

REPLIES BY THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LANDS
AND HOUSING, ENCHE ABDUL HAMID BIN HAJI JUMAT, TO
QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ON
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13, 1958

To Mr. Lee Choon Eng (Member for Queenstown):

I would suggest to the Member for Queenstown two considerations. First, the houses which are now subject to the provisions of the Control of Rent Ordinance were almost all erected prewar at cheaper cost, and the controlled rentals can be said to represent a not unreasonable return on capital.

Secondly, premises built or completed after the 7th September, 1947, were built in the expectation that there would be no control of rents and the relationship between landlords and their tenants was one freely established on such understanding.

There is no special reason or emergency (such as existed when rent control was introduced for prewar properties) to justify control of properties erected after September 1947. Such control would indeed result in stifling private enterprise in building more houses and would merely aggravate the housing situation.

To Mr. John Ede (Member for Tanglin):

Temporary District Council Offices have already been erected for Serangoon and Katong District Councils and are open for inspection. Each building has a meeting room, secretariat and departmental offices for engineering and building staff, the health and cleansing staff, and the assessment and revenue staff. For Jurong/Bukit Panjang District Council, there is already a permanent office which later will be extended.

The staffing needs as well as other problems arising from the establishment of District Councils were studied by a Working Party, which, in its report, recommended additions to the present available Rural Board staff. The report was adopted by Government and the financial provision for the additional staff was approved by this Assembly in April this year.

Once the District Councils have been in operation for a few months, it will be possible to review the position to ascertain if all the provisions made are in fact adequate. From the measures taken, the District Councils should work satisfactorily.

To Mr. John Ede (Member for Tanglin):

The arrears of rates at the 31st December, 1957, including the arrears carried over from the past year amounted to \$1,697,468.28. Arrears for 1957 collected from 1st January to 30th June, 1958, amounted to \$772,087.12 and to the end of July \$889,339.58. This sum is nearly equal to the sum of \$940,006.67 which was the amount of arrears collected for the whole of last year. This improvement was made possible by re-organisation of work and the recruitment towards the end of last year of five of the required new seven Bailiffs.

1,771 properties were assessed or reassessed during the period January to June 1958, at an annual value of just over \$1 million, yielding an additional revenue of just over \$200,000.

As regards remaining properties yet to be assessed, it is estimated that there are about 2,000 permanent buildings yet to be assessed of which about 1,500 are new houses in such housing estates as Opera Estate, Glasgow Road, Jalan Kayu, Spring Hill Estate, Sembawang Road, 13½ m.s. Sembawang Road, Sembawang Hills Estate (2nd Phase), Thomson Ridge, Bukit Timah Estate, Hongkong Park.

It is on these properties that the Rates Officers, including three newly recruited assistant rates officers, are now concentrating their efforts. This will leave resettlement areas throughout the Rural Board area and many attap houses situated well away from the main roads yet to be assessed. Assessment and reassessment on these localities will follow after the large estates have been completed. Figures and details are in the process of being compiled from the Rural Survey which was recently carried out.

To Mr. Lim Koon Teck (Member for Paya Lebar):

The answer to the Member's question is that no portion of the area excised from the Pandan Forest Reserve has been set aside for such allocation, as the manner of allocation has not yet been decided. Due consideration will be given, however, to requests or applications from persons whose prawn ponds are affected by Government acquisitions.

AUGUST 13, 1958.

(Time issued 1400 hours)