.

(e) *As to Assurance to Tenderers.*

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

As considerable expenditure is necessary in completing a tender of the magnitude involved in the flats project, was any assurance given to any tenderer with regard to the expenditure involved in connection with the preparation of a tender?

The MINISTER replied:

All I have to add is that I am hopeful that there will be a decision and subsequently an announcement by the Government, within the next week, that a certain tender or tenders have been accepted.

(f) *As to Government's Procedure re Subiaco Flats.*

Hon. SIR ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Premier:

Does he not think it an extraordinary procedure for the Government to decide to spend some hundreds of thousands of pounds on a project without first knowing from where the finance will come?

The Minister for Education: Your Government did that very often.

The PREMIER replied:

That has not been done. The Government will not decide to spend a large amount of money on the proposed Subiaco flats until a tender has been accepted. When it accepts the tender, we will know from which source the money will come.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Pretty belated!

(g) *As to Use of State Bricks.*

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

In view of the Government's proposal to restrict the use of State bricks to housing only, will he allow certain of these bricks to be made available for the building of hospitals and infant health centres, especially those in isolated country areas?

The MINISTER replied:

Notwithstanding the inferences in the daily Press to the contrary, it has never been an instruction that bricks from the State Brick Works shall be used exclusively for housing.

OIL.

(a) *As to Inquiries in Canada.*

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Has Cabinet considered the suggestion that the Minister for Mines and his Under Secretary be sent to Canada in order to obtain the latest information in regard to the development of the oil industry and the necessary legislation associated with that industry?

(2) If so, what was the decision?

The PREMIER replied:

There has been some preliminary discussion of this matter, but no final decision has yet been made.

(b) *As to Introducing Legislation.*

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

Would he care to tell the House whether it is his intention to introduce legislation associated with the oil industry at the next normal session of Parliament?

The MINISTER replied:

There will be some amendments to the Western Australian Petroleum Act during the coming session. The number of amendments have not yet been decided nor have any steps been taken to put the Bill into draft form.

(c) *As to Obtaining Information from Canada.*

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Premier:

In view of the answer given by the Minister for Mines, does he not think it a worth-while suggestion to obtain the latest information from Canada, before the next session, perhaps through such a representative as the Minister for Mines?

The PREMIER replied:

I understand the Minister for Mines has already obtained that information.

(d) As to Publication of Information.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

In view of the fact that, under the Mining Act, records of the results obtained from work done in oil areas have to be officially furnished to the Government, is he willing for that information to be made available to the Press from time to time so that the public can be fully informed of the activities and discoveries in the oil areas?

Mr. May: You mean the speculators.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: No, I do not.

The MINISTER replied:

Such information as is deemed advisable to be published will be made available from time to time and, in fact, has been published during the last 18 months. There is certain confidential information regarding the boring and the strata that does not require to be published in the Press for investors' information.

(e) As to Publication in Western Australia and America.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

Does he think, first of all, that the public is entitled to be fully informed on oil discoveries in Western Australia as early as the American public? To ensure that the people of this State will become aware of major oil strikes as soon as possible, will he publish that information immediately on being informed?

The MINISTER replied:

Discretion will be used at all times and whatever is thought advisable to be released will be released.

STATE SAW MILLS.*As to Appointment of General Manager.*

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

Will he lay on the Table of the House all relevant papers in connection with the appointment of the new general manager of the State Saw Mills?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes.

RAILWAYS.*As to Increasing Freights.*

Hon. SIR ROSS McLARTY (without notice) asked the Treasurer:

Is the Treasurer prepared at this stage to give an assurance that further increased rail freights will not be levied in addition to the 35 per cent. imposed last year on rural and goldfields areas?

The TREASURER replied:

Yes, I am prepared to give that assurance.

ATOMIC BOMB THREAT.*As to Civil Defence Measures.*

Mr. YATES (without notice) asked the Premier:

Owing to the serious concern expressed by Governments throughout the world at the threat of atomic and hydrogen bombs, will he give consideration to having full inquiries made in connection with civil defence in this matter?

The PREMIER replied:

Yes.

TIMBER.*(a) As to Rights on Land for Agriculture.*

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

Further to my questions during the last session of Parliament with regard to the granting of timber royalties to settlers in heavily timbered areas, and the Minister's promise to make a detailed statement—with regard to which certain information has appeared in the Press since the close of last session—will he state now the terms and conditions under which settlers may receive the royalties to which I have referred?

The MINISTER replied:

The terms and conditions are exactly the same as those published late last year, but there are three or four details which have still to be ironed out between the Lands Department and the Forests Department. They are being dealt with at present and, once they have been eliminated, a public statement will be made in connection with the matter. That will occur in the very near future.

(b) As to Effect of Export Restriction.

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Premier:

In view of the Government's policy to restrict the export of timber from Western Australia to the Eastern States and the adverse effect it has on waterside workers in the timber ports of Bunbury and Busselton, will he give immediate consideration to raising the quota so that the waterside workers concerned may resume their rightful employment?

The PREMIER replied:

In a policy of this kind it is not possible to advantage everybody in the community. However, I will discuss the point raised by the hon. member with the Minister for Forests and let the hon. member know the results of such discussion.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

As to Attitude to Rents Legislation.

Mr. McCULLOCH (without notice) asked the Premier:

In view of the statement which appeared in today's issue of "The West Australian" and attributed to the Leader of the Opposition, with relation to the rents and tenancies legislation, does he agree that the Legislative Council is a House of review and is he satisfied that pressure was put on the Council to reject such legislation by the minority in this Chamber, subsequent to the Bill being agreed to in this House?

The PREMIER replied:

I have had no prior notice of this question and have not had an opportunity to study it, but I think my views with regard to the Legislative Council are well known. I hope that during this special session the majority of members in that Chamber will adopt a very reasonable attitude towards the amending legislation in connection with rents and tenancies.

FRUIT CASES.

As to Timber for Cutting.

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

(1) Is he aware that Coops Bros., one of the largest suppliers of fruit cases in the south suburban fruitgrowing district, will be forced to cease production this week because the Forests Department has told them that no more timber will be made available?

(2) In the light of that information, will he confer with his colleague, the Minister for Forests, to see if some timber could be made available as early as possible?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) I am not aware of that situation, but I have information that leads me to believe that the position regarding the manufacture of fruit cases has been adequately covered, particularly in regard to the slicing machine at Pemberton. If there is any demand for cases which are not coming from the normal supply areas, I will take the matter up with the Minister for Forests to see if the position can be remedied.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

(a) As to Readjustment of Boundaries.

Mr. OLDFIELD (without notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government:

Will he acquaint the House when it is anticipated that the proposed readjustment of local government boundaries will be put into effect?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied:

I have no knowledge of when the readjustment is likely to take place, but I will have inquiries made to obtain the information for the hon. member.

(b) As to Printing of Bill.

Hon. A. F. WATTS (without notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government:

Seeing that the second reading of the Local Government Bill was introduced in December last, when are we likely to see the printed copies thereof?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied:

The delay in the printing of the Bill has been brought about by an enormous amount of work at the Government Printing Office.

The Premier: And most of it from Mr. Menzies.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, there has been a lot as a result of that and also other work. On making inquiries I have been informed that it will probably be another two months before printed copies are available.

INDUSTRIAL.

As to Waterside Workers' Meeting.

Mr. LAWRENCE (without notice) asked the Minister for Education:

Could he acquaint this House whether the Fremantle Harbour Trust or the Australian Stevedoring Industry Board was responsible for the placing of one plain-clothes sergeant and one uniformed sergeant at the waterside workers' pick-up this morning to inform the men that they could not hold a meeting of members in the compound?

The MINISTER replied:

I would say that I have no direct knowledge of what transpired in connection with the incident mentioned, though I was made aware subsequently that there were policemen on duty on the wharf. I shall have inquiries made and supply the information to the hon. member.

CHAIRMEN (TEMPORARY) OF COMMITTEES.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to announce that I have appointed Mr. Hill, Mr. Moir and Mr. Brady to be temporary Chairmen of Committees for the session.

BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING ACT AMENDMENT.

The PREMIER: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice, for leave to introduce a Bill entitled "An Act to amend the Inspection of Scaffolding Act, 1924-50."

Leave given; Bill introduced and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH, DISTRIBUTION.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to announce that, with hon. members of this House, I attended His Excellency the Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the speech which His Excellency was pleased to deliver to members of both Houses of Parliament. For the sake of accuracy, I have caused copies of the Speech to be distributed amongst members of this Chamber.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

First Day.

MR. HEAL (West Perth) [3.37]: I move—

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, in reply to the Speech he has been pleased to deliver to Parliament:—

"May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our most gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament."

I desire to congratulate His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Gairdner, on the recent decoration bestowed upon him by Her Majesty the Queen. I think all members of this Chamber will agree that that decoration was well earned. During our Queen's visit to Western Australia, Sir Charles carried out his duties in a most gracious and charming manner, and I am sure the decoration that has been bestowed on him was well merited.

In endorsement of His Excellency's remarks in another place, I would like to state that Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, must have left the shores of Western Australia with very charming memories of their visit. I would not hesitate to say that their tour here must have been more enjoyable to them than their visit to any other State. I say this because I consider that the tension of their tour in other States was more severe than in the West. While they were in our midst they seemed to be at their ease at all times, and appeared very charming and gracious. Their visit left many happy memories in the minds of the people of this State.

To all those who were decorated by Her Majesty while she was in Western Australia, I would like to offer my congratulations. Their job was a most difficult one, due no doubt to the polio epidemic, which was then raging and which is still with us. Last minute alterations to the tour

must have caused a severe headache to those people responsible for the itinerary. But as results have shown, the tour turned out to be a remarkable success. To the Premier and to Ministers of the Government, I offer my congratulations on the formal and dignified manner in which they performed their duties during the Royal Tour.

The Police Force, in my opinion, played one of the major parts in the success of the tour. They deserve in great measure the respect of the people of Western Australia. I refer mainly to the mounted police constables and the motor-cycle patrols. What brought the tour of this State to a most successful climax was the behaviour of the people themselves. I am sure Her Majesty was greatly relieved when she discovered the public here behaving with such great dignity. We read of many instances in the Eastern States where Her Majesty was put to inconvenience by people crowding round her car, by over-enthusiastic youngsters attempting to sit on her lap, and like instances. The people in this State seemed to have learnt by the mistakes made in the other parts of Australia, with the result that they carried on their duties in a most appropriate manner. On one or two occasions I consider the citizens showed some emotion; once when they crowded Her Majesty's car, and another time when they tore the hessian fence surrounding the University on the night of the ball. For myself, I consider the hessian should never have been attached to the fence.

This special session of Parliament has been convened for the purpose of debating and discussing a most important piece of legislation; I refer to the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Amendment Bill. Like a great many other members, I consider this a most vital and important matter. With the co-operation of members of this Chamber and members in another place, after the Bill has been fully debated we should come to some final determination that will prove beneficial to both landlords and tenants. It is my earnest wish that this should come about.

In the last two or three years our State has shown remarkable industrial advancement. I refer to the extensive land settlement schemes, the work which the man on the land has performed the erection and progress of the oil refinery at Kwinana, and lastly and most important of all, the discovery of oil in the North-West of our State. Let us look back and see what are their effects on the undertakings of this State. At present many urgent jobs which should have been pressed forward by the Government have been brought to a standstill or are progressing slowly. I refer to water schemes, the building of homes, the erection of hospitals and the construction of class-rooms. I think the Government should look into

these matters and attempt to overcome the financial difficulties which at present prevent these schemes being carried out at a great rate.

As this is the Address-in-reply debate, I would like to take advantage of the opportunity to mention a few happenings in the electorate I represent, namely West Perth. A structure that was once an eyesore has been turned into something soothing; I refer to the observatory at the top of King's Park-rd. That was brought about by co-operation between the Premier, the Minister for Works and the Chief Secretary. I thank them for this co-operation. Another improvement in the district is the building of a health clinic. This should be completed in the next two or three months, and should prove very beneficial to the mothers of West Perth. I am sure they appreciate the part the Government has played in that move.

Another matter I would like to mention is the serious parking problem in Perth. In going to town one has to leave one's car not hundreds of yards but half a mile or a mile from the city and proceed there on foot. This problem is one that has faced Governments and local authorities for the last two or three years, and earnest endeavours should be made to overcome the difficulty. I have a scheme in mind, and I hope that something will be done about it during the next session of Parliament.

MR. O'BRIEN (Murchison): I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

BILL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Standing Orders Suspension.

The **PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam):** I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable a Bill for "An Act to amend the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act, 1951-1953," to be introduced without notice, and, if necessary, passed through all its stages in one day; and the aforesaid business to be entered upon and dealt with before the Address-in-reply is adopted.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House, and, there being no dissentient voice, I declare the motion carried by an absolute majority.

Question thus passed.

Message.

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

First Reading.

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. H. E. Graham—East Perth) [3.44] in moving the second reading said: It has often been said that there is very little public interest in the affairs and deliberations of the State Parliament. I feel, however, that on this occasion many thousands of pairs of anxious eyes are turned towards this Parliament because of the situation which will confront so many of our people unless some form of corrective action is taken within the next several weeks.

I feel that the legislation, as it emerged from the last session, following most protracted discussions between managers representing both Houses of Parliament, ultimately gave no satisfaction to anyone. As I pointed out when reporting the result of those deliberations to this House, the Assembly representatives at the conference were in the invidious position that they had to accept certain propositions or else have the conference of managers break down, in which case, at the 31st December last, there would have been no vestige of protection whatsoever in the matter of evictions or charges for rent.

The Government was perturbed at that time and has been ever since. I might confess here and now that, in the dying hours of the last Parliament, because this Government feared the worst at the hands of the Legislative Council, we had the Parliamentary Draftsman out of bed practically all of one night, preparing emergency legislation which it was the intention of the Government to introduce immediately had there been a total collapse of the conference between the two Houses.

As we all appreciate, it is customary, irrespective of the side of the House on which we sit, for members to indulge in political propaganda and to enjoy themselves in the matter of housing. I say quite frankly that that has been the case with this Government when in opposition and of the present Opposition now that it is occupying seats on the other side of the Chamber. But the matter of evictions and rental charges, in the absence of any protective legislation, is very serious because it affects so many of our people in one of the basic requirements of a civilised community—namely, shelter for father, mother, and children.

It is impossible for anyone to assess the possible repercussions after the 30th April in the event of Parliament not taking some action to correct the position. There may be hundreds involved, or there may be thousands. There is sufficient evidence to indicate that there will be an increase of people seeking accommodation over and above those who regularly approach

the State Housing Commission every week because of court action that has resulted in their being threatened with eviction from the premises they occupy.

During the time the Bill was before Parliament last session, the chairman of the State Housing Commission, on behalf of that commission, and without any prompting whatsoever on my part, issued a statement for the edification of all—but particularly, I dare say, of Parliament—to the effect that if there were any substantial increase in the number of evictions over and above those being handled, it would be physically impossible for the commission to provide accommodation for the people concerned. There are portents and evidence to show that even at this early date, without any notice having yet been given under that amended legislation, because it does not take effect until after the 30th April, there would be a situation beyond the capacity of the appropriate Government department to handle.

Therefore, any member of this Parliament who is prepared rigidly to stand by principle according to his lights, should know—and he will have evidence submitted to him to indicate this—that he will be doing a grave injustice to a large section of the community; it will mean suffering and heartrending on the part, particularly, of the womenfolk and the children; it will be human beings who will suffer as a consequence of Parliament as a whole not having had sufficient consideration with regard to the action that those members contemplate. I repeat, and for good reason, that nobody is in a position to indicate the immensity or the proportions of the problem.

As members will generally agree, although perhaps not from their places in this Chamber, the morning newspaper—in some respects it is perhaps flattering me—has gone out of its way to distort and prevaricate in respect of actions or activities of mine. Any member knows perfectly well from his own experience that if he wishes to gain the headlines, all he has to do is to say something extravagant or ridiculous, and he will be assured of a prominent place in the columns of "The West Australian" newspaper.

Recently when I visited Merredin and addressed the local road board members and other important people in the town, I was reported to have made the statement that there would be 3,000 evictions under the new legislation after the 30th April next. Mr. Speaker, I made no such statement! Nowhere have I endeavoured to hazard a guess in this regard. My experience of "The West Australian" is that it will publish lies but will not publish a correction so far as I am concerned.

Hon. D. Brand: Why did you not contradict it immediately?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Because—and this will be borne out—on previous occasions the complete opposite of the information I had given to "The West Australian" appeared in print, and no attempt was made, notwithstanding several approaches, by that journal to correct the situation. What I did do was to speak to the chairman of the Housing Commission, who accompanied me, and he agreed that the statement in "The West Australian" was fatuous and absurd because I had not said any such thing. I got in touch with the Merredin Road Board and the chairman of that board regretted, on paper to me, that "The West Australian" had misquoted what I had said. In a letter dated the 12th March last, he said—

It is regretted by my board that the Press statement in "The West Australian" in regard to your visit to Merredin has led to your being made a target for criticism by a letter writer to the paper.

That correspondent was, of course, the member for Dale. The letter continues—

It is regretted that any misquotation of an embarrassing nature should have arisen out of your visit to the centre of Merredin. My board was most appreciative of your visit, and acknowledges the keenness and enterprise which you are showing in your administration of the department.

Subsequently the Merredin Road Board took action with the local representative of "The West Australian" in an endeavour to have the matter put right. This is a letter, dated the 27th March last, which I received from the secretary of the Merredin Road Board—

Our chairman, Mr. Davies, who is in the throes of departure for Perth for the Royal Visit has asked me to reply to your letter of 25th March.

What I sought was a statement in writing from the local authority as to what actually had transpired. The secretary goes on—

I am in a position to assure you that the local representative of "The West Australian" forwarded copy to the paper correcting the statement made in the publication of which you have enclosed the cutting.

No correction appeared in "The West Australian," so it will be appreciated by all, I hope, of those people who believe in the essence of truth and fair play that if "The West Australian" will not correct a statement when I make a correction, surely in the name of decency there is an obligation on its part to make a correction when requested so to do by a responsible local authority.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I thought it was giving you all the space you wanted.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is giving all the space in the world to those who seek to condemn, criticise and generally distort the position. I have papers from the president of an important professional organisation—I do not know whether I am at liberty to use his name so I shall not do so, but his name and that of the professional institute are known to everyone. This person submitted a statement to "The West Australian," and when he saw what it had published he forwarded a copy of the statement to the State Housing Commission with this comment: "As usual, 'The West Australian' has distorted statements to give an entirely different meaning from their intent."

Mr. Ackland: Have you any complaints about the "Sunday Times"?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I make pronouncements through the "Sunday Times" newspaper because experience has shown that when I make a statement to that paper it is accurately reproduced. That is something I cannot say about "The West Australian."

One further example: When the Commonwealth took certain action in respect of the Subiaco and the Maniana projects, it was necessary for the Housing Commission to amend its plans, and to one of the reporters who approached me outside the door of Cabinet for a statement I said that the effect of the Commonwealth Government's intervention would be that 50 less families would be provided with accommodation between that time and the 30th June, 1954. In order to make sure that there had been no misunderstanding, I rang "The West Australian" office that evening between 8 and 8.30 and spoke to the same reporter and repeated the statement to him.

To my surprise and bewilderment, in "The West Australian" the next morning it appeared that because of this change it would mean that at least 50 family units would be provided for as soon as possible—a complete inversion of my statement to the reporter. I approached him on several occasions afterwards for a correction to be made, but, true to form, no such correction was made. I mention these matters to demonstrate how unfair is the attitude of that paper. I do not mind in the least how much I am criticised and condemned by that journal, but one would have thought that when a person holding a portfolio in Her Majesty's Government made a statement and it was misreported, and he endeavoured to put the matter right, the least any respectable and decent newspaper would do would be to publish the correction.

Hon. D. Brand: Has that been the experience of the Premier and the other Ministers?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I could not say. They can speak for themselves. But this should not be a matter of personality. It is a matter of the purveyor of news giving a true and accurate account of what has been said.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Pretty strong terms to use, to say that they are not decent or respectable!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: If the Leader of the Opposition has listened to and followed what I have said, I am certain that, irrespective of political differences, he can arrive at no other summary of the situation than that outlined by me, and for that reason I do not condemn the member for Dale for assailing me with regard to a statement that I never made, but which appeared owing to the untruth and invention published in "The West Australian" in the first instance, and which was not corrected. Even when the local authority concerned sought to put the matter right, "The West Australian" would not publish the correction.

This Government is as anxious as any Government to bring about the termination of unnecessary controls. In regard to my own portfolios, I would point out that every legislative restriction that was in operation when I assumed office was voluntarily lifted by me—and not because of the Legislative Council, or any other body. Members will agree that an important amendment in respect of tenancies entered into after the 31st December, 1950, was placed in the rents and tenancies legislation as a consequence of an amendment moved by me when in Opposition. This measure, introduced during the war period, was not enacted because of the war, but owing to the shortage of housing and the necessity to protect people who were tenants, as regards both evictions and rentals. That is the situation that has been acknowledged by Governments of the opposite political persuasion to our Administration. Throughout the whole six years term of office of the McLarty-Watts Government, this legislation was introduced each year with monotonous regularity.

Mr. Oldfield: Not the Bill introduced last session!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The same principles were involved in the Bill introduced by the Government last year as were contained in the measure introduced by the Liberal Government in the previous year. Admittedly, there were some differences which, in the light of experience, sought to overcome some of the weaknesses that the present Government felt were apparent in the legislation, and the Bill was accordingly submitted to Parliament along those lines. Surely, it must have occurred to members, as being more than a little strange that under our so-called democratic system a Government can be returned by

the people and given the responsibility of governing—irrespective of the size of its majority—and yet one section of the Parliament can completely negative anything that the popularly elected Government seeks to do.

It is because of the action of the Legislative Council last year that this special session of Parliament is necessary. I repeat that there is grievous concern over this matter on the part of many people in Western Australia today. Without making any comment on it, I shall pass on to members of this Chamber information given to me by way of deputation only 15 minutes before this Parliament assembled. A resolution was passed this morning by five different industrial organisations at a joint meeting at Fremantle.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But they are led by "commos"!

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is a lie, and you know it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I do not know it is a lie.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Yes, you do!

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Fremantle must keep order.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: First of all, the resolution expresses the support of those organisations of the action being taken by this Government to protect people under the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act, and it goes on to say—

If the Legislative Council refuses to accept proposals from the Legislative Assembly that will protect the masses, we, the unions and organisations represented, definitely state that in the event of any member of any such union or organisation being subjected to any undue hardship by the application of the Act as amended it is our firm intention to seriously consider industrial action similar to that taken by us on the 22nd day of February, 1952.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: Do you agree with that resolution?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I said I would make no comment, but would submit the resolution for the information of members, in order to indicate that if the people are not given a reasonable measure of protection against eviction and extortionate rents, this State will—judging by this resolution and the determination expressed by those that waited upon me—be heading directly into a most ugly situation.

Hon. D. Brand: What were the names of the unions and organisations concerned?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The Seamen's Union, the Waterside Workers' Union, the Maritime Services' Union, the Boilermakers' Union and the Fremantle branch of the Carpenters' Union.

Sir Ross McLarty: Do they think they can intimidate Parliament?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: How a person will react probably depends upon how he is affected. These people know that the citizens of Western Australia last year elected a Labour Government to do certain things, and that the Legislative Council is standing over the Government and refusing to allow it to do those things. These organisations are perhaps not concerned with the constitutional or legal niceties of the position—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Some of them made the same threat when we introduced amendments to the Industrial Arbitration Act.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I am merely indicating that here is a portent of a serious situation developing, and I am placing the position before members of this House without comment. Far be it from me to give my support to precipitate action against the law of the land—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are these unions affiliated with the A.L.P.?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Not all of them.

Mr. Oldfield: The Seamen's Union is bluffing you, as it did the publican at Fremantle.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is not a question of bluffing anybody, and I would have hoped that even the member for Maylands would adopt a more responsible attitude towards this Bill than is evidenced by the loose rubbish that he has just been talking. The Leader of the Opposition has on several occasions expressed himself with regard to this legislation, his latest effusion, of course, being in this morning's issue of "The West Australian." I dare say that that journal, which is generally regarded as the unofficial organ of the Liberal Party, at least reported him accurately.

Mr. Yates: Where did you get the idea that "The West Australian" is the organ of the Liberal Party?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Because that journal is always ranged against a Labour Government in this State, but when there is a Liberal Government in office, the position is different. There are very few exceptions to that general rule. As I read what appeared in "The West Australian" this morning, I asked myself a number of questions. Who is this Sir Ross McLarty? Is he the person who claimed recently that there was no problem pertaining to evictions and that if one family was evicted there would be accommodation provided for another family to move into?

Mr. Yates: Would not there be?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That sort of lack of logic, of course, could have been used equally three years, six years,

or 10 years ago, but it simply does not add up to commonsense. If the Leader of the Opposition really believed in that statement he would never have allowed a Minister of his Government to introduce legislation to continue the operations of the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act under its several names. So I ask myself the question: Is this the same Sir Ross McLarty who introduced not once, but every year during his six year term of office, legislation to continue the protection of tenants in the matter of both evictions and the rentals they paid?

Hon. D. Brand: You said you would solve the housing problem by 1956, so from then on legislation such as this would not be necessary.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is quite conceivable, of course.

Hon. D. Brand: It is difficult to conceive at this stage.

Mr. Oldfield: You promised you would do it.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I cannot see any reason why the promise cannot be given effect to, but we can deal more fully with that later on.

Mr. Yates: You can tell us the reason in 1956.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I ask myself, too, whether it is the same Sir Ross McLarty who introduced legislation, through his Government, on practically identical terms, so far as the main provisions are concerned, every year of the six years that he and his colleagues were in office. I would ask this same person: Is it not true that it was only the pressure of his own party members in the Legislative Council that brought about amendments to that legislation and that they did not originate with himself or his Government?

Hon. D. Brand: That does not line up with your suggestion that we are always attacking the Labour Party as a Government.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: We were speaking of newspapers at that stage; the Legislative Council is a different proposition. This morning the Leader of the Opposition spoke as though this Government, through myself as the Minister handling the Bill for the Chief Secretary, frustrated every move to achieve amendments to the legislation when it was before this Parliament a few months ago.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You do not deny that, do you?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: My attitude was on all fours with the attitude consistently adopted by the hon. member's Government in every one of the six years in which it brought that legislation forward.

Mr. Wild: Rot!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You would not listen to our amendments.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: They were listened to; they were replied to and they were dealt with.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Yes, they were dealt with all right!

Hon. D. Brand: By your brutal majority.

The Premier: Of one.

Mr. Heal: Wouldn't they like it?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: We will have it.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I ask, is the Leader of the Opposition so naive that he makes the statement in this morning's paper that last year's Bill gave no right to house owners to increase rents when he knows perfectly well, or should do, that there is a provision in the Act, inserted by his own Government and still there, which allows house owners and other property owners to make approaches to the court as frequently as every six months? That, incidentally, is a privilege or concession that is not enjoyed by the workers in the matter of making approaches to the Arbitration Court for a greater return for their labour.

The Leader of the Opposition made some mention about the inactivity of the State Housing Commission in providing accommodation. Perhaps I should tell him that the Federal Government has interfered, or endeavoured to interfere, in practically every housing project that this Government has sought to undertake and I propose to give a few particulars in that respect so that they can be properly identified.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Yet that Government has made more money available to you than it ever did to my Government.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It has been an embarrassment to this Government and to the State Housing Commission.

Hon. D. Brand: I can imagine that you have more money than you can spend this year.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I would draw the attention of this Chamber to the fact that the Leader of the Opposition and some of those who sit beside him have, in recent weeks, made approaches to me, as Minister in charge of the State Brick Works, for the release of bricks for various purposes; for anything and everything, but not, in one single case, for houses. So much for the sincerity of the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues in the matter of the action which is being taken by this Government to give every possible encouragement to the home builder.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I made approaches to you in regard to one overcrowded school in particular.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Precisely.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is the only approach I made.

Hon. D. Brand: What were the others?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I said that the Leader of the Opposition, and his supporters, had made approaches to me and not in one single instance has any request been made in respect of housing for the people; those approaches have been for other ventures—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What about the State Insurance Office?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: —important perhaps in themselves, but not as important as the provision of houses for the people, particularly in view of the situation that is confronting us at present and will continue to confront us until such time as Parliament has revealed a better appreciation of the circumstances of the day.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Has the manager of the State Insurance Office made any request for bricks for the new building he is putting up?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No, he has not.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: He is getting them all the same.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Quite a number of builders are receiving bricks, and have been receiving them regularly all the way through. It is because of the distortion in the bible of the member for Mt. Lawley that he has the wrong version.

Hon. D. Brand: You want to get a mention in your bible, the "Sunday Times".

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I say "Thank God"—and I say this seriously—that there is another vehicle of expression other than the morning newspaper because, failing that, it would be impossible, from my point of view, to give a statement and believe, with any degree of certainty, that it would be presented to the public in those terms. The Leader of the Opposition has preened himself and given support, as have colleagues of his, to that paper because of the action it took in connection with a certain flat project that the State Housing Commission had in mind.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you going to introduce this Bill today or later on next week?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I am going to introduce the Bill in my own way, and it seems as though I am saying a few things which are unpalatable to the member for Mt. Lawley. I would point out that under the McLarty-Watts Government 576 flats were erected in Western Australia under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement.

Mr. Wild: Largely for building tradesmen, were they not?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: They were flats erected under that agreement for the purpose of housing the people.

Mr. Nimmo: That is not so bad.

Mr. Wild: Why do not you answer the interjection? What sized flats were they?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: All sizes, single-storey and double-storey.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: But not 10 storeys high.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not know what the hon. member means when he says, "That is not so bad." For the edification of those members who apparently do not know much about the subject I would point out that in Sydney, and I know some members are aware of this, a block of flats 11 storeys high—and comprising over 300 flats—was erected under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, and I have plans here of the suburb of Moorabin in Victoria, the entire suburb comprising flats.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Of course, the Sydney Minister got the sack.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: All of those flats are being erected under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement.

Mr. Wild: And then the Minister got the sack.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Yes, the Minister for Housing got the boot.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Those were built in the State of Victoria. I have here an interesting communication from the chairman of the Housing Commission in Victoria and, amongst other things, he says this—

I can say that on no account has the Commonwealth queried the building of flats by this Commission and we have already built several hundreds, the largest project being at the Ascot estate, which is nearing completion, when there will be 1,000 flat units.

Mr. Wild: Were they ten storeys high?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No, they are of varying heights. Of course, the question of height has never been the subject of agreement between this State Government and the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Of course, it will be a rabbit warren. You will agree with that, will you not?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not agree with anything of the sort. The member for Mt. Lawley is aware that in the heart of the City of Perth there is a block of flats eleven storeys high with hardly one foot of mother earth around the building and there has been no protest about it from the Liberals or anybody else.

Why? Because they were flats designed to accommodate people who are represented by the Liberals in this Parliament.

However, when it is a question of the Housing Commission endeavouring, by one process or another, as speedily and as cheaply as possible, to provide decent accommodation at a rental of between £2 7s. 6d. and £2 17s. 6d. close to the City of Perth—which, of course, lessens the cost of fares, and with no expenditure for the provision of water supply and sewerage, electricity and the rest of it, because they are there—it is a horse of an entirely different colour, and hence we get this political prejudice. But I repeat what I said previously, namely, that every competent person in Western Australia who has expressed an opinion about these flats, has spoken of them in glowing terms.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Surely not!

The Premier: All except the Liberal Party!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Such opinion was unanimously endorsed by the Subiaco Municipal Council and by the State Housing Commission, which comprises representatives of outside organisations. The flats were publicly acknowledged by the ex-Lord Mayor of the City of Perth. They were commended by the president of the Master Builders' Association. They were praised by the Builders' Guild. They were commended by the president of the Institute of Architects and by the president of the Associated Sawmillers. They were publicly acknowledged and a tribute was paid to them by the president of the Chamber of Manufactures.

The Housing Advisory Panel, over which the Minister has no direction, passed a unanimous resolution commending this venture. The Architectural Students' Association, attached to the University of Melbourne, has expressed its satisfaction respecting the design and general conception of the proposed flats. Recently I had forwarded to me a cutting from the Melbourne "Herald," in which that newspaper commended to the Victorian Metropolitan Development Council this contemplated project at Subiaco as something that might be emulated by the City of Melbourne.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I hope the Minister is going to tie this up with the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I am endeavouring to demonstrate that this Government, through the State Housing Commission, has been doing everything possible in order to provide greater accommodation at an earlier date than would otherwise have been the case. Here are the figures. For the twelve months ended the 30th June, 1952, the State Housing Commission built 1,812 houses and to the 30th June, 1953, it built 2,815. It is anticipated that by the 30th June this year a further 3,500 houses will be completed.

In a period of two years the building rate has been practically doubled. I might say that the Housing Commission is most perturbed because of the interruption and dislocation which has taken place in its envisaged programme to proceed with its building undertaking. Because of that situation, there have been a few anxious moments over the past few months. It is my hope, however, that this position will be overcome. In the matter of evictions, the State Housing Commission has found accommodation for no less than 1,210 families.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Over what period?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Since the 1st July, 1951, to date. At present there are between seven and 10 families per week that are being evicted and for whom accommodation is being found.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: But you tell them they must first be evicted.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There are also quite a number of what are known as "emergent cases" for whom accommodation must be found at short notice. The sorry picture is this: Because of all these evictions and the other cases of which I have spoken, the person who applied many years ago for a house and who is at the end of a long queue continues to wait and we scarcely get closer to his turn because of the terrific demand that is made on the Housing Commission as a result of these emergency cases of families who must be evicted by order of the court. It is a matter for the State Housing Commission to find them something, no matter how humble, as an alternative to their being put out on the pavement.

As to what is likely to happen after the 30th April, unless Parliament takes corrective action, already there have been approximately 100 persons per month calling at the State Housing Commission indicating that they have been informed by their landlords that they are to be evicted or, alternatively, that their rent is going to be so steeply increased that they will have no alternative but to leave. In addition, there is a list of some 200 names which has been given to me by the Chief Secretary and forwarded from the rent inspector's office, which indicates that that number of people have called at that office because of the situation that is likely to confront them.

However, after the 30th April, when it will be competent for a landlord to give notice, unless there be an alteration in the law, I would say that this list of several hundred will be magnified many times. It is a matter of simple arithmetic for one to appreciate that the Housing Commission could not possibly deal with such a situation should it arise. Therefore those who were opposed to this emergency legislation and who are not

disposed to change their minds will be wilfully, because they have full knowledge of the facts, condemning many hundreds of our kith and kin to a state of affairs under which they will have no alternative for themselves and their families.

I say "emergency legislation" because the population of Western Australia has increased tremendously since the end of the war. From July, 1946, to December, 1953, the population has increased by no less than 135,000 people. Our population today is 627,300. Of that 135,000 increase, 63,250 comprises the natural increase, but no less than 71,750 has been the net gain on account of immigration.

So it will be generally appreciated that the task of this and, of course, the previous Government, has been, and was, made ever so much more difficult because of the tremendous numbers coming into the State of Western Australia under the Commonwealth policy, which, let me say, I am not necessarily criticising in any respect, except to point out that the Commonwealth Government has made pronouncements from time to time concerning migration policy, but at no stage have I as Minister for Housing—upon whom the responsibility devolves—been consulted, or my advice sought through my departmental officers, as to the capabilities of the State to provide accommodation for these additional numbers who might, under the Commonwealth programme, be seeking entry into this State.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Can the Minister tell us how many rental homes there are in the metropolitan area outside the Commonwealth-State rental homes?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I have no idea whatever. I feel those figures would be very difficult to obtain because at the present moment, many parents have married daughters and their husbands and perhaps children living with them, and others are accommodating friends in makeshifts, and so on. That is apart from the complete residences that are let. I have made inquiries, but I am sorry to say that there do not appear to be any official figures to indicate the numbers the Leader of the Opposition requires. This may, however, be possible after the forthcoming Commonwealth census.

Hon. D. Brand: Has not the Commonwealth Government assisted in the problem that has arisen from migration by giving grants of money year after year?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There have been additional amounts made available, but there is already a tremendous task and responsibility for us to provide accommodation for our own people. After all, they come first, because in many cases they have applied earlier. The State has done a gigantic task in the way of housing. Since July, 1946, 35,000 houses have

been completed in Western Australia. Under its various headings the State Housing Commission has erected 14,500 of that number and has spent a total of £30,000,000. These are in the various categories under which homes are built.

First of all, let me say that since being the Minister for Housing I have endeavoured, in conformity with what I said on the other side of the House, to formulate plans that would result in the provision of accommodation at a greater rate than previously, because I have always felt, however desirable it may be, the previous method was too slow to grapple with the situation and to build enough homes by using processes which, by and large, were used in the previous generation and the generation before that. I felt that the position required something more than that to meet the exigencies of the day. The position is urgent because so many families are living under such dire circumstances. As I have already indicated, however, my efforts have not met with a great deal of success.

I wish to say no more with regard to the Subiaco flat project, but as members know, it was sought to turn out over 300 houses to be built in a few short months at Maniana. Once more the Commonwealth Government said that for this, that and the other trivial reason, it would not sanction the work to be proceeded with. The architects of the State Housing Commission got busy and drew plans for what might be called a bungalow type of house. But there is correspondence in my office to indicate that that was not acceptable to the Commonwealth Government either.

As members know, certain local authorities insist on brick houses being built in a brick area. In an endeavour to assist the situation, however, the Minister for Local Government and myself felt that greater emphasis should be placed on the standard rather than on the material from which the houses were to be fabricated, and the Housing Commission sought in several years to build a limited number of a slightly better type of timber-framed house. Once again the Commonwealth Government has intervened and has said something against a better standard being sought.

This has been most disappointing to me and there has been denied to people, because of the dislocation caused, accommodation which they would have received at an earlier date. It is a matter of the gravest consideration and concern that this responsible Government—responsible to the people—has been frustrated in the many efforts it has made to provide various types of accommodation to suit the requirements of different categories, classes or types of community. Everybody does not want to live in the same type of dwelling.

Mr. Hutchinson: Which people would it have disappointed? Those in the 1947-48 priority or those being evicted?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Those on the priority list.

Mr. Hutchinson: Is it not a fact that the Housing Commission pays little regard to the priority list because of the evictees?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I did not say that. I said on account of the tremendous call being made on accommodation by evictees and other emergent cases, very few are being drawn from the priority list. It is for that reason I have sought ways and means of making the money available to me go further to meet the requirements of those people who have been waiting for so many years.

Mr. Hutchinson: I am sure that a great proportion of the public feel that in order to get assistance from the Housing Commission they must first become evictees.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That is not so, irrespective of the feelings they might have on the subject. It is probably a simple thing for anyone to say, "What is the Government doing in the matter of some more emergency accommodation"? I do not criticise the previous Government necessarily in this respect—not during the course of this debate, at any rate. There were, however, army huts which were converted; there were terrible little fibro-cement structures erected, and so on, which did serve the purpose of providing some form of shelter when the alternative would have been the streets.

But this has never been satisfactory. At the earliest possible moment they will probably be pulled down and not used further for human habitation. The people in them are constantly upset, discontented and generally unhappy. In view of the pending emergency, I delegated certain officers of the State Housing Commission to make inquiries because, after all, even the rudest accommodation is better than no accommodation at all. Inquiries were made in respect of the migration centre at Point Walter. At a pinch it may be possible to do something to accommodate families in Graylands camp. I can see in advance that they will be anything but happy or comfortable in these new surroundings. The accommodation consists of old buildings used by the Army and later on by the Immigration Department.

Unfortunately it would cost in the vicinity of £500 per family to make these buildings reasonably comfortable; in other words, for 40 families the expenditure would amount to £20,000. Even then, there would only be a bare sheet of corrugated galvanised iron separating families and there would be no privacy whatsoever. The ablution block would be outside and in the weather. The Government cannot contemplate using such accommodation as

that. Approaches were made to the army authority, but for a host of reasons, which I need not now state, the accommodation was found to be unsuitable.

The Royal Agricultural Society is prepared to allow us the use of cabins used by attendants of stock at Royal Show time. Some use could be made of that accommodation by the arranging of communal cooking facilities and dining room. But here it would be a condition that people would have to leave early in September so that the place could be knocked into shape in anticipation of the Royal Show. For that reason it is an impractical proposition.

Approaches were made also to church authorities and similar institutions which own halls. It was felt that this would provide some shelter from the elements especially as there were sanitary and limited ablution facilities, but there was not much success as a result of our inquiries. I have all the particulars here. I think members will agree that the plight of the people will be most desperate, no matter which way one views the situation.

Mr. Yates: Why not fill the two empty houses at East Perth which have been vacant for 15 months?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: They are two old, condemned houses.

Mr. Yates: Not condemned.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: If not actually condemned, they would require an expenditure in the vicinity of £1,000 to make them habitable. Officers of the State Housing Commission and the Tramway Department, which owns the houses, have made inspections and reported to me on several different occasions.

Mr. Yates: Those houses were in good condition when they were vacated. I know the full story about them.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not want to get into an argument on that matter. I have been into those houses on several occasions. A lot of treatment is necessary to make them habitable.

Mr. Yates: That is because you permitted children to go in and tear the places apart.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No. In these matters one has to be guided by technical officers.

Mr. Ackland: Why not fill the nearly new house in Wongan Hills which has been empty for six months?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is possible for all members to put their finger on to a few cases of where there has been dilatoriness on the part of the Housing Commission in the matter of finding tenants. I do not think this is the time or place to go into that aspect. I am, however, familiar with all aspects pertaining to the house referred to by the member for Moore, and I can discuss that matter with him if he wishes.

Mr. Ackland: You are telling such a sob story that I must point out there is another side.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Surely it will be agreed, and I think members are charitable enough to acknowledge, that where an authority like the State Housing Commission is landlord to 6,000 or 7,000 families, and is building at the rate of 3,000 to 4,000 houses a year, there must be odd cases here and there, because of the human element, where some officer has been remiss in his duties and obligations. If this happened 20 times in a year, I put it to members in all fairness, what is that out of a total of 10,000 being dealt with by the Housing Commission? The proportion is indeed small.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Is the State Housing Commission still building the small emergency houses?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No. There was some criticism of them, and many deputations waited on me. As purchasers of these houses in many cases complained in bitter terms, I became determined shortly after assuming office that existing commitments should be proceeded with, but after that no more of this type would be built.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I have heard that a lot of people have found them quite reasonable.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I admit that some people have adopted that attitude, but the general experience is that the purchasers are most unhappy about them. I think the member for Fremantle can say quite a lot about it.

With regard to the Bill, members have probably been able to see for themselves that in regard to evictions the Government proposes that the same principles shall follow for the year 1954, as those which applied during 1953, with one exception, namely, that where an owner requires possession of premises for himself, his father or mother, married or widowed daughter or son, then the period of notice will be reduced from six months to three months. The other requirements of owning premises for six months and being resident in the Commonwealth for two years will still apply. So I repeat the eviction provisions of the Bill will conform, with one exception, to the Act of 1953.

There is another provision in the Act which is to be continued, and it applies where a tenant does not play the game, such as a tenant who is destructive of property, remiss in payment of rent, pursuing some unlawful undertaking, or who creates a nuisance to his neighbours. Those small features are preserved in the Bill. Under the measure, bad tenants, if I may call them such, can be given 28 days' notice. In the case of a person requiring

premises for himself or family the period would be three months.

However, there is to be an alteration so far as rentals are concerned. It is proposed that a special tribunal be set up to be known as a fair rents court. The one in this case will be the metropolitan fair rents court, which will operate over the Perth and Fremantle magisterial districts. This takes in the metropolitan area and several little townships beyond what is recognised as the metropolitan area proper. Power is provided in the measure for the Minister, namely, the Chief Secretary, to appoint a fair rents court in other parts of the State as circumstances dictate.

Hon. D. Brand: Who will be the members constituting the tribunal?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The fair rents court will comprise a magistrate as chairman and two other members, one to represent the owners, and in this instance the Real Estate Institute will be asked to nominate a person, and the other member will be a person appointed by the Minister to represent the tenants. The court will have the responsibility of determining all rentals upon application by either the owner or the tenant. There is no provision in the Bill laying down the considerations that shall be taken into account by the fair rents court, which will be completely unfettered to determine from its experience and from knowledge of all the circumstances what, in its view, would be a fair and equitable rental for the premises that are the subject of the dispute.

Mr. Yates: Will this affect the Commonwealth-State rental homes?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No; as the hon. member knows, the Commonwealth-State rental homes are the subject of an agreement between the Commonwealth and the several State Parliaments.

Mr. Yates: Is it not about time that those tenants were given some protection?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Perhaps at this juncture I should give members some idea of what the rentals are outside the State housing authority, and what some owners have intimated to tenants will be their position after the 30th April in the absence of any protective legislation such as this. A cursory look at newspaper advertisements over a period of several days would clearly indicate the trend. Here are several that have been given to me by the Chief Secretary, and every one shows the name of the owner, the address of the premises, and the name of the tenant. Overall, these are quite revealing.

The first house I shall mention is in Kalamunda-rd., Kalamunda. I intend to omit the names. Certain parties entered into a 12 months' lease with Mrs. Blank for a furnished house at nine guineas a

week, plus electricity, sanitary and telephone charges. In Stirling-st., Perth, in my electorate, a member of the Police Department rang the office on behalf of a certain woman who, with her four children, are occupying one room in what the police officer described as a hovel, ill-lighted and dirty, for which she was paying £4 a week.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: You have power to deal with that now.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That may be so, but I wish to indicate what is happening at the present moment. In Oxford-st., Leederville, a Dutch family is occupying premises having a 40-ft. frontage—a timber-framed and asbestos dwelling about 40 years old. The frontage is very untidy and a new factory has been erected next door. The tenant has recently installed a new bath supplied by the lessor and lined the old bathroom with imitation-tiling metal sheets. He has also laid a path of cement bricks alongside the dwelling. This place is partly furnished, the furniture being valued at £200. The present rent is £7 10s. per week, and the lessor has advised the tenant that the rent will be increased after the 1st May to £9 per week.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That would not be legal even now, would it?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It would be legal after the 30th April.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Have you taken any action so far?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I cannot answer that question. A certain number of cases have been taken up by the office of the rent inspector, and reports of them have appeared. Which of these cases have been taken up and what stage they have reached, I do not know. I am merely giving an indication of what is happening from records that have been made available to me. A house in Queen's Park occupied by a tenant and his family is an old jarrah weatherboard structure with a roof of corrugated galvanised iron. The lessor put in a few old sticks of furniture and let the premises at £8 per week. The tenant could not complain as he was desperately in need of accommodation for his family. A lease was signed for two years, and now the lessor is demanding £10 a week on renewal of the lease.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: That would not be lawful, either.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: After the 30th April—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It would not be lawful then.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Will the hon. member allow me to proceed? After the 30th April, the landlord could make such a statement to his tenant, and if the tenant did not agree to pay the increased rent and took steps to approach the court, the owner could give 28 days' notice to quit.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But the owner could not increase the rent to anyone else.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The tragedy of the whole business is that many people have paid additional rent and probably will pay a further increase after the 30th April. The alternative is being put out into the "cold, cold snow," and it is this very situation that the Government is seeking to overcome. There is a house in Mosman Park built of asbestos and having a tiled roof. The house has been subdivided and one half has been let unfurnished at £5 10s. The lessee of the other half, which consists of bedroom, kitchen with dinette furnished, and a room unfurnished, is paying £4 10s. The owner wants the tenant out and has already advertised that part of the premises at £6 a week. That represents a total of £11 10s. a week for this asbestos house.

In Kanimbla-rd., Hollywood, there is a house known to me rented at £3 a week, which amount was fixed by the court. The owner put in about £100 worth of second-hand furniture and let the place for £7 10s. At Mt. Lawley, a man and his wife are renting premises in Woodroyd-st., for which the rent is £10 per week, plus electricity and gas. Although they pay £10 a week, a receipt is given for only £5. That is an interesting sidelight!

In Waroonga-rd., Claremont, a tenant has part of premises being the front portion of a timber-framed house with a roof of corrugated galvanised iron, and most of his accommodation is under a skillion roof. It consists of bedroom, lounge, kitchen with dining nook, and bathroom on verandah. The lessor is charging eight guineas a week, plus electricity and gas. I have a long list of cases here totalling approximately 200, and am prepared to make the list available to any member who cares to avail himself of the opportunity to see them. Nearly all the cases mentioned in the list are somewhat along the lines of those I have indicated to the House.

The Bill, incidentally, is, I feel, one largely for treatment in Committee. I do not wish to go further into its ramifications because members in the first instance, so far as evictions are concerned, ought to be thoroughly familiar with the provisions of the legislation, as we knew it, in operation last year, and as applying at the present moment; that is to say, legislation which was introduced by the McLarty-Watts Government and agreed to by both Houses of this Parliament. We have, in deference to the expressed wishes of certain sections, eased the situation somewhat by reducing the period of notice by one half.

In view of the examples I have given and, I daresay, the experience of members, it will be agreed readily that whilst there continues to be a shortage of accommodation, some action is necessary

to protect the people from extortionate charges in the matter of rentals. Let me say here and now, as I have said on previous occasions, that the great majority of landlords are fair, decent and equitable in the treatment of their tenants.

I should say, on the other hand, that the great majority of the tenants are good tenants in every respect, paying their landlords weekly and looking after the premises in a satisfactory manner, so that generally a happy relationship exists between the two parties. But, unfortunately, there are extremes. There is provision in the existing legislation for a landlord to terminate the tenancy of any person occupying his premises if he does not live up to his obligations as a tenant.

What we are seeking is that there shall be machinery to which a party can turn when landlords go to excesses along the lines I have indicated so that the matter can be taken to court, for the assessment, by an entirely independent body, of what is the 1954 rental in respect of the particular premises. It is recognised by the Government, and not very happily, that the awards made by this tribunal will, I am afraid, result in a general increase in rentals. That, naturally, will be reflected in costs pertaining to services—even the erection of houses and such other activities. It is a situation, however, which I feel has got to be faced.

The Bill may seem a little complicated because it seeks to amend what are amendments to an existing statute. I do not think however, that there will be any great difficulty in following the somewhat simple provisions that are outlined; and I am authorised to state that upon the passage—as I trust will be the case—of the amending legislation, action will be taken forthwith for the printing of a consolidated measure so that all interested parties can, with the least worry, find out exactly their position under this law.

The existing legislation, all members will agree, has fallen hopelessly short of the mark. It has no realistic appreciation of the situation that confronts us, or of the desperate plight that will unfortunately be the lot, it would appear, of so many hundreds or maybe thousands, of our brethren throughout the length and breadth of the State, but particularly in the metropolitan area. So far as I have any voice in the matter, I say, that at the earliest possible moment—and I am prepared to take a risk in this connection—it is seen that there is some prospect of allowing perfect freedom in the matter of evictions, that freedom will be allowed.

But at the same time I say that there is now, and there probably always has been, a certain percentage of those who own premises who have sought to make capital out of the distress, or the dire circumstances, of some of their fellow men. If

there is a difficult situation, then they are by no means hesitant in capitalising on it. This Government feels that in the provisions of the measure that we are now considering, there is no difficulty whatsoever in the way of a man who requires his own premises, whether for residential or business purposes, acquiring those premises for himself.

There is nothing to prevent a landlord getting rid of an unsatisfactory tenant. There will be provision for the landlord at intervals of not less than six months, to approach this special fair rents tribunal to have a fair rental assessed; and I cannot over-emphasise that there are no strings whatsoever attaching to the court which will be established. It will be at perfect liberty to judge the situation as it sees it and decree a rental in respect of certain premises whether those premises be residential or otherwise.

I commend the Bill to the members of the Legislative Assembly, and I hope and trust that, while there may be thrust and parry in the debate concerning housing, accommodation, evictions and the terms of the legislation, when making our final determinations—that is to say, casting our votes on the measure or any parts of it—uppermost in our minds will be the plight of those many people and their families who, unless this Parliament does something to stop up the many gaps which are in existence today and which will come into operation after the 30th April next—a short 3½ weeks from now—will be faced with tragedy, heartburning, worry and physical suffering. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Wild, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 4.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.9 p.m.