

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, June 18, 1969

The SPEAKER (Hon. T. C. Stott) took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

PETITION: CHOWILLA DAM

Mr. WARDLE presented a petition signed by 2,357 persons from 53 country towns and 126 metropolitan suburbs stating that the building of the Chowilla dam was essential to control the quantity and quality of water in the Murray River in South Australia; that the South Australian Government was not acting in the best interests of the State in seeking a dam at Dartmouth on the Mitta Mitta River as the next major storage to be built on the Murray River system; and that it was repudiating clear promises made to electors in this regard. It asked that the House insist that the Government take action to have the Chowilla dam built, pursuant to the River Murray Waters Agreement, by enforcing that agreement by action before an arbitrator and at law.

Received and read.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN (Leader of the Opposition): I move:

That Standing Orders be so far suspended as to enable me to move the following motion without notice:

That it be an order of this House that the Secretary, Premier's Department, on the next day of sitting produce to the House all books, papers, letters, agreements, minutes and other documents and copies of documents in the possession of the Government relating to the engagement, position, conditions of employment and termination of employment of Mr. Donald Currie by the South Australian Government.

I know I cannot canvass the merits of the motion that I have indicated it is my intention to move if Standing Orders are suspended, but I point out that it is necessary to suspend Standing Orders in order to discuss this matter immediately. Yesterday in this House, and subsequently publicly, the Premier refused to make public or to table in the House documents concerning a matter of grave public importance in South Australia about which members of this House and members of the public ought urgently to be informed. This question relates not only to the officer concerned but also to the welfare of the State and to the method of employment of people

by the Government of the State. As it is not something that should be shelved but something that should be dealt with immediately, I ask members to support the motion for this purpose.

Motion carried.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: I move:

That it be an order of this House that the Secretary, Premier's Department, on the next day of sitting produce to the House all books, papers, letters, agreements, minutes and other documents and copies of documents in the possession of the Government relating to the engagement, position, conditions of employment and termination of employment of Mr. Donald Currie by the South Australian Government.

Prior to the engagement of Mr. Currie widespread support was expressed in many areas of South Australia for the expansion of the Industrial Development Branch in the Premier's Department and the appointment of a Director of Industrial Development. When I became Premier I pursued this matter immediately because I considered that the appointment of a Director of Industrial Development at that stage was extremely desirable, that the department should be expanded, and that work of a new and scientific kind should be undertaken in the area of industrial development in this State so that we would be able to do better than hold our own in the extremely competitive sphere of attracting industrial development capital and expansion.

A search was then made for a suitable Director of Industrial Development. To find someone with the necessary background and capacity is not easy, for someone in this area needs to have a knowledge of the structure of South Australian industry or he starts considerably behind scratch: he needs to know South Australian industry and the people prominent in it and to have a sufficient personal background to know what technical problems are involved in the expansion of industry here, particularly in those areas in which South Australia is likely to be able to expand in the immediate future.

Therefore, it was desirable that he should know something of the petro-chemical industry at first hand. It was desirable that we should have someone who had had direct experience in industrial management and in a fast rate of industrial expansion. Since it was vitally necessary for South Australia to have a diversification of its industries to protect its employment from the fluctuations in the Eastern States markets for our consumer durables that had occurred twice previously,

in 1961-62 and during the period of the last Government, it was vital that we should know the areas in which we could expand to diversify our industries, particularly in the area of Asian markets. So, it was desirable that the Director have a knowledge in this area and be able to approach people in Asian industry and markets readily.

Where were we to find someone of this capacity who had the necessary background to inspire confidence among South Australian industrialists and the South Australian work force? A number of names was put forward to the Government by industrialists in South Australia. The one on which there was most widespread agreement as to capacity, background and ability was Mr. Donald Currie. In consequence, he was approached by the Government.

Let me cite to honourable members the qualifications he had. He had been the manager of the petro-chemical plant of Imperial Chemical Industries of Australia and New Zealand Limited at Botany Bay. A Master of Science, he was an able chemist, knowing the technical areas in which South Australia could look to expand—areas that the Premier has mentioned, as a matter of fact, as possible areas of expansion for South Australian industry. Under his management of I.C.I. in South Australia there had been spectacular development of that plant in the State in the time he had been manager. His record as a manager of industrial plants was exemplary, his record in industrial relations was outstanding, and he had the confidence of industrialists and workmen in South Australia. He had a considerable knowledge of Asian industry. He had worked for I.C.I. in Japan and had taken study courses subsequently in Japan during his leave periods, so he spoke Japanese fluently.

Such was his outstanding nature as a Director of Industrial Development that soon after his appointment he was asked by the Indian Government to go to India to advise that Government on certain industrial relations with Australia and on the development of relations between Indian industry and industry in this country, and during that trip he was able to visit Singapore and Djakarta, looking at industrial development there and the possible areas of development of markets for South Australian industry. I have on many occasions stated to people in other States and overseas the background of

this particular Director, and overwhelmingly they have said, "You could not have got anybody better than that for the job."

When Mr. Currie was first approached to take the job he refused it. It was only after some pressure that he decided to take the job, because he felt that here was an area of public service to this State that he could undertake in a constructive way, and he considered that he might be able to achieve, on a wider scale than he would achieve working for I.C.I., a constructive development of this State valuable to its citizens. So, he agreed to undertake the job. He did this at some personal sacrifice to himself for, whilst we met him on the question on emoluments, certain retirement and other rights had to be forgone. He undertook, with the South Australian Government, a five-year contract, and the contract was that he should be Director of Industrial Development.

It was on his recommendation that consultants from the United States of America were brought in to do two things. The first was to take a complete survey of South Australian industry and its potential, to look at the areas in South Australia where we could potentially develop the gaps in our present industrial structure, the areas where we could most likely attract both expansion and new development capital. In addition, the survey was to recommend the structure and staffing of the Industrial Development Branch. The consultants were not asked to comment upon the officers whom we had engaged already but were to comment as to the structure and future staffing of the branch.

The consultants commenced their work and I spoke to the officers of the American consultants after they had commenced work with Mr. Currie. Throughout the period of my office as Minister in charge of the branch Mr. Currie's work was excellent. The progress made by the branch was satisfactory, his work was quite invaluable in many directions, and he proved to me quite clearly his capacity in industry, if any proof were needed by that time. An interim report was made by the consultants before I left office. The American consultants had as their South Australian agents the local office of W. D. Scott and Company Proprietary Limited, a Sydney company of management consultants.

After the new Premier had taken office certain rather disturbing activities in the Industrial Development Branch were announced.

The American consultants had recommended strongly against the continued work in the Industrial Development Branch of an officer of the Housing Trust who had been seconded to the branch. They said that the services of this officer should not be continued in the department because he was not working in accordance with the policy they were advising, and he was returned to the Housing Trust.

Shortly after the Premier took office, the Director of Industrial Development was deprived of his direct access to the Minister, but this officer from the Housing Trust was made an officer of the Industrial Development Advisory Council with direct access to the Premier, so that the Director was put in a position that was difficult administratively as there was appointed, with more access to his Minister, an officer against whom the American consultants had strongly advised. Immediately after this, the Premier appointed Mr. Barker as Chairman of the Industrial Development Advisory Council. He did this in the full knowledge that there were personal differences between the Director of Industrial Development and Mr. Barker over the settlement of industrial disputes that had covered their two plants at the time Mr. Currie was working in private industry and that this, in itself, would create difficulties in administration for the Director of Industrial Development. Although that was wellknown to the Premier, he took action that could not but have been designed to make the position of the Director of Industrial Development difficult.

Then came an announcement that Mr. Currie had been required to be Director of Industrial Research and not to continue in his former position. Instead of Mr. Currie continuing as Director of Industrial Development, the Premier had him called Director of Industrial Research, and had Mr. Ramsay put into office as Director of Industrial Promotion. Mr. Ramsay was at that time, and still is, the General Manager of the South Australian Housing Trust, Chairman of the Municipal Tramways Trust, and a Commissioner of the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Mr. Lawn: What does he do in his spare time?

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: He is also an officer of the Young Men's Christian Association, and I could also cite a few other things. It could only have been anticipated that it would be difficult for the Director of Industrial Development in South Australia to continue in office but then came the most extraordinary thing of all: he was deprived of his staff. He

was working as Director of Industrial Research with no staff to carry out the research. The staff was not under Mr. Currie but under Mr. Ramsay, and doing the work Mr. Ramsay required. Mr. Currie had no power to obtain or to direct the staff necessary for the basic industrial research work to be done.

In these circumstances, the Government obviously intended to bring every pressure to bear to force Mr. Currie out, and I ask the Premier whether it was not the case that, when Mr. Currie asked the Premier what the position was and whether the Premier wanted him to go, he was eventually told "Yes" by the Government. I hope that the Premier will answer that one, as he did not answer very much yesterday. As a result of this, Mr. Currie sought employment elsewhere. He has obtained, in accordance with his qualifications and abilities, one of the most senior industrial development positions in this country: Aluminium Company of Australia has him as its Development Director, and I know that its programme of development exceeds in size the total of the present I.C.I. development in the whole of the Commonwealth. That is the job to which Mr. Currie has gone and, naturally, members on this side have protested about the way that he has been subjected to this kind of pressure, and subjected from the moment the Premier took office. The motive was obvious. It was not because the Government disagreed with Mr. Currie's background or abilities: for any officer to suggest that Mr. Currie had insufficient background to qualify himself for this position is, in view of the facts I have cited, completely ludicrous.

For political reasons, and none other, the Government decided that, since this appointee was appointed to the post under a Labor Government, it was going to get rid of him and it took action to see that it did. Not only has a gross injustice been done to this officer, but we will never again be able to attract to South Australia another senior executive from industry for employment under the Government. The situation is that this or any future Government, when seeking to get qualified people from private industry to come to this State, will be told, "Look at Currie—it's not for us." That situation is doing grave harm to the State, but more harm was done yesterday when the Premier came into the House and, as an excuse for his conduct, read a sentence extracted from some document which he does not publish, whose authorship he will not reveal, and whose origin is

unknown, and he has refused to table all the other relevant documents so that the House and public may judge this issue.

He knows that the statement he made is defamatory of Mr. Currie and that it was made under privilege in this House. That statement relates to Mr. Currie's qualifications for a developmental post, a similar post to that which had been his previously and which he now holds. The Premier would not cite or attempt to cite (and that is not surprising in all the circumstances) a single fact to support the statement he made concerning Mr. Currie. This position is unparalleled in the history of public administration in South Australia. Most people in this State have been pretty shocked that it has happened, and I hope we will never see anything like this again. Therefore, in this matter the House and the public are entitled to the fullest information.

It is not the Government but this House that is the custodian of the South Australian people's rights, and it is our duty to see that public administration and public appointments proceed in a proper way. Consequently, we are entitled to have the material and documents here in order to judge the course the Government took against Mr. Currie and to judge the conclusion that Mr. Currie reached about the Government that I read to the House yesterday: not that it was a public statement of his; it was a private one to me. I read it in order to disprove the statement of the Premier to this House that Mr. Currie wanted the matter hushed up. I believe members of Parliament and the public are entitled to judge these things and to have the documents. I ask members to support the motion that, since the Premier will not table the documents, it be required of the Public Service of this State that it table them so that we and the public can see the truth of the matter.

Mr. CORCORAN (Millicent): I second this extremely important motion so ably moved by my Leader. This is an unusual step to take, but it has been taken because the matter with which we are concerned is a serious one, indeed. As the Leader has pointed out, the Premier was given an opportunity yesterday to explain his position in this matter, and he was given an opportunity to table in the House the documents concerned. The Premier has refused to do either of these things. He certainly did not explain himself or his position in the matter yesterday and would not even reply to the request to table the documents. As the Leader has pointed out, for the first time in the history of this State possibly, the

administration of a Government and its actions are being questioned in this way.

I think this State has every reason to be proud of the way in which Governments have performed in the past, and I do not think there has ever been any question of shady dealings concerning previous Governments in this State. But there is something about this matter that does not smell quite right. Certain questions may well be asked of the Premier, and I hope he will reply satisfactorily to the remarks made by the Leader and other speakers. We want to know certain things and, indeed, I hope the Premier will support the Leader's motion. Yesterday, as the Leader has already said, the Premier came into this House and, as part of a statement that he read, he said:

I quote as follows from the report submitted to me by the consultants engaged by the Leader when Premier:

An evaluation of the above factors leads us to the conclusion that Mr. Currie is not qualified either by background experience or by performance on the job to satisfactorily fulfil the position of Director of Industrial Development as described in this report.

I should like to know, first of all, the date of that report and whether the things which the Leader outlined and which happened to Mr. Currie occurred prior to that report's being received or afterwards. I should also like to know how long a man has to be in a job in order to prove himself: we all know that Mr. Currie's appointment had been made not long before, but he was not given much opportunity really to establish himself in what was a new department and a new approach to industrial development in this State. Mr. Currie was appointed in August, 1967, and his demotion was, I think, discussed and, in fact, had taken place possibly eight months afterwards. One can imagine the tremendous amount of thought and work Mr. Currie had to undertake to get this department off the ground for a start, and yet we see the Premier taking notice of a report from consultants to which members referred yesterday. We have asked who signed the report, and this is important to us and to the people of the State; indeed, it has a big bearing on the matter. However, we see a complete acceptance of the report. I suppose Mr. Currie had an opportunity to refute its contents, or did he? Evidence of this report has now been made public by the Premier, and surely it is our responsibility as an Opposition to see that someone stands up in defence of Mr. Currie and of his abilities.

Mr. Lawn: We don't know whether any such report was made.

Mr. CORCORAN: Until we see it tabled, we are not satisfied that it was made. Surely, if the Premier has nothing to hide in this matter and if the facts are as he has stated, what is wrong with making the documents available to the House? I should like the Premier to answer that. There is no reason in the world, if he has nothing to hide, why this should not be done. The Leader of the Opposition has already referred to the far-reaching effects of the Premier's decision. If there is something genuinely wrong in this matter, it may be that future Governments in this State will be able to continue to draw on private enterprise for the sort of skill and ability needed to administer Government; but if nothing is wrong, surely it means in the long term that no future Government in this State will be able to draw on private enterprise in this way. Governments not only at State level but also at Commonwealth level have continually had to draw on private enterprise for the sort of qualifications and experience needed to administer Government. This is an extremely important aspect. I do not need to reiterate all the things the Leader has said: I merely wish to impress on the Premier and members of the Government Party the importance of this matter. A man's integrity is at stake and his qualifications are questioned.

Mr. Ryan: His reputation!

Mr. CORCORAN: Yes; surely that is sufficient reason for us to stand up for him in this House (he is not able to do so himself), and we will continue to do this for him. I hope the Premier and those who support him will see fit to meet the Leader's request.

Mr. Broomhill: If they have nothing to hide, they will.

Mr. CORCORAN: I have said that already. I appeal to those people who sit opposite, and to you, Mr. Speaker, to see that this matter is satisfactorily cleared up. I honestly believe that the only way this can be achieved is for the documents in question to be tabled in this House, so that we can see them and so that the public may know what is contained in them.

The Hon. R. S. HALL (Premier): I should have hoped that members of the Opposition could finalize their case in supporting their Leader's reiteration of most of the things that he said yesterday. There are, of course, two main points in this debate:

one of them centres on the welfare of South Australia, and the other on the welfare of Mr. Currie. The Government, under my leadership, has taken due and proper account of each of these two aspects. The Leader has dealt with a number of inaccuracies and with a situation of his own creating. He and the Deputy Leader have said that because of the Government's action it will never again be able to attract interest in and applications for positions within Government service, particularly those concerning industrial promotion. This is, of course, quite untrue. I have recently had occasion to initiate the calling, on the advice of the relevant consultants, of applications for a position within the Industrial Development Branch, and it may surprise the Leader to know the facts.

Following receipt of a report from the consultants setting out a manual for the organization of the Industrial Development Branch, a report was submitted to the Public Service Board for consideration and recommendation. The Public Service Board recommended the creation of a new office of Senior Industries Promotion Officer at a salary of \$9,370 a year. Applications for the new office were called throughout Australia and on April 27, 1969, Mr. W. M. Scriven, Bachelor of Science, M.I.E.(Aust.) was appointed to the position. As many as 64 applications were received in response to the advertisements, and 42 of them were from outside State and Commonwealth Government employment. Yet we are told that we are not able to attract interest in promoting South Australia's industries, although we get 64 applications and a man of this standing, who has the following credentials: since 1967 Mr. Scriven has been Chairman of the Australian Industrial Research Development Grants Board, a statutory authority set up by the Commonwealth Government. His appointments in the Commonwealth Public Service over the past 15 years have brought him into close relationship with industry, and his appointment as Chairman of the board referred to above has necessitated a close examination of industrial developmental projects for the purpose of deciding their eligibility for Commonwealth grants. Mr. Scriven will commence duties as Senior Industries Promotion Officer on June 24. It is interesting for the the House to recognize the difference in the types of appointment that have been made. Of course, the appointment of Mr. Currie was an improper appointment made by the previous Premier.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. R. S. HALL: That appointment was improperly made with complete disregard to the normal procedures in the Public Service. Why was that done?

Mr. Clark: They call for applications and then appoint the man they want.

The Hon. R. S. HALL: Clearly, a Government desiring to recruit a top man from industry would advertise the position in order to attract the widest possible field from which to make a selection. Direct negotiations with an individual would undermine the confidence of loyal and proficient public servants, who would be automatically excluded from being eligible to apply for the position.

Mr. Corcoran: How did Ramsay get the position?

The Hon. R. S. HALL: The truth hurts. Direct negotiations with an individual would place the Government in an untenable position by having a special contract quite outside the normal regulations governing public servants, and they would lay the Government open to criticism that the appointment was a political one, where political acceptability became the criterion, rather than suitability for the job.

The Hon. D. A. Dunstan: He wasn't a member of our Party.

The Hon. R. S. HALL: This policy, if continued, could break down the whole morale of the Public Service. That is the type of appointment we have been discussing—an improper appointment that set a dangerous and unacceptable precedent.

Mr. Clark: What about Ramsay?

The Hon. R. S. HALL: The honourable member knows that Mr. Ramsay is acting in his position. Of course, he has had close association with the Housing Trust for many years and holds his position as Acting Director of Industrial Promotion. This first major appointment since I have come to office has been made in the proper way an official appointment should be made.

Mr. Clark: How happy is the Public Service?

The Hon. R. S. HALL: The Leader has made other inaccurate references. He said yesterday that we had been unable to attract interest from qualified people, yet 64 people applied for a position. He said that Mr. Currie was General Manager of I.C.I. in South Australia. Of course, he was not; he was Works Manager and not General Manager. Mr. Currie's suitability for the position was evaluated against three primary considerations. First, it was evaluated against the

requirements of the Government with respect to development and promotion methods and policy. One of the significant policy effects was to create a position of Director of Industrial Promotion as head of the Industrial Development Branch. Secondly, the position of Director of Industrial Promotion required essentially qualifications in the fields of economics and economic development. Mr. Currie's tertiary qualifications are in chemical engineering. Thirdly, the position of Director of Industrial Promotion required and implied skill and experience in marketing and commercial operations. Mr. Currie had no significant background in this area. He was Works Manager at Osborne. I.C.I.'s marketing operations in South Australia are carried out by an entirely separate division responsible back to Head Office in Melbourne.

There is another interesting interpretation that the Leader has been putting on this matter. He has been saying that the report I have signed by some insignificant person who represents W. D. Scott and Company Proprietary Limited, and that his main interest was with an American company. Let us look at what the Leader signed in appointing this firm of industrial specialists. The document states:

Recommending approval for the appointment of W. D. Scott and Company Proprietary Limited and Arthur D. Little Incorporated as joint consultants to conduct a survey and report on plans for industrial development in South Australia at a total fee of \$153,500 payable to W. D. Scott and Company Proprietary Limited as prime contractors to the South Australian Government.

The Hon. D. A. Dunstan: They were the local agents.

The Hon. R. S. HALL: Why then does the Leader now concern himself with the fact that the report has now been signed, as he apparently thinks, by the W. D. Scott people, and why does he think there is some deficiency if that is the case? Yet in his enabling document he labelled them as the prime contractors. Yesterday we were treated to the "Dear Don" letter with some energy (for a while I thought it was a "Poor Don" letter), and we were told that Mr. Currie had written to the Leader as follows:

As far as I am concerned you can make whatever use you wish of my South Australian experiences. Hall and company are a thoroughly lousy and unprincipled lot of goons.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. R. S. HALL: Listen to that: ". . . a thoroughly lousy and unprincipled

lot of goons"; what a responsible statement that is! The statement continues:

I cannot think of any way in which I behaved improperly and, if they want to blacken me, let them.

Who has tried to blacken Mr. Currie? At every turn of events I delayed for months in putting this information to the House. Because Mr. Currie's reputation was involved, under very great provocation last year in the House and under severe criticism from the Leader I refused to give him information. Let me cite to the House some of the provocation of the Leader. Let us see what he said about me. He said:

He is so small and mean-minded that nothing could be good for the people of South Australia if we initiated it. His action on this occasion is a mixture in motive of incompetence and malice, and nothing else.

In the face of that I refused to say anything detrimental about Mr. Currie. If members opposite care to look at newspapers of the time they will find how true that is and how I sat here taking abuse from the Leader and using my own reputation as protection. Now, after further extreme provocation, apparently I am to blame for these facts about Mr. Currie being stated in this House. If there is one person responsible for their publication it is the Leader.

The Hon. D. A. Dunstan: Why don't you produce the lot?

The Hon. R. S. HALL: Who improperly appointed this man outside of the normal procedures of the Public Service? The Leader did, and he then set up two firms of consultants to investigate the department, at Mr. Currie's own recommendation. They reported against Mr. Currie. They cost the State a lot of money, and it cost the Government \$30,000 as a parting payment to Mr. Currie. Yet the Leader criticizes the Government. This is a similar type of incompetence to that which we were so used to seeing in the management of the State's affairs when the Leader was Premier of the State. Members should have a look and see how much industrial development we were getting during that time. I think we all remember the great new find that the Leader came out with at that time. I do not know where he got his advice but I suspect where he may have got it. He was going to revolutionize South Australian industry with cottage industries. I remember when the Leader spoke, at a public function that I attended, about cottage industries. There had never been such a sidetrack or wrong track in industrial promotion as that one.

The Hon. D. N. Brookman: And the milk bar economy.

The Hon. R. S. HALL: Well, "milk-bar economy" is a personal phrase that the Leader can use if he wishes, and I will criticize him at another time on that, but pertinent to the question of what type of industrial development we were getting at that time was the statement that we were going to go on the wrong road by having cottage industry development, flying in the face of every known technological advance in the world. The extremely significant industrial development advances that we have had under my Government are not to be related to any sidetracks such as that.

The very significant new industries that have come and are coming to this State are a direct result of the policy that this Government has been following, so it is futile for the Leader to try to make out to this House that the Government is pursuing this man because of some political vindictiveness. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Leader may be pleased to know, if Mr. Currie has not already written telling him, that when Mr. Currie came to us and said that he would like to leave we said that he could, and that we would talk to him about parting arrangements. We gave him some weeks, on the Government payroll, to find an alternative position suited to his talents, and I am pleased that he has been able to find one.

At no time has anyone said that his technical qualifications do not suit him for the type of job that he has. The thing that has been brought into question is his ability to promote industry in South Australia, and let me say clearly that I am not relying entirely on the report of the consultants that the Leader engaged: I am relying on my own observations of the lack of confidence by industry in South Australia in this man as a promoter of South Australian industry, and the Leader knows that he has only to talk to industrialists to find that that is correct.

The Hon. D. A. Dunstan: That's not true.

The Hon. R. S. HALL: Well, it happens to be true. As far as the welfare of South Australia is concerned, the State had to have a promoter of industry who was efficient and could inspire confidence, and this is why the change has been made. Mr. Currie was not reduced in salary, and the conditions regarding a car or insurance, which are additional to the salary mentioned in this document and which were substantial, were not altered.

The Hon. D. A. Dunstan: They were in the contract.

The Hon. R. S. HALL: When he left the State, he was paid \$30,000, plus about \$330 for some leave factor. He received more than \$30,000 and he has written back saying that the Government comprises a lot of lousy goons! Let me say that many people regard \$30,000 as a large sum of money.

As far as the result is concerned, the upsurge in activity in this State tells its own story. Recently I was pleased to have representatives of the Trades and Labour Council in my office. I gave figures to them, and I must say fairly that they gave the figures to the press on the next day, and they read very well. We had an extremely amicable discussion on this point. The rise in activity in South Australia cannot be questioned. It is occurring across a wide front of industrial involvement. Do I have to read this to the House again? Perhaps I should read a selected number of these factors.

Mr. Broomhill: What about dealing with the other documents?

The Hon. R. S. HALL: You know, Mr. Speaker, as other members doubtless know, that the approvals of new business premises constitute an extremely good indicator of the success of the economy of a State, and the value of approvals for new business premises in the latest three months for which figures are available (February, March and April, 1969) is \$14,800,000. In the last four years the total value for a typical three months' period has been about \$8,000,000, and for the three months ended April, 1968, the total was \$6,800,000.

The recent improvement has been well spread over new shops, factories, and office and other business premises. Regarding housing, in April there was a good revival of new houses and flats approved. Approvals in that month totalled 936, which brought the total for the period ended in April to 2,445 houses and flats, which was 22.7 per cent above the number of dwelling approvals in the three months ended April, 1968. For the year ended April, 1969, total dwelling approvals were 9,020, compared with 7,920 for the year ended April, 1968. This is a 13.9 per cent improvement. The revival in new subdivisional activity continued in April.

Mr. Corcoran: What about drought and leadership?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Broomhill: What's this got to do with the motion?

The Hon. R. S. HALL: Approvals in the four months from January to April, 1969, showed an upward trend.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think the Premier is getting a little away from the motion. I draw his attention to the desire expressed in the motion to have papers, books, and other things tabled in the House.

The Hon. R. S. HALL: With due deference, Mr. Speaker, I refer to the Leader's speech, in which he referred in some detail to the activities of Mr. Currie, as the head of industrial development in this State, under the Dunstan Government and in the early months of office of my Government. I consider that the Leader's statements dealing with that time ranged far and wide. I am trying to tell the House that, since that time, there has been an extremely significant upsurge in industrial development in this State.

The SPEAKER: Order! I must draw the Premier's attention to the fact that those statements were made on a different type of motion. All that is before the House at the moment is the motion moved by the Leader and, strictly speaking, in terms of debate, all that can be referred to is that particular motion.

The Hon. R. S. HALL: In that case, Mr. Speaker, we should be dealing only with documents and letters. I draw your attention to the fact that the Leader's statements were far wider than that. I can summarize by saying that, right across the field of industrial activity in this State, there has been an enormous upsurge that did not exist under the previous Government.

The Hon. J. W. H. Coumbe: And isn't the Opposition disappointed!

Mr. Virgo: Go to the people if you think you're so good.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Edwardstown should respect the Chair and maintain order. I point out that he has an opportunity to speak later. Will he please confine his remarks to the time when he makes his speech?

The Hon. R. S. HALL: Little more remains to be said. I do not agree with this motion. Of course, it is obviously a form of motion of no confidence in the Government, and it will be treated as such by the Government. It illustrates the thoroughly incompetent manner in which Mr. Currie was appointed to his former position. If one needed any judgment of Mr. Currie, it is provided by him in the letter cited by the Leader. The report has been compiled by

the consultants appointed by my predecessor, the present Leader. The State is enjoying a very significant industrial recovery. Mr. Currie's terms of parting of the ways with the South Australian Government were freely negotiated with the Attorney-General by Mr. Currie's own experienced solicitor. I believe that the welfare of both South Australia and Mr. Currie have been properly looked after in this situation.

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY (Whyalla): I do not intend to reiterate the points made by my Leader in the excellent speech he has made or those made by the member for Millicent (Mr. Corcoran), but I want to deal with one or two of the remarks made by the Premier in trying to defend what I call his completely untenable position in this discussion. The Premier made much of Mr. Currie's appointment having been improper but I recall that, when Mr. Currie was appointed, the then Opposition and the present Premier did not oppose the appointment. They made no criticism whatever and they did not declare it improper: in fact, they accepted it. I believe that they thought the wind had been taken out of their sails by the fact that the then Government had appointed a leading man in industry. They probably expected someone else would have been appointed, but they saw that we were determined to get the man with the right qualifications and appoint him to this particularly important post.

The Premier has told us this afternoon that Mr. Currie's appointment was obviously made on the grounds of political acceptability. Let us have a look at what the Premier has done in regard to Mr. Currie's dismissal. He has said that he has acted on the report of a firm of consultants, which was paid a very high fee to report on the promotion of industry in this State. Obviously, the Premier wants to impress on the House that he regarded this position as being of such importance that he would have had the matter very thoroughly examined and have taken notice of the report put in by these consultants. Yet what does he do when he has got rid of Mr. Currie? He does not go to another firm of consultants, or to the same consultants, and ask them whether Mr. Ramsay's appointment would be a good one.

Mr. McKee: He never called for applications, either.

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: He did not find out from some experts whether Mr.

Ramsay was capable of carrying out this job: he simply appointed him. As far as I know, he did not even call for applications for the job but appointed a man who had at least three other most responsible positions in the State and who obviously could not devote his full-time activities to what the Premier regards as an outstanding appointment, one on which the Government's future will probably depend.

Mr. Broomhill: What would the consultants say about that?

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: Exactly. It is obvious that any firm of consultants would have said that no man could take on this job as a purely part-time position.

Mr. Corcoran: Wouldn't that appointment have been improper on the same basis as Mr. Currie's appointment is said to have been?

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: I think it would have been more improper for the very good reason that this was not a full-time appointment. Mr. Ramsay is General Manager of the Housing Trust, and this, together with his other appointments, makes it utterly impossible for him to devote the time to this job, if it is as important as the Premier has indicated. Yet, the Premier did not consult anyone but merely appointed him, and he now charges the Opposition with appointing Mr. Currie on the grounds of political expediency. Where is the political expediency? Not on this side!

The other significant matter in regard to this question is the manner of Mr. Currie's dismissal. This afternoon the Premier has said that Mr. Currie came to the Government and said that he would like to leave, but if this report from the consultants is so damning as we have been led to believe (and it certainly is a damning report of a man with such qualifications), why did the Government not go to Mr. Currie and say honestly to him, "We have had a serious report about your qualifications. We do not think you are competent to carry on with this work. We regret very much that we will have to terminate your contract." But no. First, the Government took his position away from him and put him in another position where he had no staff, making it impossible for him to continue. In other words, it adopted back-door methods of a most damnable nature in order to force this man out of his position instead of facing up to him honestly and saying, "Look, this is the report. We do not think we can continue to have you in this position. We will have to terminate your contract." If this had been an

honest approach, bearing in mind the needs of the State and with due respect to Mr. Currie, this is the action that would have been taken but, instead, it was done by means of subterfuge and unfair pressure.

Mr. Riches: Do you think the Government had the report?

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: If it had this report at the time it is trying to lead us to believe that it had it, the Government would tell us more about it to clear itself, but the very fact that it is determined to refuse us the information indicates that it has something very important to hide. One of the outstanding things in this State on which we pride ourselves is that when there is a change of Government the Public Service carries on as before. We always talk about this as being one of the major strengths of our form of Government: we do not change all the people in the Public Service and have the spoils going to the victor, as has been done in some other countries. We regard this continuation of administration as one of the most effective and most important means of good government in the State. Of course, the Government would never have dared to do this to a public servant in a high position but, because this man was under a particular form of contract, this action was taken: it was taken not honestly but by means of subterfuge, and the Government is now refusing to reveal the facts to the public.

Furthermore, the Government has charged the Opposition with having made an improper appointment, whereas the one this Government has made was far more improper if there was any impropriety about the other. It is absolutely amazing to hear the Premier try to justify the appointment to this job of a man with so many other responsibilities. When the Premier tells the House about the upsurge of activity and tries to relate this to the appointment of the man who now has the job, it is absolutely ridiculous because, if there has been an upsurge, it has been entirely due to the change of circumstances in the Eastern States.

When I had the privilege and pleasure of attending a dinner given by the Chamber of Manufactures recently, I was very pleased to hear His Excellency the Governor say that the difficult conditions through which South Australia had passed in the last three years had been due to the conditions in the other States, and that it was no good for people to try to find, as I think he expressed it, a scapegoat in this situation. The Premier could well take notice of the Governor's remarks.

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide): Having heard the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier, I cannot but believe that the credibility of the Premier as well as the mishandling by the Government of the matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition is on trial. The Premier has been asked in the motion to table and produce to Parliament certain papers and letters concerning the conditions of employment and the termination of employment of Mr. Currie.

Mr. Broomhill: A completely reasonable request.

Mr. LAWN: Of course. The Premier is treating Parliament with contempt by brushing off this matter in the manner he has done. You, Mr. Speaker, drew his attention to the terms of the motion, but he refused to table those papers although he referred to bits and pieces of paper, including last year's *Hansard*, and you, Sir, had to draw his attention to the fact that he was not speaking to the motion. He produced one page of the documents concerned with the Leader's motion. He produced one letter that apparently dealt with the appointment of Mr. Currie, and that has become part of the file. The motion merely asks that the complete file be produced. The Government and the Premier obviously have much to hide in this matter if he will produce to Parliament only one page of that file and withhold the remainder.

The Premier read a reply he gave the Leader of the Opposition last year about the conditions of employment of Mr. Currie. He made it clear then, as he did yesterday, that Mr. Currie did not want publicity. The Premier said this afternoon that he was refusing to give the information to the Leader because of the effect on Mr. Currie's reputation. However, Mr. Currie has called his bluff and made it clear in the letter he sent to the Leader that anything could be used and exposed concerning his employment with the South Australian Government and its termination. The Premier is lying when he says that he has withheld this information because Mr. Currie does not want the publicity and that he is withholding it because of the effect on Mr. Currie's reputation. That is completely untrue. The invitation is extended to the Premier in Mr. Currie's letter to the Leader of the Opposition to make public and bring into the open all facts concerning his employment with the South Australian Government. The credibility of the Premier is on trial, because he has proved in his statements that he is not withholding the documents because of the interests

of Mr. Currie: Mr. Currie does not want them withheld.

The Premier will describe what is on the file, but he will produce it only if it is convenient to him. How do we know that what he says is on the file is actually on the file? He said yesterday that the file contained a report adverse to Mr. Currie from the consultants employed by the Dunstan Government. After hearing the Leader's description of Mr. Currie's qualifications and how he was highly recommended by secondary industry to the Government, it is difficult to understand how these consultants could submit a report about Mr. Currie's background and experience that would not justify his appointment.

Mr. Corcoran: They were asked to report not on that but on the staffing of the department.

Mr. LAWN: I suggest that the Premier is lying, and that there is no such report from the consultants. Until the Premier tables these papers I will not believe that such a report is on the file, unless it is a report of the present Premier. The Premier accused the Dunstan Government of making an improper appointment when it appointed Mr. Currie, and said that the previous Premier should have called for applications. We know that the person appointed by the Premier (Mr. Ramsay) was appointed without applications being called, which means that the present Premier is accusing himself of making an improper appointment in the present instance.

Before the Premier announced this afternoon this report of the consultants to create a certain position in this department and fill it with an experienced person, I had already been informed (as were other members of the Opposition) that competent men were available in our Public Service who had the necessary qualifications and could have filled the position, but the Premier, not wanting them, decided to get someone from Canberra, and this afternoon he announced the name of that person. Is that not improper? The only way to find the truth is for this motion to be carried, and I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will support it so that we can ascertain for ourselves the justice or otherwise of the termination of Mr. Currie's employment.

Mr. McKEE (Port Pirie): In supporting my Leader's motion, I am completely at a loss to understand why the Premier has refused to table the documents. It concerns me because a principle is involved, and it also concerns the public of this State. They must be con-

cerned and worried, and wondering exactly what sort of Government is administering the affairs of this State.

Mr. Lawn: A lousy unprincipled Government.

Mr. McKEE: The people must be concerned about the Government's honesty: if it has nothing to hide, why do this? The Premier has told us that Mr. Currie was not qualified; perhaps to prove this statement he has a document signed by some fictitious person, possibly himself. However, this House and the public are entitled to know what circumstances brought about Mr. Currie's dismissal and who signed the letter. That is all I ask, because I consider that a principle is associated with this and there is an obligation to let the people of this State know what has happened.

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE (Attorney-General): I entirely support the Premier's stand in this matter.

Mr. Ryan: Why?

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: He has fully covered the ground and given his reasons for opposing the motion, and I entirely support them. In speaking against the motion I emphasize two points: I do so because my name has been mentioned as the person who negotiated with Mr. Currie's solicitor for the discharge of the obligations of both parties under the contract entered into between him and the present Leader of the Opposition as Premier.

Mr. Corcoran: Was it a properly drawn-up document?

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: Yes, it was. The first point I desire to deal with is the one which was raised yesterday by the Leader, and which was canvassed by him again today, regarding the report of the consultants (W. D. Scott and Company, the Australian company, and A. D. Little Incorporated, the American company). That report covered all positions in the Industrial Development Branch and not just that of the Director, so that factors are canvassed in the report which have nothing whatever to do with Mr. Currie who was then the Director. If this document were to be tabled it would, therefore, disclose private and confidential information about others besides Mr. Currie, and I suggest that is entirely undesirable.

The report was signed by the present Manager for South Australia of W. D. Scott and Company. I do not know whether the Leader did it deliberately, but he certainly imputed dishonesty to the Manager in what he said yesterday; he implied that the signatory

to the report was guided by political and not professional motives. If that is a deliberate imputation which the Leader makes, I entirely refute it. It is wrong of him to come into this House and to attack a man in such a position as that, without any grounds whatsoever except, he says, that the person concerned is a friend of the Premier. In fact, he is a friend of mine, too, and a friend of many people on both sides of politics in this State, but that is entirely irrelevant.

To suggest that the person concerned would not do his professional duty simply out of political perfidy is a disgraceful thing for the Leader to have said in this House, and I ask him, if he intends to reply to this debate, to withdraw those imputations against Mr. Curtis. I assure the Leader that, although the only signature was that of the Manager for South Australia, the report was approved by A. D. Little Incorporated before it was presented to the Government, and it is entirely inaccurate for the Leader to suggest, as he has done in this House both yesterday and today, that this was the report of one man only and that it was made for political purposes to help the Government. Those things are entirely wrong.

That is the first point that I desire to cover. The second point deals with the negotiations which led up to Mr. Currie's leaving the Premier's Department. Those negotiations were of a delicate nature; we all know that. Those of us who have been involved in these things before know it; and the Leader would have had experience of this during the time when he was in private practice as well as during the time when he was in Government. I do not intend to disclose the details of those negotiations.

Mr. Riches: Can you assure me that that report was received before Mr. Currie was sacked?

Mr. Rodda: Mr. Currie was not sacked.

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: He was not sacked. I have already dealt with that point.

Mr. Riches: I am sorry, I didn't hear any date.

Mr. Corcoran: I didn't, either.

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: I did not mention a date, because I did not know the date. The Premier gave the date yesterday in the House.

Mr. Broomhill: He refused to give it.

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: No, he did not.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much conversation.

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: I can assure the honourable member that the report was given a long time before Mr. Currie left the service of the South Australian Government but that, to me, is irrelevant.

Mr. Burdon: When was the report made in relation to the action taken against Mr. Currie?

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: No action was taken against Mr. Currie to terminate his services. What has been said by every member opposite, that he was dismissed, is entirely inaccurate, and members opposite know that. Indeed, the Premier has already made that perfectly clear. Let me go on to develop the second point I am trying to make: that the negotiations which led to Mr. Currie's departure were of a delicate nature which should not and cannot, in the nature of things, be disclosed. I have already said that the report contained matter regarding other persons besides Mr. Currie. This whole question is, to an extent at least, a matter of personalities. As it turned out (and I do not think there is anything wrong in saying this), Mr. Currie was a square peg in a round hole; he just did not fit into the position to which the previous Government appointed him.

Mr. Corcoran: Is that your view? Are you the judge of this?

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: That is my personal view, and I should have thought it was common ground between us. Because the report itself contains matter concerning other people, and because this is a matter of personalities, obviously the negotiations which I conducted on behalf of the Government included matter which is of a private and confidential nature, and all the documents for which the Opposition is now calling contain matter also of a private and confidential nature. It would, therefore, be quite wrong, in my view, for these matters to be made public.

Members opposite have suggested that the actions of the present Government towards Mr. Currie have undermined confidence in the administration of the State and that we will never be able to attract other persons to our service. The Premier has already dealt with that and shown that this is just not the case. However, if the contents of this document were to be made public, that result would undoubtedly follow. Therefore it is, in my view, in the best interests of the State, because of the private and confidential nature of the matters in the docket concerned, that it should not be tabled in this House, and I therefore ask members not to support the Leader's motion.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN (Leader of the Opposition): The Government this afternoon is so frightened to allow the justice of this case to be decided on the arguments put before this House that the Premier, rather than allow members of this House to do justice in their own minds to an individual who has been grossly wronged by this Government, has declared this to be a vote of no confidence in order to see to it that your vote, Mr. Speaker, goes a particular way, regardless of what is said here or of the rights of any particular individual. That is how far the Premier is concerned with the rights and justice of this matter.

If he were concerned with the rights and justice of this matter, his Government need not stand or fall by this vote, as he knows perfectly well. The proposal itself is not, in form, a motion of no confidence and, in consequence, Mr. Speaker, you would be free to vote on it as you saw fit, unless the Premier declared it to be a vote of no confidence, which he saw fit to do. Let me turn to the things the Premier saw fit to say: the first of these is that Mr. Currie's appointment was in some way improper, and he cited certain reasons, referring to the impropriety of the original appointment. The nature of the original appointment was revealed in this House at the time it was made: that Mr. Currie had been engaged at the figure I mentioned, that the post had not been advertised, that it was not a Public Service post, but that Mr. Currie was under contract.

For weeks afterwards this House sat and not one word was spoken by members of the Liberal and Country League alleging any sort of impropriety in the course followed by the Government—I may say, including the Attorney-General, who was assiduously alleging impropriety in the most innocent of circumstances in those days. To suggest any impropriety in this matter is completely absurd. It was the policy of the Liberal Government, behind which members opposite sat, to appoint people outside the Public Service to senior posts and not to call openly for applications for those posts. That happened in many cases. What happened in the appointment of the Prices Commissioners? They were not public servants.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson: They never have been.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: Of course not, and that is the point I am making. Apparently, that is not impropriety! What is more, what about appointments to other senior posts for which special provision was made

on the lines of the Estimates but which were not Public Service posts? Mr. Cartledge was made Chairman of the Housing Trust, not by calling for public applications for that post. He was rewarded out of public moneys at a figure agreed by the Government with him. That was the action of the Playford Government. How can members opposite allege for one moment that the employment of a senior person under contract to the Government is in any way improper? Of course it is not improper.

Mr. Virgo: And they know it.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: In fact, it is a widely established practice of the British Government that I.C.I. has contributed a number of its senior executives to the Government in Britain and elsewhere on similar occasions and on similar terms. The Premier then said, "It is not true that we cannot attract people to the service of this State in these conditions because we have been able to get for the more lowly paid posts in the Public Service a certain number of applicants." I will deal with the particular case of the appointee to the new post in a few moments.

Then the Premier went on to try to cite some facts in support of the defamation of Mr. Currie; he read them out in this House. He said that what was required in his view and the consultants' view for a senior post in this department were not the qualifications Mr. Currie had, in chemical engineering, but tertiary qualifications in economics. Who was appointed to the new Public Service post that the honourable member has mentioned? It was Mr. Scriven. What are his qualifications? He is a Bachelor of Science, not an economist; and he has honorary qualifications as a Postmaster-General engineer.

The Hon. R. S. Hall: What is his present post in the Public Service?

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: It is the one announced by you—in the Industrial Development Branch.

The Hon. R. S. Hall: One that required a knowledge of industrial development.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: All I can say is that first you say you are going to get somebody into this post because you have dismissed or forced out of the Public Service, in effect, a man who has not got economics qualifications; then you employ as a senior full-time officer of the department somebody who has not got them, either.

The Hon. R. S. Hall: You're suggesting we shouldn't employ engineers.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: I am not suggesting that you should not employ engineers, but here you are hoist with your own petard. There is not the slightest reason why a man with Mr. Currie's background should not fill the post of Director of Industrial Development in South Australia, or hold a senior post in that department. Apart from this, the Premier could cite nothing; all he did was to suggest that, in relation to the report he received from W. D. Scott and Company, it was all right for that report to be received from that company, over the signature of its local manager—although that was not revealed until the Attorney-General stated it. The original Cabinet minute that I had signed awarding the contract to Little and Scott said that W. D. Scott and Company was not the prime contractor: it was the local agent. It was clear from the way the contract had been awarded that we were bringing in the experience of Little which had previously, unlike Scott and Company, made reports that had shown results.

Mr. Clark: And this was said at the time.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: Yes; it had produced its own results in Manitoba, where it had made a report previously; and it was on that basis that the contract was awarded.

The Hon. Robin Millhouse: Are you still saying that Arthur D. Little did not concur in the report?

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: I cannot at the moment concede that Little concurred in this report; nor am I prepared to accept a statement from the Attorney-General not backed up by any documentary evidence, while the Government utterly refuses to put the evidence before this House in documentary form on that score. I know what the officers of Arthur D. Little said to me about Mr. Currie when they were first working with him: it was completely contrary to what is now being alleged. As far as my questions on this matter in relation to the manager of W. D. Scott and Company are concerned, I stated before, and I state now, that my suspicion is that the nature of the report was coloured by the nature of the report that the Premier had indicated he wanted; and the report was got ready because that is what the Premier wanted—and he wanted it from somebody who was a close political associate of his.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: If members opposite say that this is not the case, why do they not table these documents? If the

Attorney-General suggests there is some confidential information in this (and I do know the contents of the agreement that was made with Mr. Currie, because Mr. Thompson, his solicitor, has revealed the contents of the agreement to me) I say there is nothing in that agreement that is confidential or can be considered to be so. It is no use the Attorney-General's coming here and trying to assure the House that this is a confidential matter, because I do not believe him on the evidence I already have.

The idea that the Government is concerned with the delicate nature of these negotiations and therefore is so concerned with the rights of particular individuals that it cannot possibly reveal what has gone on is, in the face of what has happened in the last few days, quite ludicrous. If there was anything in the dockets that was confidential and related to other material, why in the world could the Government not table those portions of the documents relating to the particular individual, with a certificate that the other matters contained in the documents related to other things and not to the point in question?

Mr. Hughes: That would be too honest.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: The Government will not let us or the public know the truth of this matter. It is simply determined to act in a disgraceful fashion as it has acted in forcing this man out of Government service and depriving the people of South Australia of the services of an excellent executive, thus damaging the State. It is not much use the Premier's coming here and saying, "We can get some lesser paid people to apply for Public Service posts under the protection of the Public Service Act." That is a very different matter indeed from getting a senior industrial executive—and the Government knows it. This has been a shocking episode in the history of this State and it is not something that will be forgotten. The Government has treated this officer in a most shocking and cavalier fashion, and his private expression to me of his opinion as a result of the treatment he received at the hands of this Government (a Government he endeavoured to serve loyally) is in my view perfectly justified. Indeed, regarding the language that Mr. Currie used in that private letter to me, in view of what this Government has done to him, in the words of another Parliamentarian on another occasion, I was astounded at his moderation.

The House divided on the motion:

Ayes (19)—Messrs. Broomhill and Burdon, Mrs. Byrne, Messrs. Casey, Clark,

Corcoran, Dunstan (teller), Hudson, Hughes, Hurst, Hutchens, Jennings, Langley, Lawn, Loveday, McKee, Riches, Ryan, and Virgo.

Noes (19)—Messrs. Allen, Arnold, Brookman, Coumbe, Edwards, Evans, Ferguson, Freebairn, Giles, Hall (teller), McAnaney Millhouse, Nankivell, Pearson, and Rodda, Mrs. Steele, Messrs. Teusner, Venning, and Wardle.

The SPEAKER: There are 19 Ayes and 19 Noes. There being an equality of votes, it is necessary for me to give a casting vote on this question. I have noted the remarks of the honourable Premier and of the honourable Attorney-General. Before giving my casting vote I wish to refer to the Seventeenth Edition of Erskine May's *The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, as follows:

Subjects of, and restrictions on power of moving for, returns may be moved for, either by order or address, relating to any public matter, in which the House or the Crown has jurisdiction. They may be obtained from all public offices, and from corporations, bodies, or offices constituted for public purposes, by Acts of Parliament or otherwise: but not from private associations, such as Lloyd's, nor from individuals not exercising public functions. The papers and correspondence sought from Government departments should be of a public and official character, and not private or confidential.

The honourable Attorney-General, speaking in the responsible position of Attorney-General of the State, said to the House that these documents are of a delicate and private nature. Therefore, I give my casting vote in favour of the Noes and the question passes in the negative.

Motion negatived.

QUESTIONS

ELECTORAL ROLL

Mr. VIRGO: Yesterday I asked the Attorney-General about the threat of incorrect removal of the names of people from the roll of the Edwardstown District, and he replied as follows:

The registrar in question admits that a mistake was made, and he has been most apologetic about it.

Can the Attorney-General say whether the registrar concerned has apologized to the people who were incorrectly informed of the threat of removal and, if he has not, will the Attorney require him to do so?

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: Yesterday I said, as the honourable member has quoted me, that the registrar was most

apologetic for the mistake that had been made.

Mr. Virgo: To whom?

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: Good heavens, let me get the words out of my mouth. I have not spoken directly to the registrar about this matter, but that is the sentiment that has been expressed to me as being his, and I accept it as such. This was a mistake. Quite frankly, I do not think it would be appropriate that the registrar should make a personal apology to everyone who was involved in this. Mistakes do happen, and a mistake occurred here and has been acknowledged.

Mr. Corcoran: And the mistake is regretted.

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: Yes, and every effort will be made to see that it does not happen again. I think that is reasonably the end to the matter.

RESERVOIRS

The Hon. B. H. TEUSNER: Can the Minister of Works say what is the present position of the State's water supplies? In particular, can he say what quantity of water is being held in the Warren, South Para and Barossa reservoirs?

The Hon. J. W. H. COUMBE: The honourable member was good enough to tell me earlier that he would require this information. The following is the position of metropolitan reservoirs as at 8.30 a.m. today:

Reservoir	Capacity (000,000 gall.)	Holding (000,000 gall.)
Mount Bold	10,440	7,041
Happy Valley	2,804	1,750
Myponga	5,905	4,476
Millbrook	3,647	572
Hope Valley	765	583
Thorndon Park	142	117
Barossa	993	896
South Para	11,300	9,117

The capacity of the metropolitan reservoirs is 36,099,000,000 gallons, whilst at present they hold 24,648,000,000 gallons, or just over two-thirds of their capacity. This is a little better than the position at this time last year. The following are the holdings of some other reservoirs:

Reservoir	Capacity (000,000 gall.)	Holding (000,000 gall.)
Warren	1,401	337
Beetaloo	819	241
Bundaleer	1,401	542
Baroota	1,371	1,178
Tod River	2,495	1,756

MILLICENT SOUTH SCHOOL

Mr. CORCORAN: My question relates to the effluent treatment plant at the Millicent South Primary School, which plant was completed prior to the installation of a sewerage system in that part of Millicent. Sewerage has now been available to the school for the past nine months. It is competent for the school to be connected to the system, but the treatment plant is still operating. The school committee is concerned about the health hazard that this is presenting; it is unsightly and it is overgrown with weeds. The committee desires that the school be connected to the sewerage system as quickly as possible. This proposal has been cleared with the Education Department, but the hold-up is in the Public Buildings Department, although it does not appear to me that much planning is necessary. Will the Minister of Works investigate this question as a matter of urgency and ascertain when the school will be connected to the sewerage system?

The Hon. J. W. H. COUMBE: I will look into this matter at once with a view to seeing that the whole project is completed as expeditiously as possible.

CLARE SCHOOL RESIDENCE

Mr. ALLEN: On November 15 last the Minister of Education visited Clare and spent the day inspecting school facilities there. Prior to lunch she inspected the Housing Trust area, where a solid construction residence was being erected in Pattulo Avenue for a high school teacher. At the time of the inspection the walls had nearly been completed. I was informed this morning, eight months later, that this residence is still not occupied. A young married teacher living in temporary accommodation is waiting to move into this residence. Can the Minister inform me of the nature of the delay and when the residence can be occupied?

The Hon. JOYCE STEELE: I recall with much pleasure the day I spent visiting schools in Clare, and I remember visiting the house referred to, which was then in the course of construction. I am distressed to hear that, eight months later, the house is not occupied. I will most certainly call for a report and let the honourable member have it as soon as possible.

WHYALLA RAILWAY

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: I have been informed that the Commonwealth Minister for Shipping and Transport has said that the report

of the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner on the survey and priority of the proposed railway between Port Augusta and Whyalla was submitted to the Commonwealth Minister on January 21 of this year. Will the Premier try to get a copy of this report and present it to the House? Will he at the same time request the Commonwealth Government to give a decision on this matter as quickly as possible?

The Hon. R. S. HALL: The Government has been in constant contact with the Commonwealth Minister in relation to the standardization of the railway from Adelaide to Port Pirie and in relation to the proposed new railway between Whyalla and the standard gauge line. Only last week I telephoned the Minister and asked him what stage had been reached, because we were awaiting word from the Commonwealth Government regarding its suggestion about the consultants' study of the line from Adelaide to Port Pirie, as the initiative now rests with the Commonwealth. He said he was actively pursuing the matter and that he would reactivate the question in his department and let me have an early reply about the Commonwealth's intentions. I will find out as much as I can and let the honourable member know as soon as possible. I do not know whether the report can be made public or whether the Minister of Roads and Transport has a copy. The honourable member will realize that it is a Commonwealth report and, of course, it would be within the Commonwealth's power to decide whether it should be released.

IRRIGATION REBATE

Mr. ARNOLD: Has the Minister of Irrigation a reply to my question of yesterday about irrigation rebates?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: The annual irrigation water rates for highland areas provide for a rate of \$21.50 an acre for five general irrigations. If the total water pumped during general irrigations averages less than 30 acre inches an acre, a rebate of \$2 an acre is made. Rebates for the 1968-69 season have been applied to Moorook, Waikerie, Cadell, Mypolonga and Berri areas. The rebate has not been disallowed, as suggested by the honourable member, in the Berri irrigation area. The quantity of water pumped in the Ral Ral Division in the 1968-69 season is 35.70 inches, which is considerably in excess of the 30 acre inches under which rebate applies. In these circumstances the rebate has not been allowed.

ROAD RULES

Mr. BROOMHILL: I recently noticed in the *Advertiser* that the Minister of Roads and Transport, when opening a seminar on "Slaughter on the Roads", said:

We should drive on the right of the road. This is a change that has to come.

Can the Premier say what steps the Government is taking to implement this change?

The Hon. R. S. HALL: The honourable member will realize that this would be a very long-range project if it was, in fact, decided on by all States. Apart from the question whether the public approved it, there would be the matter of a major alteration in the manufacture of motor cars in Australia and, of course, in cars manufactured overseas. In fact, to drive on the right-hand side of the road would be an enormous change economically, socially, and physically. I believe that the Minister was expressing a personal opinion. Of course, he is a Minister who has been noted for much activity in his department and he has brought a new sense of urgency to the works carried out by that department, and I commend him for his very vigorous approach to his responsibilities. However, a decision has not been taken by the South Australian Government on whether it desires a change to be made by Australia, and I can assure the honourable member that this decision could not and would not be taken in isolation. Therefore, any talk of it at present is based on looking a long way into the future, and would be the beginning of an immense change by the people of Australia in their driving habits.

SUPERPHOSPHATE

Mr. NANKIVELL: A heading in today's *Financial Review* states that the South Australian Government yesterday asked the Tariff Board for appropriate financial aid to enable Nairn Pyrites Proprietary Limited and Sulphuric Acid Proprietary Limited to remain operating. I understand that about \$400,000 is still owing by these interests to the Savings Bank on money that was guaranteed by the State Treasurer. Can the Premier say whether the present price fixed for superphosphate in South Australia is based on the cheapest price of sulphuric acid available by import at present? If it is, can he say what will be the effect of any assistance given if it is in the form of a tariff rather than a bounty? Does the Premier consider that granting the request could cause an

increase in the cost of superphosphate in South Australia?

The Hon. R. S. HALL: I will get a report, with the details, for the honourable member.

GOVERNESSES' ALLOWANCE

Mr. CASEY: Recently the Minister of Education returned from a visit to the Northern Territory where, I understand, she inspected schools and teaching staff who are provided by the Education Department of South Australia. I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that people in the Northern Territory who employ governesses on station properties are granted an allowance by the Commonwealth Government of \$100, I understand, for expenses incurred. In my district, in the North of the State, we have stations which are equally as outback as those in the Northern Territory and which are very similar to the Northern Territory stations. Will the Minister look into the question of whether these people in South Australia who are inconvenienced by not having a school for their children to attend and who are forced to employ governesses on their stations can be granted an allowance similar to that granted in the Northern Territory?

The Hon. JOYCE STEELE: I am aware that the Commonwealth Government makes a grant of \$100 to people who employ governesses on stations, subject to certain conditions. This was brought to my notice some months ago and again when I made my flying trip, of which the honourable member is quite aware, to northern schools in South Australia a few weeks ago. I was interested to learn of this particular grant, and I have set in train an investigation to find out what conditions the Commonwealth Government attaches to the payment of this allowance of \$100. I did have the opportunity of speaking with the Commonwealth Minister for Education and Science on a trip that I made to the Northern Territory last week, when he told me that the conditions, for instance, must require that the governess be wholly engaged in supervising correspondence lessons and in teaching children. The allowance cannot be paid if the person supervising lessons performs other duties in the house, and for this reason—

At 4 o'clock, the bells having been rung:

The SPEAKER: Order! The time for questions has expired. Call on the business of the day.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Hon. R. S. HALL (Premier) brought up the following report of the committee appointed to prepare the draft Address in Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor:

1. We, the members of the House of Assembly, express our thanks for the Speech with which Your Excellency was pleased to open Parliament.

2. We assure Your Excellency that we will give our best attention to all matters placed before us.

3. We earnestly join in Your Excellency's prayer for the Divine blessing on the proceedings of the session.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

(Continued from June 17. Page 19.)

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON (Treasurer) moved:

That Standing Order No. 44 be so far suspended as to enable Order of the Day No. 2, Supply (in Committee) to be proceeded with forthwith.

Mr. VIRGO (Edwardstown): I take the opportunity—

The SPEAKER: Just a minute. The Treasurer has moved that Standing Order No. 44 be so far suspended as to enable Order of the Day No. 2, Supply (in Committee) to be proceeded with forthwith.

Motion carried.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON moved:

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

Mr. VIRGO (Edwardstown): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your guidance and hope that the frivolity that has occurred may relieve the tension for the Premier and his colleagues. I want to say how disappointed all members and the public were that the Government waited until this House rose before bringing about what I can describe only as an iniquitous increase in Housing Trust rents. Not being satisfied with that, the Government then applied increases to its own departmental houses.

In a report in the *News* of March 24 last, the General Manager of the Housing Trust (Mr. A. M. Ramsay) announced that there would be increases in the rents of trust houses varying from 25c a week to \$1.30 a week and that these increases would be applied to 5,000 of the older type houses. What worries me particularly in relation to this matter is that at all times the announcements were made in

the name of the Housing Trust and the Minister of Housing has hidden behind the General Manager of the trust. We all know that Mr. Ramsay is nothing more than a part-time General Manager of the Housing Trust. He cannot be a full-time General Manager of the trust and be a full-time industrial promotions officer, or whatever his position is. In fact, he is not doing either job properly.

Mr. Lawn: What about his Tramways Trust duties?

Mr. VIRGO: All these things are thrown to him as well. Quite frankly, the Minister is the one who must take the blame for this. It is no good his hiding behind the servants appointed by the Government to run Government instrumentalities, as the Minister has done.

Mr. Broomhill: Surely he has to approve all these increases.

Mr. VIRGO: Well, when they were announced in the press I immediately rang Mr. Ramsay and was told that he was not in. Finally, I got to a junior officer and, after a few moments, he advised me that Mr. Ramsay had just come in, so I was able to talk with him. I believe that Mr. Ramsay had been out. Mr. Ramsay told me that these increases would not be applied to people who could not afford them. He accused me of not reading the article properly.

Mr. Broomhill: The House wasn't in session at the time.

Mr. VIRGO: Of course. That is the first point I raise. I strongly object to these actions being taken while the House is not in session and when it is not possible to question the Government and demand that the Minister answer for his actions. Mr. Ramsay referred the article to me and said, "If you had read what I said in the paper you would have a different attitude." From this, one naturally construes that he agrees with the newspaper report as being correct. He is quoted as saying:

As far as we know they have gone only—he was referring to the notices of increase—to people who are in receipt of full economic incomes. If any tenant feels he has any particular social problem he should contact the trust, which always handles these rents individually.

The inference I drew from the discussion was that the trust would not only handle them individually but would treat them all sympathetically. But what has happened? These matters have been referred to the Housing Trust, and a number of people in my district have complained to me that they

have not received sympathetic consideration from the trust. The following examples have been typical: the first concerns a lady (and I think in fairness that I should not mention names, although Mr. Ramsay knows the people to whom I am referring because, at his request, I went and spent an hour with him and landed a parking sticker into the bargain), who is a civilian widow pensioner with one son who has just started his apprenticeship. On her behalf I wrote to the General Manager of the trust pointing out that her rent was to be increased in accordance with the notice she had received from \$4 to \$5 a week as from Saturday, April 19, and I asked that he give sympathetic consideration to withdrawing the notice. The sympathetic consideration to withdrawing the notice was a simple "No". The increase still stood, but the trust was very magnanimous in its attitude, saying, "We will apply only half of the increase at this stage and the remaining half in six months' time." It must break the trust's heart to be so kind to these people.

Mr. Broomhill: It was only a 20 per cent increase, though!

Mr. VIRGO: Yes, a mere 20 per cent increase, but what have the pensioners had? This Government is so hungry that it will not even leave the pensioners alone. The people living next door, both the husband and wife on the bare pension, have had their rent increased from \$4 to \$5 a week. What happened when they went to Mr. Ramsay? The same old story. The pensioners had an increase in their pensions of \$1 a week—why should the Housing Trust not take the lot? That is what the Minister is saying, backed up by Ramsay. This is one way in which the Government builds up its revenue: it takes money from the pensioners. This is the value of being in the family.

Mr. Broomhill: The happy family!

Mr. VIRGO: Yes, the happy family. "You will get a better deal if you vote Liberal," Mr. Gorton said in February, 1968. He also said, "You will get more money." The Government is trying to get it from the pensioners.

Mr. Lawn: They claim that they represent all sections of the community.

Mr. VIRGO: Yes, and they exploit all sections of the community, and they take the kids, the old and the sick into it just the same.

Mr. McKee: And the mentally ill.

Mr. VIRGO: I also cite the case of another lady with whom I had discussions at her request when she, too, was unable to get anywhere. She is a widow who has raised six children.

Mr. Rodda: You are somewhat of a trick.

Mr. VIRGO: If the member for Victoria had put six good Australians into this country I would not mind if he slung off, but I want him to stand up and criticize the Government as he has been requested to do by the people on whose behalf he presented a petition in this House yesterday. He has the chance to show whether he is genuine or whether he is here as a sham and a seat warmer, as some of his colleagues are. This lady has raised these six children, and the two who are at home are both of school-going age: one is 14 years of age and attends the local technical high school; the other, a boy, is nine years of age and attends primary school. The lady applied for the withdrawal of the notice to increase her rent, and this is the reply she received:

Although on the stated income you do not qualify for a reduced rent—

I do not know what sort of table the trust uses—

the trust has agreed to reduce your rent—

this is the humour in it—

for six months to enable you to adjust your household budget.

First, the trust has not reduced the rent: all it has done is to follow the same hackneyed pattern of saying, "We will apply only half the increase for six months, and then the balance." It calls this a reduction.

Mr. Lawn: They are not living as well as they did with Labor.

Mr. VIRGO: That is right. The greatest insult that can be levelled is this letter telling a widow pensioner with two schoolchildren to adjust her household budget. I suggest to the Minister of Housing and other members of the Government that they should try to raise two children at school on a pension for just a fortnight and see how they would get on. If they did that they would see the stupidity of such a statement. It is an affront to a person in the low-wage income bracket to be told to adjust her household budget.

Mr. McKee: They suggest that she and the children should eat less.

Mr. VIRGO: Presumably that is the only way they can save money.

The Hon. R. R. Loveday: You must remember that this comes from the expert on economics and management.

Mr. VIRGO: If this is the man who is attempting to promote industrial activity in this State and he thinks this way, then God help industrial activity. Not being satisfied with the attitude, which I can only describe as the grossest arrogance possible, I wrote to the Minister on May 5 lodging the strongest protest at his authorizing the trust to allow these increases, particularly in relation to pensioners. It was a month before a reply came from the Minister, although in the meantime I had received a telephone call from a junior officer of the Housing Trust who told me that Mr. Ramsay had had my letter forwarded to him by the Minister and who asked me whether I would be good enough to come and see Mr. Ramsay so that he could explain some of the workings to me. This is when I got my parking sticker, which did not make me happy. I had a long discussion with Mr. Ramsay, who showed me how the rent increases had applied and how some had been reduced, and so on. However whatever was said and whatever is done, the hard, cold facts are that this Government has viciously increased rents for pensioners.

Mr. Broomhill: After this friendly talk did you get anything?

Mr. VIRGO: A month later I received from from the Minister a letter as follows:

I referred your letter to the General Manager of the trust who has now advised me that he has had discussions on the various complaints that you made. I assume from his report to me that you are now aware of the effort that the trust has made and is making in a genuine effort to treat its tenants fairly and sympathetically.

I am not aware of any such attempt: the Housing Trust is not attempting to treat its tenants fairly and sympathetically, nor is the Minister. He is hiding behind the trust and, in all seriousness, I suggest that he is not carrying out the function that he should as Minister of Housing. He is not administering the Housing Trust: the Housing Trust is administering him.

Turning from Housing Trust rents to departmental rents, I refer to the increase in rents applied, with the authority of the Government, to railway cottages. At this stage these increases apply to the metropolitan area; I understand that increases for country areas have been deferred pending further consideration and possibly to try to gauge the reaction if country rents are increased.

Last week's incident would have provided the Government with its answer. Although it only rated a minor report in the newspaper,

there was a strike in the South Australian Railways over this question of increasing rents. The Minister of Roads and Transport and the Premier intervened, and it is to their credit that they instructed the Railways Commissioner to refund the money that he had illegally taken from workers' pay by way of the rent increases, and as a result the trains resumed running. If the Government wants a strike on its hands, and if it wants the transport of this State tied up, it should go ahead and increase the rents to be paid by railway workers, because that is just what it will get. This is the frame of mind that railway workers are in at present.

Many unsavoury aspects are associated with this question. I refer to what occurred at Long Gully, where there are three railway cottages. Long Gully is a pleasure resort, and apart from the three railwaymen I do not think anyone else lives there. The houses these people are required to occupy are more than 50 years old, and one of them is a wood and iron converted barracks and not a house. The condition of these houses can only be described as substandard. Whilst I cannot substantiate the report on these houses, I know the person who gave it to me as a man for whose integrity I have the highest regard, and I am certain that it would be an accurate report. I know that many hundreds of railway cottages are below substandard condition, and were it not for the fact that they were owned by the Government the local council would condemn them as unfit for human habitation.

Mr. Langley: They would have a sticker on their door.

Mr. VIRGO: That is correct, but because the Government owns these houses it gets away with it. They do not even have reticulated water, and the occupants rely on rain water and water that they have to pump out of the ground. Even members opposite on their farms in various locations are not affected in this primitive way, yet these are the houses that the Railways Commissioner forces the workers to occupy. No choice is allowed: they are forced to occupy them as part and parcel of their jobs. Many efforts have been made to improve the standard of these houses, but to no avail. So that members will know what is being inflicted on these people, I quote the following information: in one of the cottages the rent has increased from \$6.60 to \$11.40, an increase of \$4.80; in the second it has increased from \$5.10 to \$9.60, an increase

of \$4.50; and in the third case it has increased from \$5.16 to \$10.60, an increase of \$5.44. This is an increase of more than 100 per cent for a substandard house.

However, when this matter was raised by these men through their union, and the union contacted the Railways Commissioner, he scrubbed them off completely. On June 3 the Railways Commissioner was telephoned and asked to receive representation to discuss the question of increased rents at Long Gully. The Commissioner's reply was, "The question of increased rents is entirely out of my hands", yet in a letter that the Premier wrote to the Grades and Labor Council he implied that the various bodies associated with Government-owned houses were capable of negotiation ("The Public Service Board will consider departmental or personal submissions made to it before June 20 in relation to any particular houses, and any variations will be made with retrospective effect as from June 2"). He also said that in regard to Housing Trust homes the same thing applied.

I understand that, when asked whether this applied to other houses such as those of railway employees, the Premier said, "Yes, it applies to all Government homes." But when the Railways Union, on behalf of its members, went to the Railways Commissioner, he said, "It has nothing to do with me." The net result of this was that I telephoned the Minister of Roads and Transport, and within 24 hours I had a deputation before him. The whole thing is completely unsatisfactory. Not the least unsatisfactory aspect of this matter is the method of application. When these rent increases were announced, a statement was made that, where the base rate of a person whose rent had been increased was \$45 a week or less, the increase would be applied in annual amounts of 50c until the whole increase had been absorbed.

This is a rather interesting position. What is the base rate of a person in this regard? When we examine the \$45, we find that a number of people receive a sum close to this; for instance, a traffic pointsman is on \$42.40; a porter in charge is on \$42.45 (and there are plenty of those around); a signalman, class 3, is on \$44; and a signalman, class 2, is on \$42, and so on. But the dishonest application of this has been in relation to the wording. Let us remember that the decision given was that the rent for these employees whose base rate was \$45 or less would be increased by 50c, etc. The base rate relates to the sum paid under the terms of the award, so

what right has the Railways Commissioner (I might add, with the authority of the Minister) to add to this base rate the service pay that was given to the employees concerned? Service pay has nothing to do with their base rate or with the award: it was a payment in acknowledgment of their service to this State that was given by the Labor Government. If the Hall Government had the courage of its convictions it would take off this payment, but it has not got the guts to do so.

Mr. Lawn: It is taking it back another way.

Mr. VIRGO: Yes, this Government is grabbing that payment by means of rental increases, and this involves not only the Minister of Housing and the Minister of Roads and Transport but probably most, if not all, of the Ministers. I wrote to the Minister of Education only a few days ago concerning a vicious increase in rents charged the caretaker of the Bedford Park Teachers College, who is forced to live on the job in a particular house and to work seven days a week for a lousy salary. As an appreciation of the services rendered by these people, the Government increases their rents! I know the Government is money hungry and has applied taxation in every possible field but, when it gets down to taxing, by way of increased rents, those people who are forced to live in the houses provided, many of which are substandard (and when it applies these increases to pensioners and the like), I think this Government has hit an all-time low. It is scraping the bottom of the barrel and it has lost all sense of decency to society. I believe that the Minister of Housing, at least, should explain to this House why he has not uttered one word in public to justify his action in allowing the Housing Trust to increase rents.

Mr. CORCORAN (Millicent): I wish to add a few remarks to what has already been said by the member for Edwardstown, and I do so in the form of making an appeal to the Government concerning rental increases, particularly those that have been made in respect of departmental houses throughout the State, more particularly those in my district. I refer, of course, in the main to the township of Mount Burr, where most of the houses in question are situated. Members will recall that I presented a petition to the House yesterday from residents of both Mount Burr and Millicent, 241 signatures being those of people living in Mount Burr, and 12 being those of people living in Millicent. A much lower number is involved for Millicent, purely

and simply because there are not many departmental houses in that town. However, there are many more in Mount Burr, because this is a Government town which is run by the Woods and Forests Department and inhabited in the main by employees of that department.

I am led to believe that the increases have come about as a result of a review made by the Housing Trust of rents that are applied to departmental houses throughout the State. I question, first of all, the method of inspection that was applied by the officers responsible for the survey that was conducted, particularly at Mount Burr. I have been reliably informed that in many cases the officers concerned did not, in fact, enter the houses to inspect their amenities or to examine their state of maintenance or their general condition. That is my first point; I think it should be looked at.

The second is the amenities that exist in these houses, and particularly those at Mount Burr. In some cases, they were built 30 years ago, and in other cases as recently as only five years ago, so they vary in age but not in style. Consistently, there are not the amenities in them that we would expect for the rent paid. In some instances (and, possibly, these are outstanding) not even a hand basin is provided; yet there have been increases in rent for those houses. We know that the average rental increase varies from \$3 downwards, and the average at Mount Burr is \$1.50 a week for each householder. I maintain that the residents at Mount Burr are more concerned about the injustice of this action than about the amount involved.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson: What are they being asked to pay now?

Mr. CORCORAN: The rent has been increased in some cases to \$7.50 or \$8 from about \$6, which is a fairly large increase for people living close to the minimum wage. Not much overtime is worked at Mount Burr. There are other disadvantages in living there: for instance, the added expense of providing their amenities. In many cases, on their own initiative and at their own expense, people have installed electric appliances. Normally, there are only wood stoves, open fireplaces and chip heaters. Apart from the inconvenience and the dirt that occurs from the burning of wood in open fireplaces and chip heaters and the inefficiency of those things compared with electrical appliances, there is the smoke problem. The internal appearance of the house suffers, which has the most depressing effect on people living in them,

because there has never been in the past (and I do not expect there will be in the future) sufficient paint made available often enough for them to redecorate or renovate the insides of their homes.

This may be a small thing but it is annoying: in no house in Mount Burr except those recently built are there any switches of the modern type. They are pull switches. The Minister will appreciate the difficulty of getting up in the middle of the night, wanting to go outside and not being able to locate the pull switch. The cord swings from one side to another, which is most annoying. This demonstrates the type of facility that exists in these houses.

Of course, there is not hot water. I mentioned a chip heater. The fires must burn continuously in the summer-time to provide hot water for the houses. There is no complaint about the timber frame houses being dry. The people there have no problem such as the people at Millicent have because of the Mount Gambier stone. The rooms are not very big, however. There are some large families at Mount Burr, and they have been included in this increase in rent. I could mention some specific cases but will not do so now because I hope that the Minister, having reconsidered the matter, will visit Mount Burr, Nangwarry and similar places to see for himself the conditions there and the difficulties facing the people living in those houses. I hope he will agree that the rent increases in those cases are not justified. He will see that some stone chimneys, which must have been falling away from the houses, have been jacked up and propped. That is not so in every case but it is so in some cases, and this must cause difficulties for the tenants.

Complaints are made from time to time but, because the maintenance staff has been reduced by one-third, the department does not seem able to cope with all the complaints received. No doubt, there are many of them because the condition of the houses is not good. In fact, in some cases I have been told how bad it is. In one instance a house that is 30 years old is occupied by a tenant who has been there for 13 years and, on his own calculations, not mine, he estimates he has paid some \$5,000 in rent for a house that possibly cost about \$640 originally. In some instances, the houses were much cheaper than that. These are the sorts of things that are irritating the residents at Mount Burr in particular at the moment.

I hope the appeal I make to the Minister, which is genuine, will influence him to reconsider the matter. I should like him, first, to remove this added burden by cancelling or deferring these rent increases until he can visit the area and see the position for himself. If he is responsible for all these rent increases (and I take it he is, or at least he would have a big say in the matter) I ask him to come to Mount Burr and other similar places to examine the situation for himself and see whether or not the things I am telling him are true.

I have mentioned the disadvantages for people living at Mount Burr. For instance, they must travel seven to eight miles to Millicent, involving a return journey of 14 to 16 miles. They must make that journey for almost everything except general groceries and bread, which they can get in the town. But, for the services of a doctor, they must go to Millicent. There is no regular bus service. A bus goes through three days a week to Mount Gambier and it is almost imperative for people there to own a motor car which, in many cases, they cannot afford. They get into debt to buy a motor car so that they can exist in a reasonable way.

In some cases the employees of the mill at Mount Burr are forced to live at Mount Burr because of the nature of their work. They are required to be on call. They were told when employed that this was a condition of their employment. I know of one person who wanted to live in Millicent and to purchase a house there some years ago but, because of the nature of his job, he had to live at Mount Burr. He is a house-proud person and he has spent up to \$200 of his own money to improve the bathroom alone, to make the house reasonably satisfying to live in. This person suffers the disadvantage that, if he moves to Millicent, he will have to pay a much higher price for a house now than he would have paid when he was first employed at Mount Burr. Also to be considered is the rent he has paid over the years for the use of the place in which he is living.

I am told (and this can be checked by the Minister) that money that has been made available for housing maintenance has not always been used for that purpose. At Nangwarry, a fair amount of it has been used recently to build a swimming pool. I do not dispute that the people at Nangwarry need a swimming pool (it is a most desirable facility for a town of this nature) but I express

alarm at the fact that money has been used (I am told reliably it has been, and the Minister can check on this) for these purposes when it should have been used on housing maintenance. It could possibly be claimed that one reason why the rent increases were deemed necessary was the increase in expenditure on housing maintenance.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson: How do you arrive at that conclusion?

Mr. CORCORAN: I would not know; I will leave it to the Minister to find out. I am saying that this has been reliably told me. I cannot check it but, if the Minister will consider that point, I think he will find it is possibly correct. I have not heard of these things happening at Mount Burr. I do not argue about money being provided for a facility there. However, this money should not have been provided at the expense of the maintenance of the houses people have to live in. Having had a number of letters, I know that the Woods and Forests Department, other departments and the Public Service Commissioner will have been inundated with letters from all over the State complaining against this increase. I have received a letter from Noolook Forest, which is situated between Robe and Kingston, the people who live there being virtually isolated. As some of the comments made by the writer are worth noting, I will read the letter, which is as follows:

We have been paying \$4.46 a week for our departmental dwellings. As from today, June 2, we are to be burdened by an increase of \$1.84 a week rent which brings our rent up to \$6.30 a week which in our opinion is quite excessive for what we receive as amenities. I will list some of the shortcomings of our dwellings. We only have a limited supply of power, our power coming from a 240-volt power plant, which is run three days a week for a four-hour period. In these times our wives are expected to do washing and ironing, my own wife with three children, one a baby, and the other people have four children. We have power of an evening from 5 p.m. until 11.30 p.m.; therefore we can only use a kerosene refrigerator, which costs a further 70c a week. We have no showers in either dwelling. In the kitchen we have ordinary wood stoves, not slow combustion, our only means of hot water being from a wood-burning copper and chip heater. We live 12 miles from Kingston, our nearest shopping centre.

I can bear out the fact that there are no shopping facilities at Noolook. The letter continues:

A Government vehicle is used once a week for the ration run, which is quite inadequate, which means any further goods we may require means a special trip to town, which places an extra cost on us. Any interior painting we are obliged to do ourselves, the department supplying the white paint. We have to furnish our own tinters. My septic tank is 13ft. from our back door on the surface of the ground and in the summer-time the stench is quite unbearable.

Of course, this problem does not exist at Mount Burr, where sewerage is installed. From this the Minister can get some idea of the difficulties experienced by these tenants, and such difficulties are fairly common. As I have said recently, the tenants should be paid to live in many of the houses at Mount Burr. An article in the *Public Service Review*, the magazine of the Public Service Association, is relevant and states:

It should not be the province of the Government to make a profit on rents charged to public servants, having regard to the special relationship of landlord and tenant. The purpose of the Government providing a Government house is obviously two-fold: (a) as a condition of employment for a particular job, or (b) to provide attraction for country-based positions.

To attract people to take employment in the Mount Burr area, it was always made known that houses with cheap power and cheap water were available. This was an incentive for people to go there. In fact, not so many years ago people did not pay anything for power or water, but now they pay the same rates for both as obtain in other parts of the district. Of course, rates may be slightly different from those in the metropolitan area and other country areas. These people pay the same rate for electricity and fairly steep rates for water. Where excess water is used a charge is made, unless a good excuse can be provided.

Residents of Mount Burr have formed a committee, which has spoken to me on their behalf. The committee was the instigator of the petitions introduced in this place by me and also by the members for Victoria and Mount Gambier in relation to which the committee co-operated with other committees in Nangwarry and Mount Gambier. The members of the committee are responsible people, not the sort who would look for something for nothing. They are genuinely concerned with the injustice of the matter rather than with any hardship it will cause. In some cases hardship will be caused because, as the Minister knows, families of this type cannot readily find \$1.50, \$1.80 or, in some cases,

\$2.20 without noticing it, and they have to adjust to allow for it. The Public Service Board issued a circular stating that if people wished to object to the rents they were free to do so. On behalf of the residents of Mount Burr, the committee to which I have referred has written to the Chairman of the board stating:

In response to your notice of May 22 we wish to advise that all the members of this community protest the increase in rental of departmental houses on the following grounds:

- (1) The houses are, in general, sub-standard and lacking in amenities (no hot water, wood stoves in most houses, pull cord light switches, etc.; there are some houses which have combined bathroom and laundry where a copper is the only means of heating water and hot water must be carried by bucket from copper to bath).
- (2) Some are in a state of disrepair.
- (3) As far as can be ascertained, there has been no physical inspection of these houses, so we can only assume that rents have been set at an over-estimated book value.
- (4) Mount Burr is at a distance from shopping centres (seven miles to Millicent and 32 miles to Mount Gambier) which causes inconvenience and necessitates the expense of running a personal vehicle as there is no public transport. Doctors must be visited in Millicent as the charges for a home visit are prohibitive (\$6 travelling plus \$3 consultation).

There is some desolation in this area. It has never been a pleasant area to live in because the workers work, live and play together. At times the atmosphere is not all it could be because of a lack of diversity of interest. This is something they have to put up with. Many people have lived there for years, and a number of the people affected are pensioners. Where I have been approached by pensioners I have raised their cases individually, hoping they will be given express consideration.

My main reason for speaking today is to draw to the Minister's attention the general unrest and dissatisfaction with the decision, not so much regarding the extra cost but more with regard to what they consider to be an injustice, because they do not believe in their hearts and minds that the houses are worth the additional rent. They have asked me specifically to raise the matter and to invite the Minister to visit the houses in the area to judge for himself whether the rent increases are justified.

Mr. Lawn: They have asked you to report back.

Mr. CORCORAN: Yes, and naturally I will do so. They are good people, and I hope the member for Victoria (Mr. Rodda), who has had a similar experience because Nangwarry is in his district, will support the things I am saying. I think this matter goes a little deeper than most things. Although this will cause hardship in certain cases, I am also concerned about the injustice. I am not trying to make anything out of this other than to obtain a correct decision for these people. I hope that the Minister will freeze this matter for the time being and, after he has looked at the houses, I hope he will think as I do and reconsider his decision.

Mr. JENNINGS (Enfield): I will confine my remarks mostly to Housing Trust rental houses, so many of which are in my district. If I may be presumptuous enough to say so, I believe that the great majority of the houses most affected are the semi-detached trust rental houses which are, of course, among the oldest existing in the State today. Many pensioners occupy them; I will deal with this matter latter.

First, I refer to a letter sent out by the General Manager of the Housing Trust. It was addressed to all tenants, the halt, the lame, the blind and so on, irrespective of the fact that we know the Housing Trust has an up-to-date record of its tenants. It has a Gestapo system that enables it to tell anyone anything about any of its tenants at any time. Instead of sending the letter to the people who might have been concerned, it sent it to everyone, and then put in a proviso that, if a tenant's position was of a certain nature, he could appeal. The letter is as follows:

Substantial increases in maintenance costs, rates, taxes and other charges have occurred since you occupied your house; because of this, and to be fair to those paying a much higher rent than you for similar accommodation in order to pay for some of these charges, it has been decided to take the step of increasing some rents. The new rentals to apply are lower than those being paid by new tenants and should not impose any hardship upon the average tenant. It is appreciated—

here is the so-called escape clause—

that, in some cases, an unusual circumstance may exist and, if this applies in your case, you should bring this to the attention of the trust immediately.

This letter informed a man that his rent would be \$5 a week from April 19, 1969. The man has stated the amount of his previous rental; the increase is 25 per cent, which, I humbly submit, is a considerable increase.

Mr. Broomhill: A savage increase.

Mr. JENNINGS: In a moment I will quote what a certain gentleman said about a savage increase when increased rents were imposed by the Labor Government; he is sitting on the front bench on the other side. There is one peculiar thing in these letters. As we know, the last session ended on February 20. It would seem to me, to a Sherlock Holmes, a Perry Mason or anyone of that nature that the letter was ready to be sent out as soon as Parliament adjourned, because the date was stamped on the letter; it was March 24, 1969.

Mr. Broomhill: The Government hoped that we would forget about it.

Mr. JENNINGS: Yes, I think that was a sanguine hope; we do not forget so easily, and I had no chance of forgetting because I was besieged day and night by people complaining about these increases. On September 14, 1965, a member of the then Opposition, who was an aspirant for Cabinet rank, dealt with Housing Trust rents. He aspired so well that he is now a member of the Cabinet, and may I say that, whilst I think he is a shockingly bad Minister, he is nevertheless the best Minister on the other side. I am referring to the Hon. J. W. H. Coumbe. He asked the following question:

As sweeping and very steep increases in Housing Trust rentals have been announced in today's *News*, can the Premier explain the justification for these extremely savage increases, some of which are as high as 10s. a week? Can he justify this further slugging of the workers . . .

One would think that it was Karl Marx himself! The honourable gentleman continued:

. . . especially in view of a move last year by the former Opposition to reduce rentals on railway cottages?

I find it very peculiar that any member on the other side, except for the most base political reasons, should be interested in the workers of South Australia and in the slugging of them. The member on the other side was doing this purely to deceive people, purely to get votes by deceit, purely to get votes at any price. Then, when members on the other side became the Government, they themselves found it necessary, in view of this State's economy, to impose the most savage increases on the workers and on everyone else in the State. The increases were far greater than any that the Labor Government was responsible for. This is one of the things that the present Government stands condemned for, and we must remember that it is a minority Government propped in power by a so-called Independent Speaker. Sometimes he can justify his rulings by referring, or getting the

Clerk to refer, to Erskine May, or something like that, but if that contains nothing relevant to the matter he just says, "The Ayes have it," or, "The Noes have it," irrespective of the issue involved, as long as the Government votes "Aye" or "No". I think he is the most biased Speaker that this Parliament has ever known. I think he is a disgrace to this House. It is all right to say that we must respect the Chair. I respect the Chair. I think it is a good mahogany or oak chair, or whatever it is, but I do not respect the occupant of the Chair.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will take his seat. Under the Standing Orders, no honourable member can reflect on the Chair. The honourable member is distinctly out of order, and he should know that. The honourable member also knows that I did not make the Standing Orders: they were made by this Parliament.

Mr. JENNINGS: As I said, I was reflecting not on the Chair but on the occupant of the Chair.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is not allowed to reflect on the occupant of the Chair, either. I ask the honourable member to restrain himself.

Mr. JENNINGS: Very well, Sir, but, Mr. Speaker, if there is anybody in the sphere of Parliament in South Australia who has brought discredit to the Chair, it is not I: it is the occupant of the Chair himself.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot allow that remark. I ask the honourable member to withdraw it. Will the honourable member please withdraw the remark?

Mr. JENNINGS: Yes, Sir, I will withdraw it because I have a few other things to say. I refer, Sir, to the letter from the Housing Trust to all of its tenants—the illiterate, the frightened, aged, and the people who considered that they had lived in a house for so long that, if they approached the trust with some complaint, they would be likely to be victimized and this would prevent them from approaching the trust with their complaint about the increase in rent. I consider that, in many cases, it is not true to say that the trust would victimize them. It would not bother to do that, because the first part of the letter deals with maintenance costs and, in most cases, the trust does not do any maintenance, anyway. I will read to the House a few relevant letters. One states:

Please find enclosed answer received by me after applying for a reduced rental on my home.

This letter from the trust was roneoed, but had the date typed in. The letter I have been reading continues:

I am receiving a widow's pension for myself and a teenage 14-year-old son. We are the only two people living here now, as the older children are married. I have been renting this house for over 19 years and I think that, in the circumstances, my application should receive some consideration.

Her application was refused and she asks quite properly, I suggest, if a person receiving a widow's pension cannot qualify for reduced rent, how much lower on the income scale one has to be before one can expect a reduction. Another letter states:

As we are amongst the houses gone up, we do know our rent is good, but not so long ago we got a letter very plainly pointing out that the rise was as high as the places were allowed to go up. Since we have been in this House we have had necessary repairs all other householders come up against. My husband keeps the garden very tidy and at times we have vegetables to go on the table. When we arrived here we bought our own stove, a Simpson Dudley. Just recently they put in another one owned by the Housing Trust. Also, we had had a gas copper put in and a gas bath heater and troughs. We paid for these through the trust and have the receipts for same. The toilet pan and tank are very nice, and the old one was cracked. When I first came here the rental was 17s. a week. One tenant added up receipts for \$2,000 and these houses were built for \$1,800 a pair, so that in itself covered the pair of cottages for quite a few years' repairs, don't you admit? This amount, added together, would be \$4,000 a pair then. They are now \$5 a week. We know this is good but it would incur great strain on pensioners, as the rise they did get did not cover this, too, as well, as food prices and fares have risen.

Of course, this is the position to which the member for West Torrens (Mr. Broomhill) referred: that so many of these people are pensioners. Another letter states:

I received a letter at the end of March from the Housing Trust informing me that my rent was going to be increased from \$4.70 to \$6 a week. The following day I went in to see them and filled in a pink form for a reduction of rent, as I could not afford the increase. On Tuesday, April 15 (this week), I went to pay the rent at the Gilbert Street branch. Today I was told that they may consider my paying half the increase, say, for six months, then gradually increase it.

The trust actually is telling her to adjust her income so that at the end of the six months she will have to pay the full increase.

Mr. Lawn: But she must reduce her living standards.

Mr. JENNINGS: Of course, because that is the only way she can do it: how can she

increase her emoluments? She can reduce her living standard for six months, adapt herself to that, and then pay the full increase. I cannot think of words to describe this situation other than by using those that are violently unparliamentary.

Mr. Lawn: Would that worry you?

Mr. JENNINGS: No, but I want to finish what I started to say. Another letter I have states:

I am putting pen to paper *re* our rise in rent, as we live in a Housing Trust house. Now, the wife and I had an interview with a tenancy officer, and it went something like this—"Where could you get a house for \$6 a week?" and she said this in not a very nice manner.

This is when they were appealing. The letter continues that this man told her he was a T.P.I. pensioner, and she said, "So what!" She was not interested in the fact that this man had been totally and permanently incapacitated in the service of his country. The letter continues:

She said, "If you don't want to pay it you can get out."

He then puts in brackets, after this statement, the words "nice lady?". Again, I would not describe her in that way, but perhaps the female of the canine species would be the best way to describe that lady. The letter continues:

We have lived in this house for the past 20 years and in that time it has been done out inside twice and painted outside three times. So I suppose we will have to pay up and shut up.

I have a typed letter from a man whom I know well, and it states:

Further to my telephone conversation with you in relation to the proposed increase in rental by the Housing Trust, I am forwarding you this brochure for your perusal and investigation. The weekly rental on this type of house is \$4 and the circular from Mr. Ramsay indicates a 25 per cent increase. It appears a very appropriate time for Mr. Ramsay to introduce this increase.

As this was just after Parliament had adjourned, I think that this man can be congratulated on his political perspicacity. I know this man well and he keeps his house in an impeccable condition. He has a good garden and has laid concrete paths and things like that, because he told me that if he had to live in the place he wanted the circumstances under which he lived to be as good as they possibly could be, and that if the Housing Trust would not do any maintenance then he would do it himself, and he does it.

Strangely enough, this gentleman rang me today and said that after meeting the increases he had applied for a new stove, because the stove he had was unsatisfactory. He had written two years previously to the General Manager of the trust and nothing had transpired but, having telephoned the trust on this occasion, he said an officer came out and had a look at the stove, tried it out, and said, "Oh, well, I can tell you that that stove is finished." That is what the inspector said. That was last week, and today another inspector from the Housing Trust turned up. That is why the man telephoned me today, but he found it difficult to contact me. The second inspector said to him, "You will have to persist with that stove", and the tenant said, "Well, I'll tell you what the other inspector said last week", which I took to mean that he was condemning the stove, and then he said, "What do I have to do? Does my wife have to keep on using this stove which the inspector last week condemned?" The officer replied, "Yes; what do you think it would cost the Housing Trust if we went around putting new stoves in all of these places?" That is the kind of so-called maintenance that is causing such a tremendous and savage increase in Housing Trust rents.

Mr. Hurst: Are you suggesting that there are too many inspectors and that there is not enough action?

Mr. JENNINGS: There are certainly too many chiefs and no Indians at all, it seems. I have another letter stating:

I was advised by a member of the staff in a very abrupt way that it was planned to renovate it but . . . I was then informed it would be anything up to two years before they got around to remedying it.

Another lady, a pensioner who is 80, and whose husband is also a pensioner, says that she does not get any income except from her pension, and she then adds something which I think is really rather irrelevant and which I can justify only by the fact that the poor old lady is obviously upset about the whole situation: the post script to her letter states, "Now, the fridge has blown up, and the budgie has died." I do not know what that has to do with the general situation, but I can imagine how she feels in the circumstances. No doubt she loved the budgie more than she would love Mr. Ramsay. I also have a letter signed by 41 people which states:

We the undersigned, who live in the Housing Trust rental area at Blair Athol, would like you to know some of the conditions of the homes we live in. Most have resided

here for at least 16 years and during that time have had the homes painted only once inside. We have done them ourselves during the years at considerable expense. Repeated requests for new stoves have been ignored. The ones we were originally given were rejects from the Gas Company, bought by the Government and installed in these homes. There is one case where an oven door has been tied on with string by the occupier, yet these very stoves now have been converted ready for natural gas.

That indicates that the people concerned will not receive new stoves for a long time. The letter continues:

One or two people have been fortunate to have installed new stoves, but only because the original ones literally fell to pieces. The same thing applies to the cisterns in the toilets: some have had them changed over to modern push-button cisterns; others have had to make do with the antiquated ones that have to be flushed three or four times after every use. A few homes have also had hot water services put right through and, although the rents have gone up in these homes to \$8 a week, we think we have been in these homes long enough to warrant an improvement at the trust's expense and not our own. They have put our rents up to defray the cost of maintenance, which is ludicrous, as the amount of maintenance done in these homes amounts practically to nothing.

I could go on and on listing the defects in these homes, which we have paid for over the years—ill-fitting doors and windows that have to be seen to be believed. We will leave it at that and hope you can get something done for the people whom it would seem the Government has forgotten about.

I am hopeful that the remarks I have made will not fall on deaf ears, and I certainly hope that the action that we want will be taken by the Minister of Housing. We hope that the plea not to "slug the workers" that was made so eloquently, if also brutally, by the member for Torrens, now the Minister of Works, will be belatedly acted on. Many of the people concerned obtained their houses at a time when building materials were under control in this State. I remember this period, because that control existed when I was trying to get materials to build a house for myself. I was apparently more persistent than most people, because I obtained sufficient materials to build a house.

Mr. Clark: That was luck.

Mr. JENNINGS: It was more good luck than anything else. These people wanted to build houses of their own but did not have the opportunity to do so because they could not get the materials, which were controlled. So they went into Housing Trust rental houses and have lived in them ever since. They have paid for them over and over again. They

maintain them mostly themselves, and now after 20-odd years, when it is impossible for them to branch out and get other houses, they are just slugged (to use the eloquent and elegant expression of the present Minister of Works) by not the Government but the Housing Trust—which, of course, does the dirty work for the Government. And this organization is under the control of the man who is doing this work on a part-time basis and who is also our Director of Industrial Development, as we were told earlier today in another debate. I hope that you yourself, Mr. Speaker, from the depths of your humanity and your compassion, which is so well-known to all of us in this House, will lend your great influence to help our case in this matter.

Mrs. BYRNE (Barossa): I, too, have been asked by constituents in my electoral district who occupy Government-owned houses and who are employed by the Government, to protest against the rent increases. These people have received correspondence, usually from the departments for which they work, part of which states that advice has been received from the Chairman of the Public Service Board that the rental of departmental houses has been reviewed, but for this to take place approval must have been given by Cabinet.

I understand that the average rent increase in the State is 25 per cent, but there are some houses the rent of which has been increased by over 100 per cent. In the Barossa electoral district I have not come across any houses where the rent increase has exceeded 100 per cent, but I did receive correspondence, in the form of a petition signed by nine wives of staff members at the Roseworthy Agricultural College, which stated that the rent increases ranged from \$1 a week up to \$4 a week, which represents a 26.5 per cent rise for the older-type houses and a 68.6 per cent rise for the newer-type houses. The correspondents further state that it is felt that this is totally unjust when the circumstances prevailing regarding the employment of their husbands are taken into consideration.

I also received correspondence from another constituent whose husband is a member of the staff of the Roseworthy Agricultural College. It states that obvious anomalies exist in the rentals charged for different houses: for example, identical or near-identical houses are charged different rentals. There is also an obvious anomaly between houses such as the one occupied by this person writing to me, a resident of a Housing Trust house built 14

years ago, with an iron roof, no insulation and no hot water service. However, it is mentioned that this is now being attended to. This person is concerned that, once this is done, the rent will rise again. I ask the Minister to consider such cases. I trust that no increase in rent will occur if people's houses are improved because, as stated by previous speakers, many of these Government-owned houses have needed attention for years. However, nothing has been done and naturally the people who live in them are concerned that, if those houses are improved, the rent will be increased again, on top of the present rent increase.

This correspondent further states that at the time the house was occupied it was necessary to hire from the Electricity Trust a hot water heater to be placed in the kitchen, and this is still in operation. Many of these items are, of course, provided in the newer houses. The laundry is fitted with a concrete trough, not stainless steel as in the more recently built houses; the back entrance has no protection whatsoever against the elements; the back screen door has been blown off its hinges many times, yet the writer is charged \$9 a week rental while the tenants of the newer houses, which are provided with many more facilities and amenities, are charged very little more than that.

This is one aspect that the Minister could look into. Also, I have other constituents affected who are employees of the Government and who occupy houses at the South Para, Barossa and Warren reservoirs. They are employees of the Engineering and Water Supply Department. It is necessary for most of these employees, who are reservoir keepers, to work seven days a week; they are on call 24 hours a day and are not allowed to leave the district without permission. Of course, to obtain this employment it is necessary for them to live in these houses. I inspected them and found that one of them was about 80 years old. It was of stone construction; the sitting room wall was damp. It was a very large house, previously occupied by two families; it had four bedrooms. It was in reasonable condition, mainly because of the efforts of the person occupying it.

The point is that the employee has to pay increased rent for this house but he does not require such a large dwelling, although he is forced to live in it. I also inspected the house at the Barossa reservoir, which I found was a stone house, damp, and built in 1901.

Very few improvements had been effected to it since then. I understand it will now receive some attention but, again, I trust the rent will not be increased. Overall, I found that few repairs have been made to these five houses over the years, and three of them were erected as temporary dwellings. Some of the amenities are privately owned and some of the houses have been improved at the expense of the occupier for his own comfort. Of course, the houses are painted by the occupants, the paint being supplied by the department. Sometimes this work is done in the department's time and sometimes it is not. Some of the facilities, such as chip heaters, wood coppers, wood stoves and toilets, are outmoded.

I understand the board has stated that the assessment has been made by the Housing Trust based on general increases since 1962 in rent on trust properties, less a 20 per cent concession for the employer-employee relationship of occupancy. Therefore, these rent increases are obviously based on an economic valuation. Also, the Government is obviously increasing rents to raise revenue whereas, as the member for Millicent said, the reason for the State Government's supplying these houses to its employees was certainly not for that purpose. It is a condition of employment for people employed at Roseworthy Agricultural College and by the Engineering and Water Supply Department at its reservoirs that they live in these houses. Another reason why the Government provides the houses is to attract and induce people to live in the country. As some of the rents were initially at a low level, this was once an inducement, but of course the rent is not an inducement now. As the member for Enfield said, in many cases these Government houses have been paid for over and over again. I admit there is some advantage in living in Government owned houses but there are also many disadvantages of which the Minister should be aware. No selection of design and style is available because the house is just allocated to the occupant and that is all there is to it. In some cases, when people who have lived in a house for 20 years or more retire, they must leave, and they probably buy a house. Of course they have no equity in the house for which they have paid rent over all that period, and they have spent their own money on improvements.

These dwellings are situated in typically rural environments where the occupants must suffer the discomforts of flies, dust and so on. As has been said, the occupants must live in such places, so they have no alternative but to put

up with the discomforts. As previous speakers have said, most occupants have complained about repairs and routine maintenance being delayed for years, thus causing inconvenience and discomfort. In some cases, in desperation the occupant is finally forced to appeal to his member of Parliament to get something done, but this should not be necessary. In one house inspected by me an electrical fitting had to be installed for a light in a shed. Although the job would not have taken more than five minutes, it had waited for more than six months for someone to come and do it.

One of the disadvantages at the Roseworthy Agricultural College is that transport is essential to do shopping and business transactions, as the major shopping centre is from seven to eight and a half miles away. Considerable travelling is also necessary for children to be able to attend secondary school and to take part in sporting activities at school and socially. Some members of the staff of the college find it necessary to have their houses open at any reasonable time to students who request extra-curricular tuition. Of course, not all people living in State Government houses would be affected in this way. Also, extra expense is incurred as staff members are expected to participate in the social activities in which the college is engaged. I am sure that if the Minister examined the increases in rents on these houses throughout the State he would find that fewer than half of them were justified.

In any case, the Opposition does not want to see a repetition of this. I believe some machinery should be set up so that individual grievances can be examined, for it is essential that Government employees should be happy in their employment, and in these circumstances some of them are not happy. A rents tribunal could be set up to make recommendations to the board. Of course, I know that it is desirable that the Minister should look at some of these houses, whereupon he would know that what Opposition members have said is correct. Further, the fact that some of the employees who have to occupy these houses also have to work seven days a week should be considered. I ask the Minister again to reconsider the matter. These rent increases must have been approved by Cabinet and him. Perhaps he would consider freezing the whole matter until some machinery could be set up whereby individual grievances could be examined. I am sure that if this were done fewer than half of the rent increases throughout the State would be imposed.

Mr. BURDON (Mount Gambier): I join other Opposition speakers in supporting what has been said about increased rents for Government houses. With the member for Millicent, I appeal to the Minister to have a good look at this matter before anything further is done. I have lived in these Government houses, so I know the circumstances in which these people live.

Over 25 years ago I told the Woods and Forests Department that I considered that the establishment of Mount Burr and the establishment of the township of Nangwarry were mistakes, and I still believe that they were mistakes. Of course, sawmills are necessary and have proved vitally important to South Australia. I told two former officers, who have now retired from the Woods and Forests Department, that I considered that the establishment of the township of Nangwarry was a mistake. The sawmill should have been established near Penola. The establishment of the Mount Burr enterprise was a mistake: it should have been established near Millicent. There already existed in Millicent and Penola amenities and community activities in which these people could take part immediately.

The two mistakes to which I have referred have created big problems over the years for the Government and the Woods and Forests Department, because it is absolutely necessary to provide all the services at Government expense to try to make life bearable and interesting for the occupants of the houses.

Mr. Jennings: Do you want to go back 20 years ?

Mr. BURDON: No, but I am happy to say that, when the Government and the Woods and Forests Department saw fit in the early 1950's to establish another sawmill in the South-East, one gentleman who has now retired from the Woods and Forests Department remembered what I had said some years earlier. He took me on an inspection of an area that now has the largest sawmill in Australia; he said, "This is where we propose to establish the State sawmill in Mount Gambier, and we will not go outside. So, what you said a few years ago will be taken into account." This has contributed greatly to the development of Mount Gambier.

We all know that during the 1950's the establishment of this mill in conjunction with the Electricity Trust, and the development of Softwood Products Proprietary Limited has

caused Mount Gambier to grow to its present extent. What has this to do with rentals? Many of these houses are 30 years old. One of the contractors, who is now living in semi-retirement in Mount Gambier, built some of these houses at a contract price of about \$104 in 1936; the same point applies to the houses built at Nangwarry between 1939 and 1945 (a few houses have been built in later years). The amenities of these houses, compared with today's standards, are, to say the least, fairly primitive. There are primitive facilities not only in the houses at Mount Burr and Nangwarry but also in those at Mount Gambier forest, Myora forest and Caroline forest.

In order to persuade the Minister to consider withholding the rental increases, I offer to show him the conditions of some of the houses where these people live. They are required to live on the job because of the nature of their work. Consequently, they must live seven or eight miles from the township. In my days at Mount Burr and Nangwarry a cheap rental was regarded as an incentive to persuade a person to work in these industries. In this case it is vitally necessary for the Woods and Forests Department to have on hand people for various activities such as fire prevention during the summer. Fire prevention measures must be maintained at full pitch, and people must be on call to deal with any fires that occur. In the South-East there is a fairly good mobile fire-prevention system that has greatly contributed to the protection of our forests and the surrounding farmlands.

As a result of these rental increases there is not much incentive left to this type of person to remain out near the forests. Such a person could just as well go into the town where his wife would have better facilities. His children could go to school more easily: they would not have to be conveyed a distance of from three to 10 miles to school. I appeal to the Minister to seriously consider the pleas made by the member for Millicent (Mr. Corcoran) and me about these people who have been affected by the recent increases. I was very pleased that the member for Victoria (Mr. Rodda) presented a petition to Parliament on behalf of these people. It showed that these people had approached him and that he had done the job requested of him. I hope that he may be able to speak in this debate in the same terms as those in which two other members from the area have spoken today. These people have a very good case for reconsideration of the position created by these rental increases.

[*Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.*]

Mr. BURDON: This afternoon I mentioned a period of 25 years, and I wish to have that corrected in *Hansard*. I should have referred to a period of 30 years. I want to tell the Minister of Housing that I include in my earlier reference to forest reserves the public servants employed by the Woods and Forests Department and living in Mount Gambier. I am interested in Mount Gambier and in the forest reserves surrounding the city. I see that at present the Minister is speaking to his Party Whip, so I shall wait a moment.

The SPEAKER: Order! Will the Parliamentary Under Secretary please take his seat?

Mr. BURDON: As I did not want to interrupt the discussion by the Whip and the Treasurer of what was obviously serious business of State, I remained silent. However, as I admire the Treasurer and Minister of Housing as being a clean-shaven gentleman, not one of these outlandish types that we are hearing so much about at present, I was rather surprised to see in the current issue of the *Public Service Review* a photograph of him that does not completely fall in line with his present appearance. That has nothing to do with house rents, but the situation probably would be improved if he gave the Public Service Association a current photograph. I plead with the Minister to consider the matters that have been raised by the member for Millicent (Mr. Corcoran) and me regarding the people to whom I have referred. I can do no more than place their case in the Minister's hands.

Mr. McKEE (Port Pirie): I, like other members on this side, register my protest at the steep increases in the rentals of departmental and trust houses. I have had many letters, telephone calls, and personal approaches from people in my district who are extremely disturbed by the increases. Many people, particularly widows, age and invalid pensioners, deserted wives, and wage-earners, consider that they are unable to continue to meet this rent obligation. I think every member appreciates that low wage-earners in the Government departments are already struggling to make ends meet and are entitled to be concerned about this impost. Therefore, I appeal to the Minister to reconsider many of the increases.

As the member for Millicent has said, many houses of the older type, particularly those occupied by railway workers and other departmental officers, are practically substandard, and little has been done to improve them.

In my district the trust houses of the older type have no facilities inside the house. The toilet system is far away in the back yard, and the laundry facilities consist of old troughs and wood coppers. The general condition of the houses should have been considered when the rents were being reviewed. Many railway houses in the Mid North and as far away as Cockburn have been built for up to 70 years, and probably cost about \$600 or \$800 to build. It is unreasonable for a landlord (and the Government is the landlord in this instance) to try to exact exorbitant rents for such houses, without effecting improvements. These houses have been paid for many times. I have seen many houses as far north as Cockburn that are not fitted with screen doors, the occupants having to hang strips of cloth on the doors.

It would have been desirable for the Minister to inspect some of the houses before the rents were increased. If he had seen the condition of many of them, he would have had second thoughts about recommending these increases. The Minister will probably say that our Government called for the review of the rents and that he has acted on our recommendation. True, we called for the review, but we did not impose the increases and I am sure that we would not have recommended many of them. Petitions have been presented to the House yesterday and today by members on both sides, and the Government members concerned will doubtless have to speak on behalf of their electors, who are justifiably protesting against these increases. The member for Edwardstown (Mr. Virgo) this afternoon read a letter in which the trust stated that it would reduce the increase by half for six months to give one woman time to adjust her budget.

Mr. Lawn: In other words, she had to reduce her standard of living within six months.

Mr. McKEE: In effect, he said, "We will give you a period of six months to get your stomach used to absorbing a certain quantity of food." He more or less told this woman that she would have to stop eating, or at least one of the children would have to stop eating. We get to this situation as a result of the actions of this Government, which is in a responsible position and which claims to be a responsible Government. We have an officer of this department who occupies more than one position, and possibly this state of affairs has arisen because he has too many jobs and is relying on too many other people to help him out. I think it might be a good idea if this

person confined his duties to coping with the housing situation in South Australia.

Regarding the problem of the Housing Trust today, there are many people in this State who are unhappy not only about rents but about the trust's building programme, which they consider needs to be looked into. I think it is appalling when a man or a Government writes to a woman and tells her to adjust her budget when that woman is on a pension. It is unbelievable.

Mr. Hurst: It's up to the Commonwealth Government to increase the pension, isn't it?

Mr. McKEE: Yes. We have the present Commonwealth member for Grey (Mr. Jessop) out vote-catching at the moment. He has just made a statement in which he said he was seeking a better deal for pensioners.

Mr. Casey: He has done nothing since he has been in Parliament?

Mr. McKEE: Not a thing. An article I have here from the *Recorder* of June 11 this year states that Mr. D. S. Jessop seeks a better deal for pensioners. It goes on to say:

Although liberalisation of the means test would greatly assist a large proportion of the community, it would do nothing to assist those living at or near the poverty level. This was one of the findings disclosed by Mr. D. S. Jessop in a comprehensive survey of pensioner needs in the electorate of Grey.

He admits that the pensioners are living at or near poverty level, and as a Commonwealth member of Parliament he should be in a position to know the situation the pensioners are in today. Anyhow, he has come up with this statement.

Mr. Casey: What has he done about it?

Mr. McKEE: Not a thing. He has not made any protest to the Premier here. He has not said, "Look, Mr. Premier, as a Commonwealth member I am in a position to know the financial circumstances of these people and I suggest that you don't increase their rents; for goodness sake don't do it, Mr. Premier." If he is fair dinkum, that is what he should say. The report goes on to say that as a result of a survey Mr. Jessop has just taken in the electorate of Grey he has found that many people, including pensioners and deserted wives, are living at poverty level. I have nothing to hide, Mr. Speaker, unlike the Government here, and I have a document that I am prepared to table, because it has been given to the press. Mr. Jessop is vote-seeking, and good luck to him, but he is not going to win as a result of it because

he should have also alerted the Premier of this State to the fact that these people are living at poverty level.

I am sure that the Minister of Housing (Hon. G. G. Pearson) is a reasonable man, and I think that if Mr. Jessop had approached him he might have said, "Well, perhaps we ought to have another look at it." I have already referred to Mr. Jessop. I am sure that even Andrew T. Jones, in his light-hearted way, does not have much concern for the pensioners. He, too, has been vote-spinning off them. In my opinion, there is nothing worse than a person going out and trying to make capital out of people who are in bad circumstances. This is a very low type of politics.

Mr. Casey: This is what the Communists do.

Mr. McKEE: Fascists! Like everyone else, I know that a Government must get money, but a Government should take it from people who can afford to give it. This Government has already put imposts on people in mental institutions I do not think there is anyone that this Government has not touched; it has even upset its own clan as a result of its receipts duty legislation.

Mr. Rodda: Pay your debts.

Mr. McKEE: That's a good one. Pay your debts, indeed! We did have the driest year on record, and we took over the emptiest Treasury that has ever existed, but we still kept the cost of living down in this State. I am sure that the member for Stirling (Mr. McAnaney) is dipping deeper into his pocket to live today than ever before. Everyone today is complaining about the high cost of living in this State, because the Government has wiped out price control and rent control. The Housing Trust is not able to build houses quickly enough to accommodate the people, who are being exploited by landlords. I know of cases in my district where people are renting galvanized iron houses that have leaking roofs, as a result of which the tenants have to put saucepans and buckets all over the floor. Those people are paying from \$14 to \$16 a week for such houses, and because there is no rent control and no protection whatever there is nowhere they can go to get protection.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know why you are looking at me; you have not assisted them much, either. This is the situation today regarding rents and the lack of protection for people in this State. I only wish that we could have an election tomorrow: we would find a different situation prevailing.

Mr. Edwards: Why? You would fleece them more.

Mr. McKEE: I think the best thing the member for Eyre can do is keep out of this issue, for I might be able to upset him and I do not want to do that. I feel in a rather placid and pacifist mood tonight, and I do not want to have an argument with the honourable member. Petitions have been presented in this House, indicating that the people are concerned (and rightly so) because they really do not know how they are going to make ends meet. Where are we going when we have a responsible officer telling a pensioner to adjust her budget and giving her six months in which to do it? There are several cases like this, and I think it is time the Government decided to have another look at this matter, because its present action is unreasonable. I am sure that if the Minister of Housing took a couple of days off to have a look around some of the areas in which rents are being increased, he would have second thoughts about the subject.

Mr. CASEY (Frome): I did not think that within the short period of seven years I would again be debating this measure in this Chamber against a Liberal Government. The three occasions on which rents have been increased in this State have all occurred through the actions of a Liberal Government. In 1962, when the Playford Government was in power, we saw an increase in the rent of Government houses. On that occasion we voiced our opinion very strongly, and as a result Sir Thomas Playford had another look at the situation and instead of imposing an increase of \$3 he decided to raise rents as a \$1 increase over the three-year period. I do not think that he was justified even in raising the rents to the level he did.

Just prior to the Labor Government's taking office in 1965 we saw an unusual event in this State. On that occasion the General Manager of the Housing Trust (Mr. Ramsay) made an announcement informing the people living in Government houses that their rents would be increased.

Mr. Broomhill: Was Parliament in session at the time?

Mr. CASEY: No, strangely enough! The whole point is that the Government was not even consulted, and an increase in rents of this nature was unprecedented, in my opinion, throughout the Commonwealth. It was only through swift action on the part of the Labor Government at the time that the measure was not implemented. We now find that, for the

third time in seven years, a Liberal Government has decided to try to increase rents.

Mr. Broomhill: Once again, whilst the House was not in session!

Mr. CASEY: That is right. I suggest that Government members make it their business to go into some of the areas and visit people affected by this rent increase. I think the way in which these rents are being increased, without a proper assessment of the housing position being made, is absolutely ridiculous. Most of the Government houses in my district were constructed much longer than 40 years ago and, as has been said previously, they have been paid for over and over again. However, the strange part about it is that if a railway employee is given a house in a railway town and wishes to add an extra amenity, he has to pay extra. An extra power point in a railway house, for example, means that the occupier has to pay an extra 5c a week rent, and if, with the size of a family increasing, a sleepout is needed, that costs over \$2 a week in addition to the basic rent already being paid. The Government now wants to increase the rent further. Just where will it finish?

Mr. Venning: It's all calculated first.

Mr. CASEY: But not properly; many of these houses have not been examined properly. Let the member for Rocky River inspect some of the houses concerned in my district and see what rental the occupiers are paying at present. The position is absolutely ridiculous. Some of the railway houses in the metropolitan area are an absolute disgrace to the South Australian Railways. Some of them are empty, and no-one but railway employees can occupy them, even though other people require housing. Indeed, others should be allowed to occupy the houses in question in order to make them livable, for when they are unoccupied the houses deteriorate rapidly through the effects of termites and vandalism. It is a shocking state of affairs to have houses empty and dilapidated, and this is the opinion of people in this State who know something about housing.

Many of the houses concerned in country areas have not been painted for years and have no sink in the kitchen. Much of the minor maintenance work on railway houses is carried out by the tenants themselves, even though they are not supposed to undertake this work but are supposed to apply to the works foreman's office and to requisition for whatever improvements are needed. Several years ago, machinery was taken from the

works foreman's office at Peterborough and sent to Islington, and yet that machinery was necessary to carry out certain repair work on houses in the huge Peterborough Division, which takes in houses as far north as Quorn, as far south as Terowie, as far west as Port Pirie, and as far east as Cockburn.

The works foreman was told at the time that he would have to wait until there were some broken doors or windows that could be sent down in bulk to Islington to be repaired and then returned to Peterborough. What a ridiculous situation! What is a person supposed to do if a door, which breaks off its hinges and has to be repaired, must be sent to Adelaide only if and when there are other doors or windows requiring repairs? Tenants have been facing these problems for years, and yet this Government has seen fit to impose unwarranted increases. Of course, I have heard Government members in the past say that it is cheaper for some of these people to live in the country than in the city. In fact, the previous Liberal Government had the audacity to apply to the court to have the country wage decreased in comparison with the city wage, because it was said to be cheaper to live in the country, as people could go out and shoot their own meat (rabbits, etc.) and could obtain wood from friendly farmers.

That was one of the most stupid things ever put up by any Government, yet that was the nature of the submission to the court. I had thought that there would at least be some semblance of sanity on the part of this Government and that it was aware of the problems of country people. It is absolutely disgusting to think that the Government has seen fit to obtain more revenue in this way in order to balance the Budget, a thing which it says is so vital to this State but which really is complete nonsense: Sir Thomas Playford, as Treasurer, allowed a deficit to exist for years, and no-one said anything about it. We know that there must be a deficit in times when the economy needs a little stimulus, but this is another move by the Government to increase revenue so that we shall be able to see in big headlines "Liberal Government Balances Budget."

Mr. McKee: At the expense of the worker!

Mr. CASEY: That is correct. It is at the expense of the working people of this State who, unfortunately, provide the impetus in any economic situation, because they spend all their wages. They have to, and that is what keeps money in circulation. It is not the big people who create stimulus in the

economy. If we have a work force fully employed, we have a better economic position for the State than without full employment. That is only natural because there is more money in circulation, and it comes into circulation because the wage earner spends his money. He has to do so because he does not get much. I firmly believe in that theory.

Here, we have an example of people who, in some cases (and I could take members to many places where this happens) are on the border line—not pensioners, as mentioned by the member for Port Pirie, but working people getting not much above the minimum wage, who are occupying Government houses and have families to educate and clothe. I do not think this has been taken into consideration at all. The Housing Trust made a substantial profit last year. It is in its interests to do so (I do not quibble about that; it is a very good thing) but it just goes to show that the state of the trust's economy is buoyant. If it is buoyant, why increase rents further? What is the object of creating more profits for the Housing Trust—so that it can build more houses? We see what the Treasurer has done in this matter: he has curtailed the amount of money available to the Housing Trust for building houses in this State. He did that last year and we complained bitterly about it.

I do not see that there is any justification at this stage for rents being increased to the extent they have been. I should like to see the reports of the assessors who have been appointed by the Housing Trust to go into some of these country dwellings owned by the South Australian Railways, and also some of its metropolitan dwellings, to see how they assess the situation, because I maintain from my own personal experience over the years with railway cottages that those people are already paying sufficient rent considering the conditions under which they live. I was pleased to hear the member for Millicent (Mr. Corcoran) invite the Minister of Housing to inspect the Government-owned houses in his area. I hope he does inspect them and that he will come up to my area, although I do not suppose he can go all over the State.

Mr. McKee: What about Naracoorte; shouldn't he inspect the position there?

Mr. CASEY: We will let the member for Victoria (Mr. Rodda) speak on behalf of Naracoorte. I am sure he has inspected

these houses and made his own assessment of them. I am sure he would not be prepared to live in some of them and pay the rental that the people living in them are being asked to pay.

I am disappointed that this Government should raise revenue in this way. It is only a revenue-raising device that it has used on this occasion. I see no justification for it and I hope the Minister will look again at the situation, because it will create a problem for many, though not all, of these people. Most of them will be hit hard by these rent increases. I sincerely hope the Government will reconsider the matter. I know the Minister of Housing is a very fair man and that his constituents think likewise. I have known him for many years and do not think for one moment that he would just sign a docket and say, "Right; raise these rents", without himself having full justification for doing so. Sometimes the Government relies on its officers to go out and merely say, "Yes, this is this and that is that", and then Ministers put their signatures to something about which they know nothing. These increases affect people's livelihood and their future. I hope the Government will re-examine the matter and ascertain whether these rent increases are justified in the circumstances.

Mr. RODDA (Victoria): On behalf of those good people in my electoral district I was pleased to present a petition similar to those presented by the member for Millicent and the member for Mount Gambier yesterday. I have been to Nangwarry since these rent increases were announced. There have been rises there ranging from 40c to \$1.90 a week. The position there is as described by the member for Millicent this afternoon when he was speaking of Mount Burr.

I am sure the Minister is, as the member for Frome said, a fair man, who will send his officers to investigate this matter. Mr. O'Reilly from the Housing Trust visited Nangwarry and other places in the South-East, and these rent increases arose from his visits. It is not the first time I have had something to say about houses: I took this matter up with Mr. Bywaters some three years ago.

Mr. Ryan: He treated you very well.

Mr. RODDA: He did not treat us at all, but I am not blaming him for that. We were talking not about rent increases but about the quality of the houses. Many good people live in Nangwarry who do not support the Party of which the member for Port Pirie is a member. Some anomalies have come out of

these rent increases that affect people who have looked after their houses. In Nangwarry and Mount Burr are people who have taken care of their houses, and when one sees the rents they are to pay one can see that they are being penalized for their initiative. I am sure the Minister will look at this anomaly. It was underlined in the circular issued by the Public Service Board that certain unsatisfactory things would come out of this matter. The people at Nangwarry discussed with me the petition they presented, and I told them that in addition to that they should appeal.

Mr. Langley: And you will support their case?

Mr. RODDA: Yes, most certainly. I am not bringing politics into this matter.

Mr. Lawn: The people of Nangwarry should hear what you have said this evening.

Mr. RODDA: The people of Nangwarry, with other people in the South-East, have nothing to fear from the representation they receive in this place from my two colleagues and me. I was pleased to be associated with the request made by the people at Nangwarry, whom I represent, and I am sure the Minister, who is a fair man (as he was aptly described by the member for Frome), will be pleased to look into the situation, which has been very properly raised in this place.

Mr. RYAN (Port Adelaide): Following the Secretary of State, the member for Victoria—

Mr. Rodda: Who are you—Lord Ryan?

Mr. RYAN: No, I am always prepared to represent the common people. I do not aspire to heights from which the ego can collapse, as happens to some Government members. As he was one of the main spokesmen for the Liberal Party, I should have thought the member for Victoria would speak against this savage increase just as strongly as have Opposition members.

Mr. Clark: He had his tongue in his cheek.

Mr. RYAN: He had two bob each way. He bet that the Government would not do anything and that he could therefore give some support to the people in his district. It was a half-hearted attempt.

Mr. Hurst: He wasn't dinkum.

Mr. RYAN: True, he had his tongue in his cheek. Realizing that some people in his district had made representations because they believed they were being unfairly treated, the honourable member had to make a half-hearted protest on their behalf. However, the protest of Opposition members is not half-hearted.

They are genuine and sincere, and they support the people who made the original protest.

Mr. Nankivell: They were full of abuse.

Mr. RYAN: The abuse I have heard recently has been against the Government. In fact, the terms used by people about the Government would be ruled unparliamentary if repeated in this place. Many residents in my district have approached me about increases in rents charged by the South Australian Housing Trust. With the member for Enfield, I have in my district one of the biggest areas of Housing Trust rental houses.

Mr. Nankivell: Is that why you are here?

Mr. RYAN: One reason I am here is that during the period I have been in this Parliament the rent on Housing Trust houses has increased by more than 100 per cent, and no general increase has been made in rent except under a Liberal Government. The people occupying these houses have not received any corresponding increase in their wages.

Mr. Broomhill: They have paid for most of the houses.

Mr. RYAN: Yes, many times over. I never thought I would receive such pathetic letters and representations as I received during the recent recess complaining about increased rents by the Housing Trust. When the Labor Party was in Government, the Housing Trust tried to increase rents but the Government told it that it had no right to do so and amended the Act so that any alteration in policy had to be approved by the Minister. I do not know whether the present Minister of Housing has any excuse for these increases, but at least he cannot say that he did not know about them, because the Labor Government introduced the amendment to which I have referred to stop any future occurrence of what happened when it was in office. Mention has been made of a Budget deficit, but I would rather have a deficit than slug the people who can ill afford to pay in order to balance the Budget, as the present Government is trying to do.

Mr. Broomhill: Including people at Nangwarry.

Mr. RYAN: Yes. We may have the pleasure of visiting that area soon, and if we do we will be sure to have a copy of *Hansard* available to show the people the representations made on their behalf this evening. Compare the speech of the member for Victoria with that of the member for Millicent, who spoke strongly and sincerely on behalf of the people who were complaining. Such a comparison shows the people of Nangwarry had negligible representations made on their behalf.

Mr. Rodda: You've got the wind up.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Interjections are out of order.

Mr. RYAN: So is the Government. It has been out of order for 18 months; it has no idea of what it is doing, and it blames someone else when something goes wrong. I join other Opposition members in objecting to the timing of these increases. I certainly oppose the increases themselves, but I complain particularly about their timing. On practically every occasion when a Liberal Government has increased rents it has done so when Parliament has been out of session for a long period. It sincerely hopes that the people will forget the increases by the time Parliament meets again and that, therefore, there will be less force in any points raised by the Opposition in regard to the increases.

Much has been said about Government-owned houses. I realize that the Housing Trust is not Government-owned. Consequently, any representations made are not treated in the same way as those made to a Government department. This is why the trust was formed. If one looks at *Hansard*, one can see that the trust was established to supply houses at reasonable rentals that the workers could afford to pay, but the situation has got out of all proportion. As a matter of fact, in my district no trust rental houses have been built for a number of years. On each occasion I sought information from the trust it said that it would not build any more rental houses, so most of the profit and revenue that the trust receives from rental houses is being diverted to houses that are built for sale. Even the situation in regard to houses built for sale has reached the stage where the waiting time is equal to that for rental houses, which has gone beyond the period that an applicant can reasonably wait.

I have complained about the situation in connection with Government-owned houses to the Minister representing the Minister of Roads and Transport and to the Minister of Housing. Although he said he would look into it, nothing has been done. I can show him many houses owned by the South Australian Railways in my district, some of which have been vacant for years and at present it does not appear that they will be occupied for many years. The Railways Department has allocated a few such houses to people who have been transferred from the country to the metropolitan area but they are on a short-term tenancy basis only. At the end of 12 months the tenants are told to leave, only to find that, after they have done so,

the houses have been left unoccupied for many years.

When I have raised this matter previously the Minister of Housing has said that he will look into it. Houses are scarce, and I have suggested that, in relation to those houses which are no longer required and which have been unoccupied for years, an agreement should be reached between the Railways Department and the Housing Trust, and they should be let or sold by the trust. I would prefer that they be let, but the Government sees fit to increase the rent savagely and to lose revenue.

Many houses owned by the South Australian Railways are in the middle of areas mainly occupied by rental houses that have been unoccupied for years. They are costing the Railways Department and the Government many thousands of dollars annually. Furthermore, they have become a fire hazard to the district, and gangs of men have been sent out to clear the weeds and rubbish that have accumulated. The problem of maintenance is very great because, as they have been left unoccupied for so long, vandalism has occurred. The Government could recoup a certain percentage of its present revenue from rents, increases in which are strongly opposed, by allowing people to occupy houses that are at present unoccupied. People have asked me to voice this opinion, with which I thoroughly agree.

The cases mentioned by the member for Port Pirie (Mr. McKee) were not isolated cases. Many people brought me the circular that they had received; it told them that their rentals had been increased on a certain basis and that at the end of six months they would be increased to current rates. In other words, they were told that they had six months in which to adjust themselves. Another point to which many people objected was that the Housing Trust had records of its tenants' financial circumstances, yet when the last increase was inflicted everyone received the notice; it said, "If you are in circumstances that would warrant a further review, please apply to the trust for such review." The trust had records that these people were paying concession rentals; it has been the trust's policy to provide for a concession rental for people whose circumstances do not allow them to pay the current rent. However, despite this the onus of applying for a review was placed on the individual. Many people aged between 70 years and 80 years came to me in distress; they said, "Our rent has gone up. What do

we do about it? We must go to the trust and apply for consideration." They were distressed because they did not know how to apply for a review.

When most cases were presented the tenants' rentals were brought back to the concession that applied prior to the increase, or a slight adjustment was made. In my opinion and in the opinion of the tenants, the trust should have investigated these cases first, instead of placing the people in the position I have described. This concession has operated for years.

I am sorry that the Attorney-General is not here, because the matter I now wish to raise concerns a department under his control. Recently one of my constituents came to see me. She is a married lady who was born in England; I know both her and her husband well. She had not seen her family in England since the Second World War, and at the request of her relatives in England she decided to go home and see her mother and brothers and sisters, possibly for the last time. She has three sons, the youngest being 12 years of age.

She applied for a passport for the youngest son in order that he could go with her so that she could supervise his educational progress, and she was told that she would have to obtain a copy of the child's birth certificate. She wrote to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages on two occasions but did not receive a reply on either occasion. Realizing that it was essential to get a copy of the birth certificate, she went personally to the Registrar's office. Naturally she did not see the Registrar himself, but she saw one of his officers, and she was told that there was no record of the registration of the birth of her child. She immediately said, "This seems rather strange, because when the child was born in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital on February 21, 1957, I filled in forms, one to register the birth of the child and the other to claim child endowment." The child endowment form was definitely received by the appropriate authority, because child endowment has been paid ever since the birth of the child. However, the woman did not know that the form of registration of birth had not been lodged with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. She was given a form and told to fill it in, and she was also told that the form had to be signed by a justice of the peace and that she would need some verification of the birth of the child.

She went to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and received from a medical officer at that institution a certificate that the male child was born on February 21, 1957. She brought the form to me asking whether I, as a justice of the peace, would sign it, and I did that. While inspecting the form, I noticed an instruction on the back that, if the registration was not done within 42 days of the birth of the child, verification of birth would be required. Further, if it was a later registration (I think three years or four years after birth) the registration would have to be verified by a stipendiary magistrate. Again, if the registration was an even later one (seven years or more after the birth) the registration would have to be verified by a judge of the Supreme Court.

The woman had not known that that instruction was on the form but she filled in the form and I signed it, as a justice of the peace. She took the form to the Registrar's office, where an officer said, "You have to take this to the Supreme Court and get a judge to sign it." She went to the Supreme Court and was told, "You cannot get that done here. You have to go to the Law Society, in Grenfell Street."

Mr. Edwards: What's this got to do with housing?

Mr. Corcoran: The debate does not have to be on rents.

Mr. RYAN: The member for Eyre has at last woken up. The woman, who was rather angry at this stage, went to the Law Society. Her husband was self-employed and she could not receive assistance from the Law Society, anyway, but she did not know that. She went to the society, on the instruction given at the Supreme Court, and explained what was necessary. At the society's office she was told, "This is a long, complicated matter. It is a legal matter and you will have to engage the services of a solicitor so that you can fulfil the requirements to have the registration recorded."

Mr. Lawn: That's the stupidity of the law.

Mr. RYAN: Yes. I am not blaming the Government for this, but I realize that, if I write to the Attorney-General, I will probably have to wait until November 5 for a reply, because the other day I received a reply that referred to a letter I had written in February.

Mr. Lawn: You were lucky to get an answer.

Mr. RYAN: I got an answer, but it said that the matter would be investigated.

Realizing the undue advice that we receive from the supporter of the Government, the member for Ridley (Hon. T. C. Stott), if I wanted to raise the matter in the House by way of a question, I would never get the opportunity to bring it up. Other people may be in circumstances similar to those experienced by this woman, and the procedure should be adjusted. I regret that the Attorney-General is not in the House. At least, what I have said will be recorded in *Hansard* and, when I get the proof tomorrow, I shall be able to ask the Attorney-General whether, if I supply him with the particulars, he will have the matter rectified.

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide): My remarks will be directed to a matter entirely different from the one that has occupied the attention of the House for about two hours. Since becoming a member of this place, I have heard many members complaining about the way in which the Law Society treats poor and needy persons who apply to the society for legal assistance. They are subjected to a means test and, if the society considers that they meet the requirements of that test, they are allocated a solicitor to act on their behalf and then, in many instances, these solicitors charge for their work, although the applicants have met the requirements of the Law Society regarding the means test. The amounts charged have not been great in the cases of which I have heard in the past. However, people concerned have complained to me about the amounts which they have been asked to pay and which they did not think they should have to pay, but they have not asked me to take the matter further, but I am raising one case now because the Government subsidizes the Law Society to enable it to give legal assistance.

Mr. Ryan: Which they don't get.

Mr. LAWN: The people do not get the assistance, as I will show clearly. This is not only a matter of complaint against the Law Society: my complaint is also against the solicitors who act for it in these cases, and I am asking the Government to give redress to my constituent in this particular case. I want a refund of the amount charged and I ask the Government to consider seriously adopting some other form of legal assistance for the poor.

The Hon. Robin Millhouse: Have you anything in mind?

Mr. LAWN: Yes, the setting up of a legal office, a Public Solicitor.

Mr. Ryan: Like they have in other States.

Mr. LAWN: New South Wales has a Public Solicitor's Office, and the solicitors in that office give the legal assistance required. In my opinion, the service should be free. I received a letter on or about March 31 last. I say that because this lady called at Parliament House a day or two before she saw me, and she had a letter dated March 31 already completed. The letter states:

I consulted the Law Society of South Australia Incorporated in October, 1967, seeking legal assistance.

At this stage I do not intend to mention the names of the two solicitors involved but, if I do not get satisfaction promptly (and although my letter to the Attorney-General was sent while he was overseas, the Minister of Lands was acting for him)—

The Hon. Robin Millhouse: Is this the matter you raised with me yesterday?

Mr. LAWN: Yes.

The Hon. Robin Millhouse: I have the file. There was no time during Question Time today to deal with it.

Mr. LAWN: I looked in my letter box to see whether there was any reply to my letter, but apparently the Attorney-General has it with him. At this stage I will not mention the solicitors' names, but I want satisfaction and, if I do not get it, I will refer to their names and deal with the matter in further detail in the Address in Reply debate. The letter to me goes on:

I was assigned to a solicitor, who acted for me until June, 1968 when I was re-assigned to another solicitor who, I believe, was instructed to act for me by the Law Society and complete the proceedings for dissolution of marriage which were instituted by my former solicitor. In the month of June, 1968, this second solicitor filed a supplementary petition on my behalf alleging my husband had been guilty of desertion. I also enclose a copy of a search of the Supreme Court file, which reveals that no pleadings have been filed in my matter or no attempt made to complete the matter since June, 1968. In the month of February, 1969, I complained to my second solicitor that there had been a considerable delay in the matter and wanted a reason for the delay. I then received a letter from the Law Society stating that this solicitor had reported the completion of the matter and asking that her costs be certified at \$100, which were subsequently certified.

I have complained to the Law Society that this solicitor did little or nothing in this matter and certainly did not earn \$100, but they have refused to acknowledge my letters or give an explanation for certifying these costs. This solicitor will not hand my file to me until I pay the \$100. I do not have \$100. I am in receipt of a pension and have no assets other

than personal effects. My husband is a wealthy man. I need assistance, and as the Law Society will not help me I am hoping that you will be able to help me and get some satisfaction from the Law Society. I allege that the solicitor has been guilty of negligence in that she has obviously neglected my matter as the search from the Supreme Court file will show. As I was assigned to a solicitor there are no court disbursements so I cannot understand how this solicitor could justify the \$100 for work done. I believe the solicitor has filed one document at the court which I believe would involve no more than \$10 solicitor's work. I desire that this matter be fully investigated and that the solicitor be made to tax her bill of costs at the Supreme Court to certify the amount that is payable, if any. In any event I was assigned under the Poor Persons Legal Assistance Scheme.

I think I should read the letter I wrote to the Acting Attorney-General—actually I addressed it to the Attorney-General—to explain this matter further and save my going over other matters. My letter to the Attorney-General, dated April 2, is as follows:

Please find enclosed copy of letter received this morning from one of my constituents. In addition to the facts contained in the letter—I might add that by this time I had discussed the matter with my constituent personally and had obtained other facts and information from her that she did not put in her first letter that I read to the House—

my constituent advises me that originally the solicitor had her case for six months before leaving for overseas and charged my constituent \$132 for doing nothing. Her affairs were then taken over by a second solicitor who still has not finalized the matter and apparently wants \$100. I believe both solicitors advised my constituent that the divorce proceedings would not take very long but it looks as though investigation into this matter will show there is a racket going on as we members are led to believe that poor persons can obtain legal assistance free through approaching the Law Society. This is not the first occasion where I have had destitute persons approach me advising that solicitors allocated by the Law Society want payment which these people are unable to afford. I trust that you will investigate this matter and advise why the solicitor should expect the \$132 when the matter had to be taken over by another solicitor and why it is that the second solicitor wants \$100 when she is acting through the Law Society. It would also be appreciated if you could advise as to how much longer my constituent has to wait before obtaining her divorce.

My constituent advised me when she interviewed me here that the first solicitor who handled the case on behalf of the Law Society said, "This will not take very long, only a couple of months." Six months later the solicitor wanted to go on a world trip and she

said to my constituent, "You owe me \$132." My constituent did not have \$132, and in order to raise the money she sold a sewing machine. Let us imagine a woman living on her own (I do not know her age, but she would be a middle-aged woman); this woman is a pensioner, and having a sewing machine she could probably knock up a lot of clothes more cheaply than purchasing them in shops. She sold her sewing machine plus a few clothes and raised \$132 and paid the solicitor, hoping the matter would be finalized. That was in June, 1968. Then later on the Law Society assigned another solicitor to complete the job, and this solicitor, after complaints by my constituent, said, "I want \$100." This is the sort of legal aid we are giving to poor people.

Mr. Ryan: This is what the Government is contributing to.

Mr. LAWN: Each year I as a member vote a certain amount to the Law Society in order that that body can give legal assistance to poor people. I say here and now that whether it be a Labor Government or a Liberal Government in power I want to see a system similar to the one operating in New South Wales. I do not know the exact details of that system, but I want a system that follows the same principle. I want to see a public office set up, with a Public Solicitor to act for poor people, instead of our having a continuation of this type of thing.

My constituent worked on her husband's market garden and while doing this work she strained her back and now has to wear a brace. Some argument developed between the husband and the wife and he kicked her off the property. I understand that he had a gun in his hand at the time. She is living in the city of Adelaide, and she decided to take action for divorce, and this is the result. She is a New Australian, and although she speaks fairly good English she cannot read and cannot understand everything that you say to her. I have had her in here and have tried to explain things to her. I sent her a letter telling her that I had written to the Minister and that the matter was being investigated, because that is what I was told in the reply that I received from the Minister's office. I must say that so that the record will show that my letter was not ignored. I received this letter from the Attorney-General's Secretary, dated April 22:

I am directed by the Acting Attorney-General to acknowledge your letter of April 2 concerning your constituent and to inform you that inquiries are being made in the matter.

I advised my constituent by letter that the Attorney-General was having inquiries made

into the matter. My constituent then rang me at home, saying that she did not know what my letter meant about inquiries; she thought that everybody had dumped her and that that was the end of it. I asked her whether she would take my letter to some of her compatriots who could understand English and who could explain to her in her own language what the letter meant. The next thing was that she turned up here and started crying on my shoulder out in the Centre Hall. Unfortunately, I still could not make her understand that the Attorney-General was having inquiries made. She kept saying, "Nobody will help me." She told me again that her husband had kicked her off the property and that he had had a gun in his hand at the time. This woman was in a pitiful condition, and I just had to say to her, "I cannot tell you any more at this stage but I am expecting a letter next week." This was several weeks ago. I am not blaming the Attorney-General because I think the Acting Attorney-General should have finalized this matter.

Mr. McKee: Who was that; the member for Eyre?

Mr. LAWN: No, it was the Minister of Lands (Mr. Brookman). It may be that he left the final decision to the Minister, that he had had inquiries made but did not want to interfere. I do not know whether acting Ministers make decisions or whether they leave a final decision to a Minister when he returns. However, this is an unsatisfactory situation. I am concerned in the main, having raised the matter now with the Attorney-General, with getting the divorce proceedings finalized. It seems that those proceedings may have been finalized but that the solicitor will not finally sign whatever is necessary to be signed in court (I believe there are papers to file in order to finalize everything properly). The solicitor will apparently not sign the relevant documents until she gets her \$100. I find that that is the practice of solicitors. It has been my experience generally, and I notice the Attorney-General nodding, so that may well be the position.

However, the matter is not finalized concerning my constituent, she has not received the divorce, and she has been charged \$132, which I think has been taken off her without just cause. I desire to see that \$132 refunded. The solicitor who acted for my constituent for six months handed over to another solicitor, went overseas for a trip, and received \$132. My constituent had to sell her sewing machine and other effects to raise the necessary money.

This is not a good deal for people who apply to the Law Society for legal aid. If the Attorney-General can assure me that that \$132 will be refunded and the divorce proceedings finalized—

Mr. Jennings: Is it a lady solicitor?

Mr. LAWN: There are two lady solicitors involved.

Mr. Jennings: One of them is well known for this sort of thing?

Mr. LAWN: I understand that this is not the first occasion that this has occurred. Having spoken to honourable members about this matter, I am told that she is well known for this. If my constituent can have the divorce finalized immediately and have the return of her \$132, I will have nothing further to say about this particular matter. However, my attitude has definitely changed in regard to continuing the present practice of Parliament's voting a sum of money to the Law Society so that it may render so-called legal aid to destitute persons.

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE (Attorney-General): I know that the Treasurer is prepared to reply to this debate, but I should like to take just a couple of minutes to reply to some of the matters that have been raised by the member for Adelaide. I do not wish to canvass the wider issue of our system of legal aid: I have made my views clear on that matter before in the House, and the honourable member has made his views clear and has reiterated them tonight.

Mr. McKee: Legal aid doesn't exist.

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: Yes, it does. The member for Adelaide raised this matter with me by way of question yesterday and asked whether I could have some information for him today. I obtained the file this morning and had a look at it. I previously was not aware of the letters which he had written because, as he said, this was done in my absence. I had the file ready to use in answer to a question today but, of course, there was not a very long Question Time, and I have not had a chance to speak to the honourable member about it. But I find that this lady has been a visitor to my office as well as to the House; indeed, she has been a frequent visitor to the Attorney-General's office on the same matter. My Secretary wrote to the Law Society in May, setting out the facts and asking the society to take some action. The society has now requested a member of the Council of the Law Society to look into all the facts as we have them, both from the honourable member and from

the lady herself, as well as from the solicitors who have been successively assigned to her. A letter was written to the honourable member's constituent less than a week ago, telling her of this and giving her the name of the member of the council who has been asked to carry out this investigation.

Mr. Lawn: She'll be on his back now.

The Hon. ROBIN MILLHOUSE: She may be, although it may be that she has not understood the letter, in view of what the honourable member said; I do not know. But the matter has not been lost sight of: the Law Society is acting on it, and I hope that in due course I shall be informed of the result of the inquiry which is being undertaken. I hope, indeed (although I may say that some of the circumstances are rather difficult), that satisfaction will be accorded to her.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN (Leader of the Opposition): I rise to refer to a matter which has received some publicity today: it is one which is, I think, of considerable urgency, namely, the present position in the bread industry. In South Australia for some considerable time there has been a deterioration in the position of controlled trades operating within the metropolitan area, generally because of the increasing mobility of the population. Previously, in early closing provisions and restricted working week provisions, we have been able to draw a reasonably definable line around the metropolitan area and to provide that people within that area shall observe the restricted forms of trading or working hours.

But, now that people are able to move about to the extent that they are, it is difficult to draw a line accurately around the metropolitan area because, every time one tries to do this, people just move a little farther out and go on with the same sort of practices, and others go out there in their motor cars to trade, causing difficulties within the area in which restrictions apply. That there have been some developing difficulties in the bread trade has been obvious for some considerable time, but what precisely was the answer was not clear, other than that we should enforce the law relating to weekend baking.

Weekend baking within the metropolitan area has become rife in the last 12 months or so, and it is now quite obvious, as the Minister himself has said publicly, that there are bakers who prefer to suffer fines rather than forgo the profits which they receive from this particular form of activity. They

are prepared to undertake illegal activity, because it pays them to do so, since the fines that are imposed on them are not so heavy as to deter them, in comparison with the profits they receive. What is more, baking outside the metropolitan area and bringing bread into the metropolitan area has now developed to such an extent that the combination of illegal weekend baking within the metropolitan area and bringing in bread from outside the metropolitan area has grossly affected those particular manufacturers in the metropolitan area who are obeying the law.

At the moment, several bakers in the metropolitan area are baking illegally and selling to delicatessens and milk bars. This has been going on for some time, and prosecutions have been launched from time to time. However, of 23 bakers in the metropolitan area, eight are known to be baking illegally outside the prescribed hours, and five of those eight bakers involved in the trade are members of the Bread Manufacturers Association. They state that they have been forced to bake illegally to preserve their businesses against their competitors who are baking illegally. The position has now arisen that several of the illegal operators are advising shopkeepers whom they have supplied with weekend bread that in future they will get supplies only if they buy all their week-day bread exclusively from those operators.

This means that a delicatessen that has been forced to provide weekend bread, in order to maintain profitability in what is generally an uneconomic industry, is now forced either to fall into line or to face the possibility that a competitor farther down the street will take most of the weekend trade. The situation has rapidly become desperate in recent months. I have found, with the employment of people in this industry in my district, that the operatives in one of the largest metropolitan bakeries are severely affected, and particularly the carters who are on a commission basis. These men who work hard have faced as much as a \$4 a week drop in their returns from bread, simply because of illegal operations going on and taking the trade away from the normal bread deliveries. This situation cannot be allowed to continue. It is not merely that now there is a distressing drift about which it is not clear what sort of action should be taken: unless action is taken urgently in this area right at this time, we are faced with bread manufacturers either

deciding to break the law blatantly, as some have already decided to do, or going out of business.

The Bread Manufacturers of South Australia have put to the Government these recommendations. The first is as follows:

The establishment of an independent authority with power to administer all aspects of the industry and to recommend legislation concerning the industry.

In other words, we are to have, in effect, a licensing and controlling authority in the bread industry, much as there is in the milk industry at the moment. The second recommendation is as follows:

Strict Government administration of the laws relating to weekend baking.

This means that the inspectors must see to it that prosecutions are undertaken on any occasion when it can be discovered that people are weekend baking contrary to the law; and it is obvious from the information given to me that it will not be difficult to catch them. The third recommendation is as follows:

Stricter policing of health, pricing and weight provisions of legislation dealing with bread. It is evident that the illegal bread manufacturers are not sticking to the provisions of health, pricing and weight.

Mr. McAnaney: That has been denied.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: I can give a few cases which, in fact, have come before the court previously where some bread manufacturers have been found guilty of not sticking to the health, pricing and weight provisions.

Mr. McAnaney: These are not the only ones baking outside the hours.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: Oh, no; they are not the only ones—that is true. The Bread Manufacturers of South Australia want those regulations enforced strictly, because there are people who will, under the force of this kind of competition at the moment, try to cut corners. They want the authority to examine and implement, if it is thought desirable after examination, the recommendations of the industry as set out in the Bread Manufacturers of South Australia's letter to the Minister of October 3, 1968. Those recommendations were as follows: that there should be heavier fines for illegal baking on Sundays; that there should be a five-day week with provision for a licensing authority to grant special dispensation in holiday resorts outside the metropolitan area during the periods of great influx of visitors; that there should be no longer than three days without fresh baked bread; that there should be a limit of 30 miles

on the transport of bread for resale from a manufacturer's plant except where a bakery had been purchased by the manufacturer; that there should be an authority to license a manufacturer to sell in an area greater than 30 miles from his plant provided bread was not already available in that area or where the proprietor of an existing bakery decided to sell bread manufactured by another baker rather than produce his own supply; and that there would be a licensing of all bakeries as well as shops selling bread to ensure that health measures were adequate, and legislation to penalize resellers of bread who broke the law. Those are the recommendations that the industry has asked that the licensing authority investigate immediately.

On this side of the House, members are concerned at what is happening both to the employees in the bread industry and to the public. Undoubtedly, if the process which is now rife continues, it will lead to a collapse of the economics of the bread industry as at present stabilized in South Australia and we shall have here ultimately a rise in the price of bread to the public, a reduction in employment in the industry, and conditions in the industry which are wholly unsatisfactory.

The stage has been reached where recently the process I have outlined has gone on very rapidly, and several bread manufacturers as well as the unions have expressed to me the greatest alarm at the present position. I assure the Minister that, if the Government is prepared to take urgent action in this matter, it will be facilitated by members on this side.

The Hon. J. W. H. CUMBE (Minister of Labour and Industry): Let me assure the Leader that the Government and I, as Minister of Labour and Industry, also share the concern he has expressed about this problem. I admit straightaway it is not easy to solve. I have had a series of discussions with both the Bread Manufacturers of South Australia and each of the unions concerned—the Bakers' Union and the Bread Carters' Union—and the consequences the Leader has outlined I appreciate could occur and are occurring at this moment. When this matter was discussed last year and I raised in the House the amending of the Industrial Code in that section of it dealing with the bread industry, I suggested, after discussion with the bodies I have just mentioned, that we introduce an amendment to the penalties prescribed for the illegal baking of bread in the city at week-ends. Hitherto, the penalty had been \$40, which was of course ridiculous because it had remained at that figure for

many years, and it was not the slightest deterrent anyway to those who wished to bake at the weekend and make more money, no matter how many offences they committed, the maximum fine being still only \$40.

The amendment I brought into the House last December provided for a scale of penalties: for the first offence it would be a moderate fine; for the second offence it would be slightly greater, and for the third and subsequent offences it would be fairly severe. For that latter class of offence the maximum fine was \$500. When that was introduced, not one member spoke against it, either in this or in the other House, so I naturally assumed that it had the tacit approval of all members of Parliament. Therefore, until some other views are expressed, I must take that view as being the approval of Parliament. I want to see this scheme given a fair chance to operate.

Let me be the first to admit that I am disappointed at the way in which this has operated. What has happened, of course, is that there have been rather serious delays in the hearings of some cases, a number of which have been adjourned. Most of these cases, as the House will realize, are heard in suburban courts. In my view, the fines imposed are moderate, something I would not have expected to happen. There was a case heard last week where the minimum fine for a second offence was about \$50, and the party concerned was fined \$60, with \$12 costs. I do not want to criticize the court but I was disappointed at the penalty imposed.

I have asked the Attorney-General to see whether there is some way in which these cases can be heard more expeditiously. I hope that future fines will be more realistic. The Department of Labour and Industry inspectors have been instructed (and they are carrying out their duties very well) to inspect bakeries where they suspect that the law is being broken. I might say that this is not a very pleasant task in the early hours of Sunday morning, especially in this weather, and in some cases they can meet a rather hostile reception from an Alsatian dog.

I believe the inspectors from the department have done an excellent job. I can tell members that some bakers now face their fourth and fifth charges that have not been heard yet. Within the last three or four weeks I have met representatives of the Bread Manufacturers of South Australia twice, explaining this point to them. Also, with regard to short weight, the quality of bread and the carrying of bread in unhygienic or unregistered containers as

required under the Health Act, which is administered by the Minister of Health, I have asked the Minister to step up investigations and supervision and to see that these matters are rigidly policed. In addition, where cases of overcharging have occurred I have referred them to the Treasurer and the Prices Commissioner. Usually overcharging occurs in a shop (I cannot say whether it occurs in a bakery).

Mr. McKee: Have there been many cases of light weight?

The Hon. J. W. H. COUMBE: Yes, some short-weight cases have occurred, and some manufacturers and at least one of the unions concerned have privately gone around on the weekend and detected cases of short weighting of bread. They have done this by buying and weighing loaves of bread. I do not think we in this State want to stand for that sort of thing; nor do we want to stand for and accept any deterioration in quality. Those are the steps I have taken. Further, I have told bread manufacturers that I want them to see me early in July when I will review the position after more of these cases have been tried in the courts. As this was the intention of Parliament, I think this system should be given a fair go before we try anything else. The Leader referred to a submission made to me, as Minister, that a bread control be set up to run this industry. Of course, this is not the first occasion on which this submission has been made, as it was made to the Leader's Government some time ago, to the then Chief Secretary (Hon. A. J. Shard). From my understanding of it, Mr. Shard did not accept the proposition as put to him then. I have studied the proposition fairly carefully and it does not meet with my complete acceptance either, but I am prepared to consider whether some compromise can be reached.

In the presence of the bread manufacturers who waited on me I gave Mr. Piper the assurance that I was prepared to review this case again early in July and I invited those present to talk to me on that occasion. I repeat that I am fully aware of the position facing the industry. Of course, it is complicated by the suggestion put by the industry to me and to the Government, as it was put to the previous Government, that there should be no baking of bread anywhere in the State at all on the weekend. This would mean that no freshly baked bread would be available anywhere in South Australia on the weekend except for one or two special places in view

of their remoteness. It appears to me that the public seem to have developed a taste for fresh bread at the weekend. I also believe that perhaps some of this problem may have been inadvertently engendered by the past tactics of some of those in the industry. Regarding illegal baking on the weekend and the breaking of the law, the Government insists that the law be upheld. As I have told the House and Mr. Piper, the matter will be reviewed early in July.

Mr. LANGLEY (Unley): As I have one small and one large bakery in my district, I want to reiterate the words of the Leader concerning this matter. Not only am I concerned about the bread industry and the workers involved in it, but I am also concerned about the treatment received by small shopkeepers during the course of this campaign. I know of several bakeries in the heart of the city that are prepared to defy the law and bake bread on the weekend. The shopkeepers have been told that they will still get bread over weekends two months from now. Therefore, even with the perusal by officers of the department, these people consider they can carry on in any circumstances for another two months. This means they will not be before the court for another two months. I agree with the Minister that some of the shopkeepers who started this practice as a means of getting trade did not consider it would go too far. The publicity given to this matter has meant that they now have to provide the service even though they do not want to do so. In these modern days people are able to put bread in their refrigerators and bread manufacturers are able to pack it so that bread will last over a weekend.

I am sure that some big bread manufacturers have people outside the metropolitan area who can bake on Sunday, and that they could have bread baked now legally. However, these big manufacturers want to make sure that stability in the industry is achieved. Many years ago people had to travel to Hackham to get fresh bread at the weekend, but in these days most people clamour for it as a necessity. A shopkeeper to whom I spoke today was harassed by what was happening: one person was getting bread from the country and he was getting it from the city. He was troubled about what was happening but he was told he would get bread as before for the next couple of months. I hope the position is clarified within two months because I do not think we can continue in the present vein; I am sure the bread industry is being affected to a great extent. If

a poll of bread manufacturers were taken I believe it would be found that they favoured a five-day baking week, but there are always people who will not go along with such an arrangement. If we do not have some clarification soon there will be chaos in the industry and many people's livelihood will be affected. I support what the Leader has said.

Mr. EVANS (Onkaparinga): Complaints today are coming mainly from the big city bakeries. When they started to encroach on country areas a few years ago and put out of business many of the smaller bakeries, they did not realize that they would actually instigate the problem they have today. At one stage there were nine bakeries in my area but today there are only two; one is very close to the city—at Clarendon. Under the definitions laid down in the recent report of the Electoral Commission, this bakery will still be in the country. The baker concerned has stood fast. The big bakeries took over his customers, but he said, "If you do this I will go wholesale." They laughed, but he had enough initiative and courage to go on. He is surviving and baking within the law at weekends; he is observing the health regulations.

If we provide for baking on only five days a week the big city bakeries will crush the country bakers and there will be centralization instead of decentralization. I ask the Minister to consider this matter seriously in order that he does not bring about a city-based monopoly. City bakeries have customers in Hahndorf and they may go to Mount Barker. They go to the Barossa Valley at present and they will go even farther. These big bakeries do not consider the country chap when they encroach on his customers. They are experiencing repercussions now! When we alter the regulations we must ensure that they do not crush country bakers altogether.

Mr. McANANEY (Stirling): I support the member for Onkaparinga very strongly. The same kind of situation has occurred in Victor Harbour. A big Adelaide monopoly carts bread 50 or 60 miles and sells it at city prices. The only way the Victor Harbour baker, who is the biggest employer in Victor Harbour, can stay in business is to sell his bread in the city. Consequently, we must at all costs see that the country bakers are protected and not over-run by a big monopoly. Once a monopoly gets a stronghold, these people will suffer.

The situation that has occurred in Victor Harbour goes against our ideas of decentralization. City bakeries must be selling bread at a price below cost if they cart it 50 miles, assuming the Prices Commissioner has fixed a fair city price. The country bakeries are sending bread to the city to break even with the big monopolies.

Mr. WARDLE (Murray): I want to change the subject from bread (I thought the member for Semaphore took the bun on that issue) to that of the rentals of Government-owned houses.

Mr. Virgo: This subject must be embarrassing to you.

Mr. WARDLE: It was no embarrassment to go to see the conditions of some Railways Department houses in Tailem Bend. I first noticed that some people were disgruntled about this matter when I saw a short television interview in *Today Tonight* or some such programme. I was not requested to make an inspection and I had not received any petitions from these people, but I went to see these houses. I think there are 300 of them in Tailem Bend. I went with a certain gentleman and viewed what he considered to be a cross-section of Railways Department houses. I found only one instance where it was said that the increased rental would be a hardship. I do not believe that these increases were actually known, but it was thought that there would be increases of between 40c and \$1 a week.

These houses were built in the 1920's. They are of solid construction and were built between boards; they are of the poured-concrete type. Most of the occupants were not as concerned as were others about the increase; it appeared that it would be small because the houses were old. What was of most concern was that these houses were not of a certain standard. In several houses the woman of the house had to wash her children in the evening by using a bowl of water on the kitchen table. In the minds of all of us, this is completely out of date. Many of these houses did not have any hand basin in the bathroom, and none had a hot water service.

If the tenants wished to have a light over the front door or the back door they had to apply for one, and this was rated at an extra 5, 6, or 8c a week. This method of rating applies indefinitely; they have to pay in this kind of way for a power point or a light. If a person needs a laundry or a back porch he has to pay at a rate of so many cents a week.

It is essential that more regular inspections of houses be made. I urge the Railways Department to bring these houses up to a good standard. When this is done the rental of \$4.40 a week, which is being required of these people, will not be regarded as excessive, but it would appear from my inspections that the matter is urgent.

Mr. RICHES (Stuart): I draw attention briefly to what I believe is a very important matter and a very important omission from His Excellency's Speech. I refer to the delay in an announcement about the standardizing of the railway gauge between Adelaide and Port Pirie. His Excellency said:

Considerable progress has been made on the rail standardization project between Port Pirie and Cockburn and work has started on the section between Cockburn and Broken Hill. The South Australian Railways will run and operate the railway between the State border and Broken Hill.

There was nothing new in that statement: that situation has been well known to members and to the people of South Australia for a long time, but there was no reference at all to the negotiations taking place in connection with the standardization project I have referred to, which is most important and most urgent. While the present situation exists, it must hamper any move to establish or expand industry in South Australia. From the date of operation of the line through Broken Hill, Adelaide will be the only capital city in Australia to and from which manufactured goods cannot be transported without break of gauge. This has been known to the Government, and the policy that the Government has followed is open to severe criticism.

Members will recall that when this matter was raised last year the policy stated by the Premier was that this line would not be considered in isolation, that it would be considered as far as South Australia was concerned only on condition that the Commonwealth Government agreed to the standardization of every line north of Adelaide over a 5-year programme, with this particular line at the bottom of the priority list. I have objected throughout to that stand. Towards the end of last year the Premier announced that the Commonwealth Government had agreed with the State to engage a firm of consultants to examine the whole situation and report to the respective Governments. We have not heard anything of the progress on that matter since that announcement, and I should like to know whether the consultants have been appointed, who they are, and when the Government

expects that the report will be received. I suggest that South Australia is not pressing this matter vigorously enough and that the whole State stands to lose by the delay.

The standardization of the line between Adelaide and Port Pirie should have come into operation at the same time as the standard gauge link through Broken Hill to Sydney. There is no point in my speaking at great length on this matter at this stage. It is urgent and ought not to be overlooked, and we expect to hear something concrete from the Government soon. I am not convinced that the blame for the delay is not fairly on the shoulders of this Government, which has never come in completely with a request to the Commonwealth that this work be carried out in conjunction with the other standardization proposals. The Government's stand that this work would be impracticable as far as this State is concerned, except at the latter end of the five-year programme, and that the reconstruction of the Adelaide Railway Station, as suggested in the Metropolitan Adelaide Transportation Study Report, would have to be considered in conjunction with the proposals for standardizing this line seems to be tantamount to placing ultimate standardization too far in the future. The Government is not looking at the situation realistically and I forcibly draw the attention of the Government to the criticism to which it is subject on this matter. I ask that, in the interests of the State, this matter be pursued with the utmost vigor.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson having risen:

The SPEAKER: If the Treasurer speaks, he closes the debate.

Mr. Corcoran: How does he close the debate?

The SPEAKER: He moved the motion. Does the member for Millicent apologize?

Mr. Corcoran: I do apologize to the Chair, Mr. Speaker.

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY (Whyalla): I have listened with interest to the points made by members on this side regarding the increase in rents and should like to emphasize that one can only conclude that the matter of rents in respect of Government-owned houses has now become a means of raising revenue and that the increasing of rents has become a taxation measure. I should like to analyse why I hold this opinion. A person who bought a good stone house 30 years ago for about \$1,600 would have been paying at that time about \$2.50 a week to purchase the house

over a period of about 25 years. During that period of purchase, progressively it would become easier for the purchaser to buy that house because of the fall in the value of money. Wages were increasing in that 30 years and the rate of repayment on that house would be going down as the principal was reduced.

Obviously, this condition that I am speaking about applies equally to the houses that the Government built 30, 40 or 50 years ago. I have no doubt that the rents for these houses, when first fixed, were fixed on the basis of cost being liquidated over about 25 years, but it is obvious that the matter of rents is not considered in this way by the Government. In other words, it is not a matter of the houses being paid for over 25 years and then maintained at a low level because the cost of the house and the maintenance thereon had already been liquidated. It is simply regarded, as rents and prices go up elsewhere, as an opportunity to increase those rents to a figure which the market will bear and to which it is politically possible to increase them to.

I think that has been borne out by the general increases that have been effected on the three occasions referred to today. We have had explained circumstances in which pensioners, who are obviously not able to stand increases in rents, have had their rents increased gradually, even to the extent of their being told that they would have the opportunity to adjust their standards of living within six months so that payment of the full increase could be loaded on to them. I think it is clear that the increasing of rents has now become a taxing measure to produce revenue, and it is obvious that, if this money is being raised in this way to bolster up the revenue of the Housing Trust or of the departments concerned so that more houses can be built, the people who rent these houses are paying or helping to pay in large measures for new houses to be built for other people, because they are certainly not paying for the houses they are living in now.

We have heard of many instances of maintenance being delayed or not being carried out properly and we know of many instances of houses in the country, in which people have to live because of their employment, not getting the maintenance they should be getting. We have heard that, when a power point is installed, the rent is increased by 5c a week. The costs of installing a power point is about \$10, so

in four years it will be paid for but, as the tenant or other tenants will live in the house for another 10 years or 15 years, it is obvious that the increased charge becomes a revenue-producing matter. It is not a question of just the bare costs and the maintenance of the article being liquidated over a reasonable period: it is just a case of once it has been paid for then it is a revenue-producing matter.

Let us take the case of a sleepout at \$2 a week. In all probability that would be paid for in four years and thereafter it would be a revenue-producing agent. Surely this is not the way to look at rents. After all, the Housing Trust was instituted to build houses for people in need of them, for people on the lower income rates, and to protect them against higher rents; but we have got out of that viewpoint, and I am sure that we are now viewing this question of rents as a taxation measure.

The present Government has already declined to take advantage of other methods of raising taxation through succession duties, a way which is open to it at any time, and in which it could raise considerable additional sums of money if it only increased the rates to those in the other States. Instead of this, with a taxation measure of this kind it is inflicting heavier imposts on pensioners and people on the lowest rates of wage.

Mr. McKee: You wouldn't expect Government members to touch their own clan, would you?

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: No. What I find so strange in this, too, is that we hear from time to time that in order that our secondary industries may compete effectively in the Eastern States it is essential that in this State we maintain low costs of production. Well, one of the easiest ways to maintain low costs of production is to maintain low rental houses. As we all know, it has been said on many occasions that the rent of a worker's home should never exceed 20 per cent of his income. However, if the present situation was examined, that would not be the case in many instances now as a result of these increases.

In any event, I think this whole position should be examined in view of the aspects I have raised here tonight. We should examine why people who are living in these houses, many of which are substandard and without modern amenities, should be contributing to the purchase and building of houses for other people, because that is obviously what they are doing. They are no longer paying for the houses they are living in; they are revenue

producers for the Government by means of these rent increases.

Mr. Evans: Do you believe that once houses are paid for by rent they should be let rent free?

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: No, I am not suggesting that. However, there is a sensible limit in all these things, and I am pointing out that even if the rents were left where they were these people would still be returning revenue to the Government because these houses were paid for long ago, and so long as the maintenance charges and the rates are covered there is nothing that one could complain about in that regard.

Mr. Casey: We are complaining about the way in which the maintenance is carried out: in many cases there is none at all.

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: In any case, the Minister of Housing will surely take some note of what has been said here this evening, particularly of the impassioned speech by the member for Victoria (Mr. Rodda) on behalf of his constituents in Nangwarry, a speech which roused the House as has never been done before on this very urgent question!

Mr. McKee: It brought tears of blood.

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: I would like to make a few comments regarding education, in view of the Minister's statement yesterday, in regard to a question that she was asked, that there is certainly no crisis in education in South Australia. The Minister will know that I refrained from using the word "crisis" when I was Minister, but only because of the definition that I hold in regard to "crisis". After all, when a patient is in crisis it is a question of whether the patient will start to recover or die, and I do not think education is in that situation.

However, the situation is certainly grave. It is one that has been continuing in a grave condition for a long time and it will obviously continue for a long time in that condition. When we look at what the department has failed to provide in its Estimates—about \$250,000 for the department and another \$250,000 for Miscellaneous—it shows the straits to which the department and the Minister have been put to find enough money to carry out the very minimum of education services, which are so inadequate today in many directions, and then of course when we start talking about whether or not there is a crisis it becomes almost an exercise in semantics, and many people think there is a crisis.

What is so serious in this situation is that, when we were in Government for three years

and I continually referred to the failure of the Commonwealth Government to measure up to its responsibilities and provide more money for education, never once did I get one word of support from the members of the present Government. In fact, all I got was criticism for criticizing the Commonwealth Government, and the member for Mitcham, the present Attorney-General, made sarcastic remarks from time to time about window cleaning at schools; but the present Minister has not been able to clean any windows yet, and I do not blame her, because she cannot afford to spend another \$250,000 on cleaning windows. She has better use for the money, as we did. We do not hear anything from the member for Mitcham now about windows not being cleaned; he has gone dumb.

Mr. Lawn: What about the use of Government cars?

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: What is more, I doubt very much whether the present Minister of Education will have windows cleaned during the life of this Government. When we were in Government we also heard *ad nauseam* about the failure of the Government to find enough money for the university. In fact, I can remember the member for Mitcham saying what a terrible thing it was that there were quotas at the university because the State could not find enough money to match Commonwealth grants. Well, we still have the quotas, but we do not hear a word from the member for Mitcham or anyone else on the Government side about quotas. They are dead silent on quotas today, the same as they are on the cleaning of windows.

Mr. Virgo: They are just dead.

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: They know perfectly well now, if they did not know it then, that the funds available for education cannot be obtained from State revenue. They know that about one-quarter of the State revenues are being used for education, as I repeated *ad nauseam* publicly when we were in office, and that it is unreasonable and impracticable to get more than about one-quarter of the State revenues for that purpose. They know that a vast amount of extra money is needed for the things that ought to be done.

Mr. Clark: They knew it then.

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: What makes it more serious is that our class sizes are now static, very little improvement having been made over a number of years because of this

situation. I doubt very much whether the present Minister, with the finance at her disposal, can make any improvement in the next two or three years. At this same time, we have a great population explosion, an explosion of knowledge, and a tremendous addition of scientific and technological information; in other words, students have to be trained better, and we are not able to do it, yet we have almost a dead silence even today from Government members about the need for more Commonwealth finance for education.

It is no use pretending that things are not too bad, for things are only just going along; they are static. When we left office we were very desirous of providing funds for ancillary people in our schools in order to make the best use of our professional staff. I am sure that the present Minister is well aware of the need for ancillary staff in our schools, but presumably she has not the money to meet this need any more than we had it. But this is a vital matter today, when we are so short of qualified teachers and when they must do all the clerical chores required in our bigger schools. Everyone who knows anything about education knows this, but still we have almost dead silence about the situation.

Government members were vocal enough when we were in office, but why have they suddenly gone silent about this matter? After all, surely the education of our children should be above politics to some extent. But, no; when we were in office we got the stick on all these questions good and proper! I am not going to give the Government the stick about why it does not do this, that or the other, because it does not have the money, but I do say that it failed miserably when we were in office to give us the support we deserved on this particularly important question. All it did was try to take political advantage of the lack of educational facilities of the children of the State.

Therefore, when I hear the Minister talking in a very calm way about there being no crisis, I am not satisfied. I will not call it a crisis, because of my particular definition of what constitutes a crisis, but it is a serious matter that will continue for a long time yet, and it is high time that members of the Government took a different attitude on this vital question.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON (Treasurer): I wish to comment briefly on some of the matters raised during the afternoon and earlier

this evening about housing matters. There are two aspects of this question, and I want to deal with them in chronological order. First, there is the matter of raising rents by the Housing Trust in respect of its tenants. The tone of the debate today on this matter, I think, was commendable; I appreciate the way in which members have addressed themselves to these matters.

However, I wish to make one comment in respect of some remarks made by the member for Edwardstown (Mr. Virgo) who, in his usual rather vitriolic manner, made attacks on the General Manager of the Housing Trust and on me. I do not mind what he says about me; that does not matter, for I can take it. However, I believe that the honourable member was not doing justice when he made remarks about the General Manager of the Housing Trust. I do not have them on record, but I know that he made some rather severe criticisms of the attitude of the trust towards certain people.

Mr. Virgo: I made criticisms of your hiding behind the trust.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: I know that, too, and I do not mind what the honourable member said about that, because I do not hide behind anyone, and the honourable member will discover that if he has not discovered it already. The General Manager of the trust needs no comment from me to justify the esteem in which he is held by nearly everyone in this State as an executive, as a man and a citizen, and as a man of wide human sympathies, whose work for a number of charitable and other organizations in this State is well known. I do not mind what the honourable member says about me, but I will not see a person of the calibre of Mr. Ramsay attacked in any way that does him an injustice.

Mr. Virgo: You stood by and saw Mr. Currie attacked today and did not raise your voice.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: The situation in which the Housing Trust finds itself is simply this: Mr. Dridan, Mr. Ramsay and a trust officer came to me to discuss this matter and told me about their problem and about the action they intended to take. They sought to acquaint me with their situation. If any member cares to look up the last annual report of the Housing Trust, he will see that on an investment of about \$230,000,000 the trust's return (the surplus in the accounts after working expenses) is, from memory, about \$1,000,000. This is a margin on which no

institution can possibly work with any degree of safety. The trust, therefore, is faced with the position that it must take some action to improve its trading accounts, and really the only action that it can take is to examine the rent returns from its rental houses.

Since its inception, the trust has built, I think, about 65,000 houses in this State, of which over 30,000 are rental houses. Many of these rental houses have been carrying rents at a low figure; some of the tenants have been in them for a long time, and the trust has maintained their rents at a low figure. It was on this low-rental section of the total leased houses that the trust intended to increase its rents.

This is not a general increase over the whole area of rentals. From the schedule I have here, I find that no house that will in the new circumstances have a rental above \$8.50 a week has been affected, and these are brick houses. In the category of brick houses, the rents of which have been increased, there are 3,312, out of a total of 30,000.

Mr. Virgo: How many of these are attached?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: I do not have that figure here but a number of them, of course, would be, and a number would not be. Again, if the honourable member looks at the annual report of the trust, he will see the scale of rents applying to various categories of house in various areas of the State, and that will give him some information on this particular aspect. In addition to those 3,312 houses, 1,034 timber frame houses, which will carry rentals of up to \$7.75 a week, have been affected by the increase. Of the total of 30,000-odd houses the trust has as leased houses, only 4,346 (adding the two figures together) are subject to an increase under this recently increased scale. They are houses the rental for which ranges from \$3.50 a week up to \$8 a week.

Mr. Virgo: How many of those are occupied by pensioners?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: I will come to that in a moment, if the honourable member will be patient. I got one of my officers (not a Housing Trust officer) to analyse these figures in another way in order to see what they meant in terms of various groups within various rental increases. These are the figures he has given me, and I think they will be pretty correct. I am speaking now only of the 3,312 brick houses, of which 980 will bear an increased rental of less than \$1 a week. At precisely \$1 a week, another 917 houses will be involved; at \$1.15 a week, 10 houses; at \$1.20

a week, 202 houses; and at \$1.30 a week, 1,202 houses. That is the breakdown of the groups in order, as the various amounts of increase apply.

I think members will appreciate that the trust has taken action only in respect of those houses previously carrying a minimal rental. The reasons why the trust has taken this action are, roughly, as follows: First, there is, in the trust's view, a need to achieve some equality between people occupying the same type of house as regards the rents they pay. The trust was in a position where some people were occupying houses and paying \$4.70 a week while people in houses next door were paying as much as \$8 a week for the same type of house. Secondly, because there is a continual increase in operating costs (rates, taxes, maintenance, etc.), the value of money has depreciated and, as I have just said, the trust's surplus on its operations had declined to a dangerous degree.

Thirdly, it was to offset to some degree the relatively high rents that have to be charged for new accommodation if the older houses built at a time of lower costs do not bear some share in the increased maintenance costs. The people who occupy the newer houses are, generally speaking, younger people whose incomes are heavily taxed by establishment costs and whose salaries may be lower; and, therefore, they are in the worst position to pay the higher rents. They may have young families (they usually do) and the trust was in the position where some tenants with a total family income of over \$100 a week were paying \$4.70 rent while people with young families and an income of \$45 a week were paying probably double that amount.

I am surprised that the member for Whyalla took the point he did when he complained that some people were called upon to pay a higher rental so that people in other houses would not have to pay so much, because in Whyalla there is a high proportion of new houses and the trust is striving desperately to keep the rental cost of those houses to the occupants down as low as possible in order to meet the circumstances of the people working there. So that if, in fact, the trust made a blanket increase over the whole of its rentals, those people in new houses in Whyalla would be paying a rent they probably could not afford to pay. This

point might have been missed by the honourable member when he was considering this matter.

This is a real problem. One thing which the trust is constantly concerned about and about which it talks to me is the cost of providing new houses, and particularly in places like Whyalla where the income of the people is limited, the costs are high, and the responsibility that the trust has, or feels it has, is to provide housing for industrial areas at a minimal cost. Confronted with this problem, the trust therefore suggested as a remedy that it would raise the rentals of houses with lower rentals. People in those houses had enjoyed low rents for a long time, the houses having a rental value in present money terms far above what was being paid. The trust felt that in all equity it should ask people in those houses to pay more so that people going into new houses would perhaps not have to pay the full cost of them.

At the same time as announcing the increases the trust said it would entertain any requests from any person in any circumstances to examine the situation. As a result of that offer the trust sent out about 5,000 letters to tenants, and to June 17 545 people had asked for some review of their situation. I have here a table setting out the result of these requests. The review of rentals is a matter for the trust as a whole and not for just one person. Incidentally, the question of social or subsidized housing is one that comes before the trust's board regularly at every meeting, many cases being dealt with.

Of the 545 people who wrote in, 127 had their rent reduced below that previously paid; increased rent was not applied to 63; a partial increase in rent applied to 182; the increase was delayed for a period for 112; and no reduction of the increased rent was approved for 61. Regarding pensioners (and I am not speaking now of widows and deserted wives), the rent was reduced below that previously paid in the case of 110 applications.

I refer to pensioners because, on examining some complaints that have come to me, I have found that some people who are represented as being pensioners are not in fact entirely dependent on their pension as a source of income. I have had cases where the nominal lessee of the house has been a pensioner but where there are people living in the house (members of the family) who enjoy the benefit of that house and who receive substantial separate incomes. This is not proper

representation. If the lessee of a house is represented as being a pensioner the assumption is that no other income is available to pay the rent. These are not just isolated cases: there have been a number.

I urge members to take what I now say into account before they make representation in regard to such cases. They should make sure of the facts, because I think that in some cases members have made representations in good faith but, when a closer examination has been made by an officer of the trust, some of the circumstances to which I have referred have been found to apply. The member for Edwardstown (Mr. Virgo) mentioned the case of a woman on a pension who had two children living at home and who had four other children who had grown up and left her. I do not know her name and address; I have not inquired.

Mr. Virgo: Do you think that the children who have married and left home are responsible for paying her rent?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: Why aren't they?

Mr. Virgo: Don't you think that they have their own wives and families to keep?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: The honourable member should make sure of this point. The family was prepared to walk out and leave the mother in straitened circumstances. The General Manager of the Housing Trust would not have made the comment to me had he not had reason to believe that there was a proper obligation on some people to help their mother and that they were able to do it. That is all I have to say about that matter. Before the honourable member peddles a story about the countryside he should make sure of the facts.

Mr. Virgo: You don't even know the case. You have already admitted this.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is out of order.

Mr. Virgo: So is the Treasurer.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: I think from that very brief summary that members will understand that the trust had good reason to make these increases. They have been applied in the area where they could be applied without hardship, and the trust has taken all proper steps to investigate any cases where hardship may occur and, indeed, it is continually doing this. In fact, it is carrying a very heavy financial load in assisting people in necessitous circumstances to be housed at entirely uneconomic rentals, and it is continuing to offer sympathetic consideration to all people who

apply to it. Whenever I have presented a genuine case to the Housing Trust for special assistance I have never found that assistance has not been forthcoming.

I turn now to the question of the 1,637 houses owned by the Crown that are occupied by members of the Public Service. Under the Public Service Act it is the responsibility of the Public Service Board to fix the rental of any Crown residence occupied by an officer, and this has been extended to houses occupied by weekly-paid employees. The board is authorized, therefore, to fix the rentals and, indeed, it has a responsibility for fixing rentals in respect to these houses. One Opposition member was good enough to recall that a review of rentals of Public Service houses was not ordered by the present Government: it was an instruction given by the previous Government in a directive on February 14, 1966.

Mr. Virgo: That instruction did not say it had to increase them.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: If the honourable member holds his peace I will tell him what it said. This is what the instruction said about a review of such rentals:

Review all such houses to indicate the increases involved in bringing all such rents up to four-fifths of the standards currently charged by the trust.

The trust referred to is the Housing Trust. That was the instruction given by the previous Government in a Cabinet directive. I do not know what the previous Government intended to do with this information when it got it, but the directive was fairly clearly worded. I repeat that the instruction was to indicate the increase involved in bringing all such rents up to four-fifths of the charges currently being met by the trust. I think that, quite properly, the previous Government considered that the trust was the best equipped authority in the State to undertake this review.

I agree with that. I do not think any other authority has experience as full, as wide or as long in the matter of rent values. The trust commenced what was an extremely big job that took some time to complete. The officers of the trust would be the first to admit that they were not infallible or immune to error of judgment and that, possibly, in cases where complaints have been received they would be pleased to make another assessment. Indeed, I am sure they will be doing that in some cases.

I have explained the origin of this review. When the documents duly came to me, as Minister of Housing, Cabinet considered them

in great detail so far as the information would enable us to do. We have a rather curious situation in regard to houses occupied by members of the Government service. Many people have to provide their own houses. All or almost all public servants in the metropolitan area provide their own houses and have to pay the full economic cost, including the cost of rates, taxes, and so on. However, others (admittedly, mainly in the country) occupy houses provided for them by the various departments. Most of those people are fortunate, because they have not been and will be obliged to pay a landlord not a full economic rental for the houses they occupy, but only four-fifths of that rental.

Other public servants who live in the country and for whom a house is not provided by the Government have to either buy their own house or rent a house from the trust or from somebody else, so they pay the full economic rental of the house. This sort of anomaly was becoming completely unfair and untenable. If the rents of houses owned by the Crown were to remain static while people receiving the same salary and doing the same job as the occupants of those Government houses were providing their own houses or renting houses, there was no equity between one officer and another.

As the previous Government had authorized the inquiry, we took the matter up from there when it was referred back to us and we decided that, by and large, the rentals proposed by the trust could be accepted, but we were careful to make a reservation: where the tenant of a Crown house thought that there was a good case for him on various grounds to ask for a review of his rent, the department in which he was employed would consider the representations made by him or on his behalf and his case would be re-examined.

The date by which these requests were to come in was set as June 20, and I have in front of me a copy of a circular dated May 22, as follows:

The Public Service Board has considered representations made by "recognized organizations" (that was obligatory under the Act) and has confirmed that, subject to minor adjustments already advised in writing or as referred to hereunder, the new rentals shown on the schedule attached to the board's memo of April 15, 1969, will apply from June 2, 1969. The board will, however, consider departmental or personal submissions made to the board before June 20, 1969. Any variations made to rentals as a result of these representations will be made with retrospective effect from June 2, 1969. Occupants should be notified to this effect. In addition, departments

should advise the board immediately of all instances when the tenancy involves either of the following factors:

- (a) the residence is in the grounds of a departmental corrective, welfare or medical institution;
- (b) houses occupied by officers who are required as an essential condition of their employment to reside in a specific departmental house and the officer is granted four weeks' recreation leave because he is required to be available for duty on seven days a week.

Some members referred to these people in their remarks today, and that is why I have read this circular, because it relates to them.

Mr. Riches: How did you determine the increases charged to Aborigines on Aboriginal reserves?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: I am not aware that they came into this review, and, although I stand to be corrected, I do not think they did.

Mr. Speaker, there is only one other thing that I wish to mention, and that is in relation to matters raised by the members for Millicent, Mount Gambier and Victoria. The member for Millicent (Mr. Corcoran) led the discussion on this matter, and I thank him for the way in which he presented it. There is, I think, some difficulty regarding houses within the Forestry Board settlements. The member for Mount Gambier (Mr. Burdon) mentioned people in isolation in the forest areas. These are people who would be brought within the scope of the last section of the memorandum that I read, and I think I will suggest to the Minister of Forests that he may wish the Housing Trust to have another look at some of the houses in the settlements concerned. I know that the trust's officers would not contend that they had been inside every house and that they had seen everything that was in every house. The petitions having been presented, and the matter having been raised in this debate, I will confer with the Minister of Forests with a view to having some re-examination made in order to satisfy him and the Government as to the real value of these houses.

If I am able to accept the honourable member's invitation to go myself I will certainly do so, but I cannot make such a promise to him tonight. Possibly there is no great value in my going because I am not skilled in assessing rents, but perhaps the Minister of Forests or someone else could look into the matter if that seems necessary. In respect of both matters raised this afternoon

(the Housing Trust's rentals to its tenants and the proposals by the various authorities including the Public Service Board and others responsible for fixing the rents of Crown-owned houses for its employees) the Government did not act without due consideration being given. Indeed, we pondered this matter over a period and came to the conclusion that, because of the matters I have raised, an increase was justified. Indeed, it was equitable, and that is the reason for the Government's action.

Motion carried.

In Committee of Supply.

CHIEF SECRETARY AND MINISTER OF HEALTH
Miscellaneous, \$275,000.

Mr. CORCORAN: I support the adoption of the Supplementary Estimates, which are fairly straightforward and which involve \$1,235,000. The necessity for the sum involved has been outlined in the Treasurer's explanation, during which he made a general survey of the Revenue Budget to the end of this financial year and in which he said that the Government was likely to balance (or come close to balancing) its Budget, mainly because of assistance received from the Commonwealth Government. The Treasurer expressed some disappointment at the sum made available by the Commonwealth Government, and I agree with him on this matter, but the sum forthcoming has nevertheless helped the situation to some extent.

I believe that the Budget situation in South Australia this financial year has been helped by the fact that the effects of the recent drought extending over South Australia and the Eastern States have largely disappeared, with the result that the markets for consumer durable goods in the Eastern States, on which this State largely relies, have improved considerably. Indeed, our own markets have also improved. The Treasurer referred to a lag in taxation legislation being passed which has led to a shortfall in the estimate of revenue from taxation sources. Indeed, it is a good thing that the iniquitous receipts tax was not enforced sooner than it was, because I know of detrimental effects it is having particularly on primary producers throughout the State who have to pay the tax on their receipts whether or not they make a profit. I believe that there has been agitation from various bodies throughout the State for the Government to rectify some of the anomalies arising from this measure, and no doubt we will see during the current session steps taken by the Government to give effect to this.

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: I support the adoption of the first line. I am disappointed that the Government is trying to create the impression that all is well and that there have been vast improvements in the economic position solely because of the present Government. When we were in office, there was no greater band of knockers than the members at present occupying the Treasury benches. They were so ready to condemn the Government of the day that their utterances were detrimental to the development of industry in South Australia.

Although, as the Deputy Leader has said, there have been better seasonal conditions, when we were in office it should have been acknowledged by members opposite that we were dependent on the Eastern States for markets for many of the goods produced in South Australia, such as refrigerators, washing machines, and motor cars. We had to depend on the Eastern States for the sale of 85 per cent of the goods manufactured here. Those States, like us, had a hard time with seasonal conditions. They had not their normal purchasing power, which had a detrimental effect on the economy of our State. In addition to that, while we were in Government we suffered the driest season in South Australia for 81 years.

Mr. McAnaney: You got us into trouble before that hit us.

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: A man like the honourable member would be in trouble all the time. Members opposite have not got out of trouble, despite all their ballyhoo. The Premier has been overseas gallivanting around. We should all like to know what the globe-trotting of Ministers of the present Cabinet has cost the State. The Premier has returned and told us about the great prospects that we now have because of his trotting around the globe. Apparently, he is going to supply South Australia with a new pressed board industry. The people engaged in making this type of board for partitions have stocks they cannot dispose of; there is over-production today. If we are to do anything to help industry, we must have a type of industry that will not prejudice those already in existence.

The greatest thing this Government has produced is a line of propaganda to boost itself, but there has been no foundation whatever. The member for Whyalla spoke about education. When we were in Government we were told that we should have cleaned school windows and done all sorts of things, and that we were always doing the wrong thing.

However, we continually showed that we were doing our best with the money available. It was not possible for us to meet all the requirements unless the Commonwealth Government met its responsibilities.

I believe the present Minister of Education is sincerely applying herself to her job. She desires as much as anyone else in the Chamber desires to see the education system improved, but we never hear one word from the Government or its supporters about how this can be done. They know full well that it can be done only when the Commonwealth Government appreciates that there is such a place as South Australia and that it is part and parcel of the Commonwealth.

This principle applies also to railways. Before long a standard gauge line will be used between Sydney and Perth, but South Australia has been neglected. Until the Commonwealth Government acknowledges its responsibility to the State, our economy will suffer. The position will not improve until there is a Commonwealth Labor Government. During the previous State election the present Prime Minister said that if the people elected a Liberal Government here there would be a better relationship between the South Australian and Commonwealth Governments. However, the Premier and Treasurer will go to Canberra in a few days' time and I know they will be disappointed. They will make submissions for far more than they will get, but they will not make one submission they should not make.

The greatest need South Australia has is for an adequate water supply, and we had and still have a guarantee in relation to the Chowilla dam. In fact, only one dam on the river system is guaranteed. The only dam for which there is a contract is the Chowilla dam, but because of the attitude of certain people—

The CHAIRMAN: I think the honourable member will appreciate that we are dealing with the Revenue Supplementary Estimates, not the Loan Estimates.

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: The whole point is that the Commonwealth Government has not a proper appreciation of our economic position. I am very sympathetic toward the Minister of Works in regard to the amount of money available for his department. I know how difficult it is to carry out projects and to meet this State's needs with the limited sum available.

I am concerned about one aspect of the Public Buildings Department. It has been

reported to me that several contracts have been let for the construction of modular construction schools. If they have been let I think it is rather a pity, because I know that the Public Buildings Department spent many thousands of dollars in preparing plans, making patterns and finally getting spare parts for Samcon construction schools. I will ask the Minister later whether the programme for Samcon construction schools has been slackened off because of the letting of outside contracts. If it has, I think it is a great mistake.

Mr. VIRGO: I have entered this discussion to make a protest. We had another sermon today about how well the Hall Government was going since it took office. It is so much ballyhoo. Apparently the Government has convinced itself, and it is repeating itself like the proverbial parrot. Let me remind the Hall Government about one or two things. In the *Advertiser* of April 1, 1969, the following appears:

The current spiral in home building costs is not yet over, according to a leading home building firm. It says that rises of up to 10 per cent in the prices of bricks, roof tiles, building hardware and electrical materials have followed wage rises in the industry. The price of a \$10,000 house has risen \$500 in the last year.

This is the year of the Hall Government—its period of office goes back 12 months from April 1, 1969, with the exception of about 17 days.

Mr. Clark: Do you realize that most building materials have been released from price control during that period?

Mr. VIRGO: This is the period in respect of which the Hall Government is saying, "Come on boys, everything is all right now. It was crook under Labor, but you are going well under the Hall Government, the Liberal Government, the private enterprise Government." What utter rot! The Government is fleecing the people and it knows it. All this rubbish about the Premier's being overseas with a bag of possibilities and probabilities! He has never opened it.

What value have we got from the Premier as Minister of Industrial Development? Where are the industries? He says much about what will happen, but it never eventuates. Will he ever open the bag, or tell us what he did while he was away for the State that paid for the trip? If he had achieved or learned something, I should be the first to applaud the incurring of the expense, but we have no evidence of that. All that the Premier can

do now is grimace, and he looks much better when he is grimacing than when he is acting normally.

The Liberal Government has to have a proper look at the situation we are in today. It has forced prices up, released items from price control and, finally, has been caught up in a web of its own design. The costs structure in South Australia will continue to rise while this Government follows the policy

it has followed in the last 12 months, and the only thought that gives me consolation is that South Australia has only about 20 months in which to suffer the inadequacies of the present Government.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10.48 p.m. the House adjourned until Thursday, June 19, at 2 p.m.