

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 12th December, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers presented" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

BILLS (2) FIRST READING.

1, Roads Closure.

2, Permanent Reserve (Cottesloe).

Introduced by the Premier.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [4-43]: I move—

That for the remainder of the session the Standing Orders be suspended so far as to enable Bills to be passed through all their stages in one day, and Messages from the Legislative Council to be taken into consideration on the day on which they are received; also, so far as to admit of the reporting and adopting of the resolutions of the Committee of Supply and of Ways and Means on the same day on which they shall have passed those Committees. In submitting this motion I am merely adopting a practice that is usual towards the close of the session. The suspension of the Standing Orders will enable Bills to be dealt with practically in one sitting, and will also facilitate the ordinary business in another place.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4-46]: It is true, as the Premier has stated, that this is the motion usually submitted to the House in the closing stages of the session. But before it passes there is generally a definite undertaking given by the Government that no new Bills of any importance will be introduced after the suspension of the Standing Orders. I do not know whether the Government have in mind any new Bills. Certainly, every day sees the introduction of new Bills; one or two are down for second reading to-day which were introduced yesterday, and which may or may not prove to be of importance. I understand that at least two Bills of considerable importance have still to come here from another place—measures amending the Early Closing Act, and the State Children Act. Certainly the former measure is of the highest importance to a large section of the community. It will be recognised that to have Bills of great importance introduced and possibly passed through the whole of their stages at one sitting would be altogether inadvisable. Further, before agreeing to the motion I should like the Premier's assurance that my Bill to amend the Constitution Act will have an opportunity of full discussion here, and that this week. It is no use wasting several days on the consideration of that Bill in this Chamber if it is only going to reach another place on possibly the last day of the session, when it would receive no consideration, and when in fact members of another place would be justified in opposing its introduction. I ask for the Premier's assurance that my Bill will be dealt with not later than to-morrow. Having regard to the business on the Notice Paper, I see no insuperable difficulty in dealing with it to-morrow, unless, of course,

new work comes crowding down from another place; and that is exactly where I am apprehensive. If new Bills, or amendments to Bills which have passed this Chamber, should come down fairly freely during the next few days with the Standing Orders suspended we shall be engaged on that business to the exclusion of the Bill I refer to, and others as well.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [4-50]: I suggest that any new Bill introduced after the suspension of the Standing Orders should be placed on the files of members immediately after the first reading, instead of distribution of copies being deferred until the second reading is moved. The course I suggest will enable members to know the contents of these measures, and, if necessary, to consult with their constituents regarding such Bills.

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [4-52]: I support the leader of the Opposition especially as regards his Bill to amend the Constitution Act. When that measure was introduced, the Premier gave a very definite promise that the fullest time would be allowed for its discussion in both Chambers. But if the Bill is kept at the bottom of the Notice Paper, where it is now, there will be every reason for another place to refuse to discuss it at all. If the Premier intends to keep his word—

The Premier: I do not think the hon. member should speak like that. Will the hon. member quote my exact words, please?

Mr. TROY: I will quote them later. I cannot just now.

The Premier: The hon. member has made one statement which is not quite correct.

Mr. TROY: What is that?

The Premier: The hon. member said that I gave an assurance the Bill would reach another House. That is not correct.

Hon. P. Collier: The Premier gave me that assurance in private conversation.

Mr. TROY: The Premier gave his word to the leader of the Opposition privately, and I have a recollection of the Premier saying in this House that he would allow time for the amplest discussion of the measure. Now we find the Bill at the bottom of the Notice Paper.

Hon. P. Collier: The debate on the second reading has been twice adjourned on the motion of members sitting on the Government side of the House: once as the result of a division.

Mr. TROY: The delay in the discussion of the Bill is not our fault, and it is due from the Premier to treat with respect members on either side of the House who are in favour of the measure, and to afford them an opportunity of referring it in proper time to another Chamber.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore—in reply) [4-53]: One question asked me was whether the Government intend to bring forward any new legislation. It is proposed by the Government to bring forward no more legislation of a controversial character or of a non-controversial character.

Hon. P. Collier: Not the Bill to amend the Early Closing Act?

The PREMIER: That comes from the Upper House. There are measures which have to come down from another place. But it is not the intention of the Government to introduce any more Bills. In reply to the question of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) whether Bills will be passed round upon first reading, I say certainly, that will be done. It is only due to hon. members that they should be

placed in possession of Bills at the earliest possible opportunity. A question put to me by the leader of the Opposition, and re-echoed by the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Troy), is whether I would allow the Bill to amend the Constitution Act to be discussed to-morrow. I told the leader of the Opposition in this Chamber that I would allow time for the discussion of his Bill; and I have done so. I consider I have carried out my undertaking by allowing the Bill to be discussed on three days here. The member for Mt. Magnet stated I had said that I would give an opportunity for sending the Bill to another place. I have no record of having made any such statement in the House, and I do not remember making such a statement to the leader of the Opposition outside this Chamber. I say this, not because I wish to burke discussion, but because, in order to save time, I wish to put myself right with the leader of the Opposition. The Bill is on the Notice Paper in the place where private members' business usually appears. However, the Bill may have precedence over other measures at a later date. We expect to have measures coming down from another place, and some of them may require considerable discussion.

Hon. P. Collier: That will depend entirely on the attitude of the Government. Those Bills may take a long time or a short time.

The PREMIER: I am not prepared to give the leader of the Opposition to-morrow for his Bill, but I am prepared to place it where it will receive discussion on Tuesday next.

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

Ayes	...	...	...	24
Noes	...	...	...	12
Majority for	...	...	...	12

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Maley
Mr. Broun	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Brown	Mr. Money
Mr. Davies	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Duff	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Durack	Mr. Smith
Mr. Foley	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. George	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Varyard
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Hudson	(Teller.)
Mr. Lefroy	

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Cheson	Mr. Roche
Mr. Collier	Mr. Troy
Mr. Green	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Holman	Mr. O'Leighen
Mr. Jones	(Teller.)
Mr. Lutey	

Question thus passed.

BILL—GOVERNMENT ELECTRIC WORKS ACT AMENDMENT.

All Stages.

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

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. C. A. Hudson—Yilgarn) [5·7] in moving the second reading said: This is merely a formal Bill following on a Bill which has already passed this Chamber, which has for its object the appointment of three Commissioners of Railways. Under the Act we are now seeking to amend, provision is made for the management of the Tramways and the Government Electric Works by the Commissioner of Railways, and it is necessary, if the other Bill goes through, that we should have provision made so that the management of these works may be placed under the control of three Commissioners instead of one as at the present time. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5·4]: This Bill is somewhat on all fours with the small Bill which went through last week dealing with the control of the tramways, and in speaking on that Bill I offered the opinion that it was largely a waste of time, or possibly a waste of time and money as well, in connection with the printing and the paper used. This Bill, like the other, might be said to be consequential upon the Government Railways Bill which passed through this House, and until we know the fate of that Railway Bill in another place it will be entirely unnecessary to pass any others. It would have been wise if the Minister had waited until he had learned the fate of the Railway Bill in another place before bringing in this Bill and the Tramways Bill, and in that way he might have saved a considerable amount of expenditure in connection with the preparation of those Bills. From what I can gather, the Government Railways Act Amendment Bill has a very fair chance of not going through another place.

The Minister for Railways: My information is to the contrary.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know who has been acting as Whip to gather that information for the Minister.

The Minister for Railways: I do not know yours and I am not inquiring.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We shall see, but I am inclined to think the Bill will go out, in which case we shall not want these two small Bills. Further than that, I do not think it will be wise to give the power to three Commissioners to manage our electric light works. It would be better to take the management of the system away from the control of the Commissioner altogether. We might then get better results.

Mr. Smith: It could not be worse.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Commissioner, or possibly the three Commissioners, are not the only persons in this State who could be relied upon in connection with the control and management of our electric light works. In any case, what will the three Commissioners know about electric lighting? The works are under the general control of a manager, Mr. Taylor, who is a very capable and expert officer in his line of business, and I do not suppose the Commissioners will have anything more to do with the actual management of these works than any hon. member.

Mr. Smith: The Commissioners will expect an extra salary.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When the question of considering the appointment of the three Commissioners is being dealt with, it will look big to find that the applicants will be expected to fill the position of Commissioners of Railways,

Commissioners of Tramways, and Commissioners in charge of the electric light works. In the other States, especially on paper, will this announcement look big, or will certainly make the positions appear to be of great responsibility, even greater than they really are. The appointment of the Commissioners to control the tramways and the electric light works will also involve the Government in an expenditure of an additional £500 for salary, and the Commissioners will not be called upon to do any work. It would be better altogether to amend the Electric Light Act and take the control of the works away from the Commissioners whether they be one or three, and vest the control of the works in a general manager who knows something of the work and who, in fact, has been carrying it out right up to the present time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Minister for Railways in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of No. 29 of 1915:

Hon. P. COLLIER: Would I be in order in moving an amendment to provide for the management of those works by a general manager, an amendment which would have the effect of taking away the control from the Commissioner of Railways?

The CHAIRMAN: I am inclined to agree that the amendment would be relevant to the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Act we are seeking to amend is an Act which vests in the Commissioner of Railways certain powers, and we propose to amend that Act by conferring similar powers upon three Commissioners. That is the object of the Bill, and not to change the management. I submit, therefore, that the suggested amendment is not relevant.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1918-19.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read transmitting the Loan Estimates for the year 1918-19 and recommending appropriations.

In Committee of Supply.

The House resolved into Committee of Supply for the purpose of considering the Loan Estimates; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Vote—Departmental, £29,257:

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner—Irvine) [5-17]: Had it not been for the ending of the war the Loan Estimates would have been laid on the Table of the House some three or four weeks ago. The Estimates would then have shown, as far as possible, how little we could have got on with in view of the financial outlook. Altered circumstances have led to an altered view. The Government are faced with the obligation of trying to make provision for the new conditions which may obtain, and also for the absorption of our returned men, and as far as possible providing for keeping our population

from migrating to the other States. The various items on the loan schedules will be dealt with by the Ministers in charge of the departments. My duty is to give information in regard to the financial outlook, and show what provisions are made for financing the additional expenditure. The total Loan Estimates for the year is £1,395,250, but as £175,000 of this will be recouped, the actual loan expenditure which we will have to provide will be £1,220,250. Of this loan expenditure £100,000 will be issued in bonds for repurchased estates and as for the first three months we have already paid £176,493 on account of loan expenditure for the year, the actual cash that I have to provide for the balance of the year is £943,766. By utilising the full £700,000 which I obtained from the Commonwealth, and taking into consideration the further sum of £250,000 which we can obtain between now and December, 1919, I can see my way to finance without any difficulty, not only to the 30th June, but at the same ratio if we continue the expenditure on these Estimates, as I have already told the Committee, until December of next year. There is no doubt that now the war is over the whole question of financing the States so far as loans are concerned will have to be carefully re-considered. The possibilities are that the States as a whole will require to embark upon other public and developmental works, and for this purpose we have to arrange further financial consideration. It is to be earnestly hoped, however, that even faced with this necessity, every care will be taken to see that such works have in them the germ not only of providing employment but eventually earning sufficient to pay interest and sinking fund. No one can predict at the present stage the future effects of the war upon the world's money market. Consequently every expenditure, however necessary, must be salted with legitimate caution and care. The contemplated expenditure on the various departments is as follows:—Public Works Department, £379,662. The principal item in this expenditure is the cost of construction of the Wyndham Freezing Works, £135,000. We hope this will be sufficient to complete the works. For the completion of railways £92,000 is provided, for harbours and rivers, £93,000, and for roads and bridges £26,000. Under the heading of Water Supply and Sewerage, £93,970 is provided, which includes water supply for towns generally £20,000, metropolitan water supply £38,000, and water supply in agricultural districts £25,000. I have not included the odd pounds in these figures. For the Mines Department £60,000 is provided. Last year the total expenditure in this department was £9,609, but as foreshadowed by the Minister for Mines, it is felt that the Government have a right to see what can be done to develop this great industry, realising that the finding of one or two good mines would justify any expenditure. They have, therefore, increased this sum by practically £50,000. I hope members will see how far they can assist the Minister for Mines with their ideas, such as we had in the debate on the Mines Estimates, to the end that our mines may be developed to the utmost possible extent. Railways, tramways, and electric power station have a sum, £204,027, set aside for them. This is absorbed by the following—additions and improvements to opened lines, £84,000, rails and fastenings £57,000, tramways £25,000, and electric power station £33,000. In passing, it may be as well to remember that in addition to those sums paid out of loan on our railways and tramways we are providing out of revenue the following:—For railways—

re-sleeping, £20,000; re-fishplating, £9,000, and ballasting £10,000; and for tramways, belated repairs, £17,500. When we consider that this money is being spent, in addition to our loan expenditure, to keep our railways up to standard, it leads us to the conclusion that there ought to be a thorough investigation into the question of revenue expenditure on them, and as to how far the expenditure should be debited to capital account, seeing that we are providing a sinking fund to wipe out the whole capital expenditure. I think that will appeal to members. We cannot afford to do too much for posterity, but it seems to me we are doing a good deal for it now. For the electric power station there is provided a sum of £33,700. For the department of Agriculture a sum of £155,000 is set aside. This is to provide working capital for the Wyndham Freezing Works, as distinct from the money provided for their construction. The Minister in charge will give full particulars of this to hon. members. Eventually this capital ought to again come back to us, but the probabilities are that this work, if it is to be a success, will require at least this sum as permanent working capital.

Hon. J. Mitchell: There is no doubt about that.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That is so. For the department of Industries we have provided the sum of £370,000. In this amount we have provided £150,000 for advances to soldiers on the land. This of course will be recouped to us by the Commonwealth, although it is an eventual liability for the State. We have to make a further provision of £60,000 to give assistance to soldier settlers, above the £500 advanced to them individually by the Commonwealth. It is found by practical experience that the probabilities are that in many of these instances we will have to advance more than £500 in order to ensure that the men concerned will make a success of their ventures. We are making further provision for repurchasing estates of £160,000. Of this £60,000 would be cash. There may be properties, and there are some, which it may be desirable that we should have, and we may have to pay a proportion in cash, while the balance will be in bonds. A sum of £100,000 will be issued in bonds to the vendors. The capital of the Agricultural Bank last year was put up to £75,000. This year we have increased it by a further £25,000. We have increased this by the sum of £25,000 for the purchase of sheep, in order to try, if possible, to make the position of the settler more sound as far as advances are concerned, as well as to make our securities better.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I see that your speech was forestalled in the paper to-day on that point.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Possibly. The capital for the Industries Assistance Board for the financial year is placed at £25,000, but it is not anticipated that we shall require this sum. Further, on the outlook at present it seems that we are to receive back on the present estimate roughly £140,000 of the capital previously advanced, as we are to get back this year some of the big advances we had to make last year. The Colonial Secretary's Department shows two small items totalling £7,500. Those sums make up a total of £1,395,259. Now we come to the land improvement fund, £69,978. This fund accumulates by repayment from the Lands Department of moneys advanced for surveys, repayment being provided out of general revenue fund each year. The amount standing to the credit of this fund available for appropriation on the 30th June,

1918, was £69,978. Of this sum we purpose spending £58,250, made up as follows:—Lands Department, £24,500. This amount is required in connection with the classification and survey of land for sale, improvements, etc. Department of Agriculture, £13,700. This is required in connection with the development of agriculture generally. Woods and Forests branch, £18,700, of which £3,000 is required for classification of timber lands, £5,000 for pine planting at North Perth, and £9,500 for the purchase of the Lock estate and the Stirling estate tuart reserve. In the Department of Industries £1,350 is required for assistance to Esperance settlers. The duty of a Treasurer is merely to put these bald facts before the Committee. It is the duty of individual Ministers to justify this expenditure, and consequently, the Loan Bill which I have introduced will be considered after these Estimates are passed. Not having appropriation, it will be necessary to cover the authorised amounts under loan expenditure.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th December.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5-35]: I had expected that some of the farmers' representatives would occupy two or three sittings upon this Bill. If the motive for remaining silent is to force my colleague on my left to go ahead, it does not savour of a courageous attitude. I am more than surprised when I recall the speeches delivered by some of our friends on the Wheat Marketing Bill of last session.

Mr. Maley: And your own.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At all events I am consistent. I am retaining the attitude I took up on that occasion, but I am justified in contrasting the remarkable silence on the part of our friends this session with the attitude of dissatisfaction that characterised them when the Bill of last session was before the House. Particularly do I recall the speech of the member for Beverley (Mr. Broun), a notable utterance in his political career, when he expressed his entire dissatisfaction with the attitude of the Government in the handling of the marketing of the wheat. More particularly did he threaten the Government with penalties unless they came down with a Bill early this session, even before any contract was entered into for the handling of this season's harvest. He demanded that the House should have an opportunity of discussing the whole administration of the scheme.

Mr. Broun: What time last year did the Bill come down?

Hon. P. COLLIER: At the end of the session, just about the same stage as we have reached to-day.

Mr. Broun: But in which month was it?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It does not matter which month it might have been, it was at the end of the session.

Mr. Broun: But it makes all the difference.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member has been lulled into silence and satisfaction. We understand that he has had no more say in the

actual clauses and provisions of the contract or of the Bill than he had on the previous occasion.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Did you have any say?

Hon. P. COLLIER: None whatever. If I could be sure that our friends have not had any more say than other members of the House, I should be satisfied. But I am afraid they have had their say, not here, but, in the language of the race-course, under the lap. That is the bad feature of the whole business. Evidently certain members have discussed this matter before some other tribunal. They have had their grievances redressed as far as possible, and so are quite satisfied to remain silent to-day and allow the Bill to go through.

Mr. Maley: Do not you discuss any of your party's business outside?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, not any Bills affecting my political platform or my personal welfare; those questions I do not discuss with any outside, irresponsible body. That is what has happened on this occasion. We read that sometimes an indiscreet branch of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, by means of a circular drafted by some impetuous secretary, lets the cat out of the bag; and so we know that members on the Government cross benches transact their business and discuss a Bill of this character with the executive of their association. And, having regard for the fact that there are 22 members on that executive, while there are only 12 or 13 members of the Country party in this House, and seeing that the majority rules when they meet conference, it is clear that our friends take their instructions and feed out of the hand of King Monger and other prominent members of the executive.

Mr. Brown: I am sorry it hurts you so much.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It does not hurt me at all, but I think these things should be ventilated. It will be a sorry day for the public life of the country when matters of this kind can be discussed sub rosa and passed through the House without ventilation.

Mr. Brown: What justification have you for making the statement you have made in regard to the Farmers and Settlers' Association and the Country party?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The whole world knows of it. It was published broadcast in the columns of the newspapers.

Mr. Brown: And you believe everything the "West Australian" says?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Everything that comes with the authority of the executive of the Farmers and Settlers' Association. If my honourable friend desires to get out of his difficulty by repudiating the authority of that executive, I do not mind at all.

Mr. Brown: Get on with the Bill.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, just as soon as it suits me. I hope our friend will get up and justify his position as a member of the House and of the Farmers and Settlers' Association as well. It is quite clear there has been some pressure exercised which the public are not acquainted with.

Mr. Maley: None whatever.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then perhaps our friends will explain the remarkable somersault on the part of the Government or of the Minister in charge of the Bill, as evidenced in the provisions of the Bill, compared with the attitude adopted by the Honorary Minister only a few months ago. For instance, we know that whilst for the past year or two the Western Farmers, Ltd., and the Farmers and Settlers' Association have been

clamouring for the appointment of an executive board, the honorary Minister was most resolute in declining to accede to that request.

Mr. Maley: But that was a recommendation from the Royal Commission.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was a recommendation from the Farmers and Settlers' conference, which was more potent in getting it included in the Bill than the recommendation of the Royal Commission.

The Attorney General: It was only the Royal Commission that did it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The orders went forth in August, at a conference of that association, and quite regardless of what the Royal Commission may have recommended on the subject.

The Attorney General: I can assure you that this would not have been in the Bill but for the report of the Royal Commission.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps the Attorney General, not being under that association's thumb, may have been able to stand up and take an independent attitude. But there are several of his colleagues who could not maintain such an attitude. Does not the Attorney General recall how valiantly the two Honorary Ministers marched down to that conference, and how tamely submissive they were when the conference was all over, and the instructions had been issued to them? Indeed, how tamely submissive were they! They were tumbling over one another to say, "Yes, sir; no sir; I will not do it again; I will not vote against this; I will vote for that."

The Attorney General: I was not there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Honorary Minister was one of those who marched down in the procession led by the Premier.

The Attorney General: That was a deputation.

Mr. Holman: In true Oriental style.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Here is the position regarding executive control: right up to the holding of that conference in August, the Honorary Minister was most emphatic in declining this proposal. In that attitude, I take it, he was supported by his colleagues, was voicing the views of the Government. Of course, definite resolutions were passed at that conference demanding executive control; and, further than that, the conference instructed its Parliamentary members to insist upon having the association's wishes in this regard granted. Following on that, the Royal Commission recommended a form of executive control; and executive control appears in the Bill. But the executive control provided by the Bill is not the executive control which was recommended by the Railway Commission.

The Minister for Works: Pretty much.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Pretty much with a very great difference. Indeed, from my point of view, not being enamoured of executive control as demanded by the Farmers and Settlers' Association, I rather like the way the executive control is hedged round in this Bill, and the fashion in which the Government have retained the real control. But what I am surprised at is that our friends on the cross benches are satisfied with the bogus executive control set up by the Bill.

The Attorney General: Have not you seen the proposed amendment?

Hon. P. COLLIER: With regard to the members of the board, yes. I am going to move that two members of the Trades Hall should be appointed to that board. In that case we should get a truly excellent board, combining all the

business acumen of the Perth Chamber of Commerce with the sturdy tenacity of some of our Trades Hall friends. I do not know what sort of a time the Minister would have as chairman in trying to keep the board under control. However, the Country party apparently are satisfied, because they have secured what they believe to be executive control.

Mr. Broun: How do you know they are satisfied?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I take their silence to be consent.

[Several interjections.]

Hon. P. COLLIER: Contrast the noise of those hon. members now with their silence when you, Mr. Speaker, were about to put the second reading! The member for York (Mr. Griffiths) apparently was restrained from jumping into the debate because I had secured the adjournment. But I was quite willing to yield to him.

Mr. Maley: We have been waiting for the chairman of the Royal Commission.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You heard my views when I spoke on the Estimates.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am rather glad that our friends are satisfied with this dummy board, and I commend the astuteness of the Minister who drafted the clause. The safeguards with which that executive control is hedged round are such as to make the executive control worth not a snap of the fingers. The Government are retaining the full control of the financial side.

The Minister for Works: Do you agree with that?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am rather inclined to agree with it.

The Minister for Works: We have done something that meets with your commendation then.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was not done by the Government because they thought I desired it. They did not know my views on the matter at all. As administrative control is all a question of finance, what power can the board have? It is all a question of the expenditure of money, and from that aspect the Minister will control the board's decisions every time. The board will be one having power in name only. If the Government accepted the principle of control by a board with executive power because the Royal Commission recommended that principle, they should have taken the Commission's recommendation in toto and not merely set up a skeleton of what the Commission intended.

The Attorney General: The Commission did not go into detail.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Had the Commission known how the Government intended to get round the recommendation, they would have gone into full details. There is another point which confirms me in the opinion that the Farmers and Settlers' Association have had their way with regard to the main features of this Bill: and that is the handling of this season's harvest. Again, prior to the conference, that famous conference which will go down in the political history of this State as one of the most remarkable exhibitions ever witnessed of the control of Ministers by irresponsible outside bodies, we know that the Honorary Minister had almost made up his mind that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., were not going to have the handling of this season's harvest unless they altered their methods a good deal from those which obtained in the previous year. He even went so

far as to invite quotations for the handling of the harvest from a number of the firms who had handled it in previous years. That was just about the time of the meeting of that famous conference. When the 385 wild and woolly farmers who attended that conference heard of the Honorary Minister's proposal to call for quotations with the object of letting the work if satisfactory prices were offered, a storm burst, as we know, with the result that the Honorary Minister was obliged to back down.

The Attorney General: No. That again has been done at the suggestion of the Royal Commission.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. The Royal Commission did not recommend that the Westralian Farmers should get the work this year.

The Attorney General: They recommended that the invitation to submit tenders should be recalled.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Royal Commission have neither condemned nor praised the work of the Westralian Farmers any more than that of any other firm that have handled the business. They left the matter entirely an open one.

The Attorney General: I was speaking of the tenders.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Seeing that the Royal Commission left the matter entirely open, one would have expected that the Government, or the Honorary Minister, would proceed with the announced intention and obtain quotations from all the other firms. But suddenly, after the calling for tenders, the Farmers and Settlers' Association spoke; and that was the end of that proposal. Perhaps this paragraph is worth quoting from page VI. of the Royal Commission's report—

It having come to the knowledge of the Commission that the Government have decided on a policy of inviting quotations for the acquiring of the 1918-19 harvest, it was considered advisable to request the Government to stay its hand pending the receipt of a report from the Commission. The Government at once acceded to the request, and postponed the date for receiving quotations; eventually for some reason withdrawing the invitations altogether. The request was not made in opposition to the policy of the Government, but on perusal of the conditions of the draft agreement, upon which quotations had to be submitted, it was found that the present system of dual control in the care and protection of the wheat was proposed to be continued. Considering that such a system was not in the best interests of the Scheme, the Commission deemed it necessary to advise the Government accordingly. In view of the statement made by the manager of the Scheme to the effect that if the work of acquiring the wheat in the future was carried out by the Scheme officials, several thousand pounds now being paid to the acquiring agent would be saved—this being accomplished principally by the Scheme directly employing the sub-agents instead of operating through an acquiring agent or middleman—the Commission is of opinion that the general manager should be requested, when quotations are being submitted by acquiring firms, to also submit a price for the work.

I do not know whether that recommendation was adopted. I believe it was not. I do not know whether the Government asked the manager, in view of his statement that the work could be done for several thousand pounds less, to submit a price. The Government decided, I suppose deliberately decided, to call for quotations. They

did not even acquaint the Commission of their intention, although the Commission were then inquiring into the whole matter and had promised to make a recommendation in time to allow the Government to consider it prior to entering into an agreement. Notwithstanding that fact, the Government, apparently ignoring the Commission, decided to call for quotations from firms who had been handling the business previously. They did so; and, without any recommendation from the Royal Commission, that step was retraced. Why? What was the pressure? Where did the pressure come from? What was the power and influence exercised upon the Government compelling them to back down from that stand?

Mr. Maley: The Royal Commission.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not at all. The hon. member knows it was not the Royal Commission. It was an institution with infinitely greater power and strength than the Royal Commission possess. It was a political organisation. That is about all I have to say regarding this Bill. I have no objection whatever to the farmers handling their own produce through their co-operative societies. I favour co-operation just as much as our friends do. But I do object to such a body as the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., the membership of which is composed largely of the same men as compose the political organisation known as the Farmers and Settlers' Association, to that kind of mixture of politics and trade, forcing the hands of the Government to yield in important matters, and apparently to yield against the better judgment of the members of the Government. That is what is happening in this instance, and I want to know where it is going to land us if it is to be pursued in all other matters as well. This is a body that intends to extend its operations beyond the handling of wheat. They propose to go into trade and commerce generally. It is their avowed intention to open out as a general trading and business concern and eventually, where are we going to end? The commercial people of the country will not be able to compete with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., because they will not have the political backing in this House, and will not be able to force the hands of the Government as the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., are able to do. What chance have the individual traders of competing on even terms with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., when this body have behind them the backing of the Farmers and Settlers' Association and that association has the support and backing of their members in this House, who are in the position of forcing the hands of the Government?

Mr. Maley: Do not forget that you have joined a co-operative movement yourself.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What would have been said of the Labour Party when they were in office if they had given a contract to a body which was virtually a political organisation, because that is what the Westralian Farmers, Limited, amounts to? We had it in evidence before the Royal Commission that no fewer than 16 or 17 members of Parliament are shareholders in the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and two or three Ministers of the Crown as well. I am not going to say that in either case, that is to any extent, they would be personally benefited by any connection with the Westralian Farmers, Limited; but nevertheless the principle is a dangerous one, one that has to be carefully guarded against, when members are interested in a pecuniary sense in such a body, and interested not only pecuniarily but politically as well. We know that if any

members of this House associated with the Farmers and Settlers' Association declined to carry out the decisions of that association, or failed to exercise their influence on this matter, and on other matters as well when requested to do so, that that political association would have the power to cause the offending members to lose their seats at the next election. We have seen evidence of that in another place when a member was carpeted and challenged as to why he refrained from voting. The association were going to apply the third degree to him, but a tactful member of the conference said, "Perhaps before we go any further we might ask the hon. member whether he will do it again if the Bill comes up," and the hon. member said meekly "Oh no, I will not do it again." There we have evidence of the power and influence exercised by the Farmers and Settlers' Association. During the five years that the Labour party were in office we did not take instructions in that manner. What would the Minister for Works have said if such a thing had happened to him?

Mr. Nairn: He would have boiled over.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He would have exploded and Royal Commissions galore would have been appointed. It is no use opposing the Bill; the contract has been entered into, and I do not know whether I have sufficient knowledge of the details of the expenditure and costs of the business to criticise it from a business point of view, or to say whether it is as good a contract as could be made in the circumstances.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There has been a present of about £5,000 made to the contractor for nothing.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I want to enter my protest against the manner in which a trading concern, which is almost identical with a political organisation, has brought pressure to bear upon the Government, to make them reverse their decision and attitude upon important matters such as has been done during the past three or four months in connection with the handling of the coming harvest.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [6-6]: I intend to vote against the second reading of the Bill, believing as I have done for some time, and as I did when a similar measure was before the House last session, that the Westralian Farmers, Limited, are going to be given a monopoly and are going to work hand in hand with the political party who are using their power in this House, as they have always used it, in the direction of giving into the hands of a few men who from the inception of that party have ruled them from a political point of view. The Bill gives a great amount of power. It not only gives power to the Westralian Farmers, Limited, to handle wheat of a certain harvest but it also gives the Government the opportunity to enter into a contract to give that same company a monopoly of the handling of the harvest of 1920. For the past four years we have been working under war conditions. The Westralian Farmers, Limited, have had a monopoly only because the Government themselves had the disposal of the handling of the wheat generally.

The Attorney General: They got it originally in open competition.

Mr. FOLEY: I doubt that. The Wheat Pool came into existence as a war measure, and the Westralian Farmers got the monopoly of the handling of the wheat because that Pool came into existence under war conditions.

Mr. Brown: They got it in open competition.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They did not.

Mr. FOLEY: The Wheat Pool being the result of the existence of the war, I contend the conditions which then existed do not apply to-day. My own opinion is that as soon as the Bill ceases to operate the Westralian Farmers will have to take their turn and enter into competition with other firms who for many years past have been engaged in the work of handling wheat.

Mr. Maley: They are quite prepared.

Mr. FOLEY: Not one member of the Country party in this Chamber has said he would be in favour of giving private firms an opportunity of entering into competition with the Westralian Farmers, Limited. So far as that institution entering into competition with other firms is concerned, I know that they cannot always deliver the goods as cheaply as many of the private firms have been able to do. The Bill gives a monopoly for the handling of wheat sacks to them, and I know for a positive fact that the Westralian Farmers, Limited, were supplying wheat sacks and wool packs at a certain price when those commodities could have been bought 2s. cheaper from private firms.

Mr. Broun: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. FOLEY: The names of those who are selling them cheaper and also the names of the individual associated with the Westralian Farmers, Limited, who was selling them at a dearer rate can easily be obtained.

Mr. Broun: You do not know the position.

Mr. FOLEY: I know the position of the party who are being run by the Westralian Farmers, Limited, and who have put up a cock and bull story to the farmers that these things can be got cheaper because the farmers themselves are handling them. The people who are handling this wheat are the same people who dictated the policy that had to be followed by the members of the Country party in this Chamber. They did that to the extent that the hon. member who was sitting in the chair I now occupy—the present Treasurer—found himself in the position, instead of being leader of the Country party, of actually being hounded out.

Mr. Maley: Has your policy ever been dictated to you?

Mr. FOLEY: Never. Our policy has always been to combine industrialism with political action and the Country party are starting where the Labour party left off. I am speaking of the Country party, because it is closely interwoven with the names of some gentlemen who dictated the policy that had to be followed. There were Basil Murray, Prowse, Monger, and Marwick. Marwick said that Monger was a grand man and Gardiner was nowhere. Prowse came into it and they held a memorable meeting, at which they scratched each other's backs.

Mr. Broun: On a point of order. Is the hon. member discussing the Wheat Marketing Bill or the Farmers and Settlers' Association?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is in order.

Mr. FOLEY: What did Monger say—and he is well in the Westralian Farmers, Limited? He said there was not one man with any brains in the Country party in the Legislative Assembly. He said they were a lot of numb-skulls. That is in print. Basil Murray is another gentleman who is going to get a monopoly under this Bill.

Mr. Broun: You are annoyed because he got licked.

Mr. FOLEY: Apparently the members of the Country party are not taking much interest in this Bill, judging by their absence from the Chamber at this moment. I was speaking about the gentlemen who were in charge and who were to be given control of the handling of wheat in Western Australia. I spoke of Mr. Monger. He has not proved to this House that he has confidence in the gentlemen who are supporting the Westralian Farmers, Limited. If we could take Mr. Monger's estimate of the gentlemen in this House, who are supporting this measure from industrial and political points of view, then there is something wrong either with the House or the party which is endeavouring to support the Government in bringing this measure forward.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): What is the matter with taking his estimate of himself?

Mr. FOLEY: There is another gentleman who is an administrative head of that institution, which is going to be given a monopoly if this Bill passes. I refer to Mr. Murray. Mr. Murray, like every one of the gentlemen who are the administrative heads of this firm, is an insurance agent purely and simply.

Mr. Broun: You gave him enough on the occasion of the Swan election. Get on to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd.

Mr. FOLEY: Those gentlemen I have named are the administrative heads of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. Mr. Murray is purely an insurance agent.

Mr. Harrison: Not now.

Mr. FOLEY: Not now, because he has a better billet given to him, for the reason that he supported the very party which wishes to foist this measure upon the State. He has never delivered the goods so far as this State is concerned regarding the handling of wheat. The Westralian Farmers, Ltd., have to deliver the goods for this House to be able to say that they have made a success of it.

Mr. Maley: He delivered the goods at the Swan election.

Mr. FOLEY: No, Mr. Corboy did.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Swan election is not under discussion.

Mr. Broun: Neither is Mr. Murray.

Mr. FOLEY: Then there is Mr. Sinclair McGibbon, and Mr. Stirling Taylor. Mr. McGibbon had a few words to say at the memorable conference of the Country party where this scheme was supposed to have had its birth. These few words that Mr. McGibbon had to say were not very complimentary to those hon. members who are now supporting this Bill. There must be something very wrong with this Bill, or there must have been an absolute change of front on the part of the gentlemen who were in administrative control. Why are they doing this? They are doing it because their work and interests, and everything they hold dear, is in the insurance work in this State, and because they are insurance agents. If we are wanting a mine manager we do not go to a bank clerk, or behind a draper's counter, or to an insurance agent, but we look amongst the men who are working in the mines and pick out the man with the best theoretical and practical knowledge, and give him the job.

Mr. Broun: That is what we have done.

Mr. FOLEY: Perhaps, with the exception of Mr. Monger, there is no one who has any idea of or experience in the handling of wheat. Someone has to handle the wheat for them. They are farmers

by proxy, and because of that they are insurance agents first. Let us see if there was any quasi political industrial combination even in the Labour party, as mentioned by the leader of the Opposition. When the State Implement Works started there was a great cry, because it was said that political influence was brought to bear on the matter. A great amount of criticism came from some of the gentlemen who are now members of the Country party, because politics were being brought into industrialism in this State.

Mr. Brown : You are wrong.

Mr. FOLEY : We could quote from "Hansard" and from the speeches delivered throughout the State to show that this State was being ruined by the fact that the then Trades Hall were bringing political influence into every phase of the administration of the State Implement Works. When the Labour Government were in office and started the Implement Works, a board of independent men was appointed, not to get the best labourite they could, not to get the best man who was entirely in agreement with their political opinions and aspirations, but to get the best man possible from the engineering point of view, and they did get the man they supposed to be the best.

Mr. Maley : What has that to do with wheat ?

Mr. FOLEY : It has not much to do with it, because the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., did not take the same stand. Had the Government taken Mr. Don Cameron from the Trades Hall, and put him in charge, because he was one of the executive men of the Labour movement at the time, there would have been a general howl in the community.

Hon. P. Collier : Mr. Cameron has great executive ability.

Mr. FOLEY : I believe he has. When this wheat handling scheme was spoken of, and when the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., were formed, there was no man who had a million to one chance of getting on the executive if he was not entirely in agreement, first with the policy of the Country party, and secondly unless he had a great pull from the St. George's terrace point of view. The Colonial Treasurer was responsible for the co-operative movement amongst the farmers. Immediately he brought it to fruition, Mr. Monger, one of the executive of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., to whom they were going to give a monopoly of the control of wheat, at the memorable meeting at York said, "There were no brains in the Country party and not one of them had any ability with the exception of the then Colonial Treasurer, the leader of the party, but he was not sincere." Again I say that we are giving into the hands of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., by this Bill, if we pass it, into the hands of those gentlemen who at every opportunity work all the political power they possess for all they are worth on members of this Chamber, a great power. I say, without fear of contradiction, that when this party was first formed, not only did they wish to get power over their members in Parliament, but their constitution provided that if those gentlemen who are on the Westralian Farmers' Executive at present decided that there was an alteration of policy necessary, or even politic, those gentlemen had the right to tell these members how they should vote in this Chamber ; with the result that the Scaddan Government were put out, because there was an industrial political organisation against them. It is this same industrial political action, in a worse form than I have ever seen in the State, that will be given power by the passing of this measure.

There is much work to be done, but who is going to do it ? Are these gentlemen going to do it, from a practical standpoint, who are the executive heads of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. ? I do not think so for a moment ; they do not know anything about it, and never did know anything about wheat handling. The position created by the Bill is that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., are given a monopoly of the handling of the wheat. These men are not looking at it from the farmers' point of view, but only from the point of view of how much they can get out of the farmer. The Bill provides that they may get a contract, and immediately they get the contract they may sub-let it to whom they please. I say, with all the energy and vigour I possess, that the means adopted regarding the sub-letting of the handling of the wheat at present are not only a disgrace to the State, but not in the best interests of those whom they say they are considering, namely, the farmers. Any monopoly that gives the right to any body of men, or any institution, to extort money from any persons without doing any work, we do not want to foster in this State, as we will be fostering them if this Bill passes. This firm is going to have this handling, and are going to sub-let it. Members know, as well as I do, that the people they are sub-letting it to are not getting a fair thing, according to the price that this firm is getting.

Mr. Maley : Do you think they should have consulted you first ?

Mr. FOLEY : This is the first chance I have had of being consulted as to the conditions appertaining to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., contract, and some of us are not making bad use of that opportunity either. I hope the House will make so much of the opportunity that the Bill will not be passed. There are many men in the State who have kept the farmers on the land and to whom they owe much money. Now the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., come in and say "We will do your work for you, but you must pay us cash." The firms who stuck to them for years are to be thrown overboard, and are not even to get a little of the cash that the Government are providing for the handling of the wheat. The farmers, of course, are going to pay that, but only because they are forced to do so. The farmers have been well treated by the Government, and have been treated well by the men who have handled their wheat in the past ; in this regard : that they have been kept on the land by those men. One of their own party has said that the farmers' representatives are the Bulgarians of politics.

Hon. P. Collier : That was a slight exaggeration.

Mr. FOLEY : We not only give the Westralian Farmers, Limited, the right to deal with the wheat of 1918-19, but the worst feature of the Bill is that we are giving the Government the right to enter into an agreement with the Westralian Farmers, Limited, for the handling of the 1920 harvest. I believe in equality of opportunity. When the necessity for the Bill arose, war conditions prevailed, but fortunately we are no longer in a war period. There are in the State other firms who are desirous of doing the work, and I contend that when we fix up the 1918-19 harvest we should give them equality of opportunity for doing the work.

Mr. Maley : They have had it in the past.

Mr. FOLEY : They have not. The Westralian Farmers, Limited, have a monopoly only because the Government gave it to them, and the same

Government that gave it to them had to consult Parliament when they did it. The House will be in recess and therefore Parliament will not be consulted until long after the proposed agreement is made with the Westralian Farmers, Limited, and in consequence no other firm will have an opportunity of competing for the handling of the wheat. I believe a mistake was made regarding the milling and the handling of the wheat generally; because, after all, when our wheat is to be taken away and the firms constituting the Wheat Pool in the various States are being consulted as to what wheat shall be taken first, I believe the wheat of the other States will be given priority over the West Australian wheat. The House would be wise if they took away from the Westralian Farmers, Limited, the monopoly of the handling of the wheat. I wish to emphasise the fact that some gentlemen who are to be given a monopoly in administration are not fit to do this job, when we consider the capabilities of other firms desirous of tendering for the work. The Government should say to every firm "We will let the work by tender." And if the tender of an outside firm is the lowest, that firm should get the work, if in a position to carry it out.

Mr. Maley: They would do it for nothing, merely to crush us out of existence.

Mr. FOLEY: If they would do it for nothing there would be a clamour from the Country party to give it to private enterprise. The hon. member said a little while ago that his party was willing to give equality of opportunity. If that is so, let him vote against the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. Maley: They had opportunity in the past, but they refused to compete with the Westralian Farmers, Limited.

Mr. FOLEY: I believe the measure is not in the best interests of the State, and therefore, I will vote against the second reading.

Mr. BROWN (Beverley) [7-53]: I have been amazed at the remarks of the two previous speakers, especially those of the member who has just sat down. In his intricate mental wanderings he has spoken of subjects about which he knows nothing. Before tea he referred to the supplying of bags to the farmers by the Westralian Farmers, Limited, and he led hon. members to believe that the Westralian Farmers, Limited, were making from 2s. 6d. to 2s. 9d. profit on every dozen bags they supplied. Let me point out to the hon. member that the position in respect of bags is uncontrollable. He knows, or he ought to know, that for this season the price of bags has been fixed by the Federal Government, and that all agents are bound to supply at or under that price.

Mr. Foley: I was speaking about the time when the Westralian Farmers, Limited, had to enter into competition with other firms for the supply of bags.

Mr. BROWN: In supplying bags the Westralian Farmers, Limited, do exactly as other agents do. If the orders are sent in by farmers early, so that the supply can be secured, the bags are supplied at a certain figure. When I spoke of ordering bags from the Westralian Farmers, Limited, I was advised to send in my order early, so that the bags could be obtained at a cheaper rate. I did so, and my bags were supplied at the cheapest rate at which the other agents were selling.

The Attorney General: Which is 4½d. less than the proclaimed price.

Mr. BROWN: No, I am referring to an earlier season. However, the price was reasonable. The farmer who mentioned this to the hon. member

must be one of those who did not give his order early, or alternatively, having ordered early, he found that his harvest was better than was anticipated, with the result that he had to order a second lot of bags. If that was the case, the Westralian Farmers, Limited, would tell him the exact position, would explain that it was necessary to purchase the bags locally from some other agent, and would send them along at the price paid, plus railage. That is the position in regard to bags. The attitude taken up by hon. members in regard to the Westralian Farmers Limited, is to me extraordinary. It is a body that the farmers themselves are supporting. The majority of the farmers are personally interested in it, and I hope that every farmer will join it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They cannot help it; they are being pushed into it.

Mr. BROWN: We have the Westralian Farmers, Limited, to protect us. We are going to support the Westralian Farmers, Limited, so long as we are satisfied that they are clear and above board in their transactions, and that they are treating the farmers fairly. The leader of the Opposition mentioned the combination of the Westralian Farmers, Limited, the Farmers and Settlers' Association and the Country party as a political body, leading hon. members to believe that we in this Chamber were dictated to by the executive of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, and had to do what they told us to do.

Hon. P. Collier: Why, you were chastised at the conference for not doing so!

Mr. BROWN: Nothing of the sort. I am astounded at the leader of the Opposition making such a statement. For nearly five years the hon. member and his colleagues sat here on the Ministerial benches and were dictated to by caucus, and the whole of their policy was framed accordingly.

Hon. P. Collier: Caucus is not the executive of an outside body.

Mr. BROWN: Why, the whole of your instructions came from the Trades Hall!

Hon. P. Collier: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. BROWN: I say the hon. members' instructions were taken from the Trades Hall.

Hon. P. Collier: In order to allow the hon. member to cool off a little, I must ask for a withdrawal of the statement, that during the time we were on the Ministerial benches we received our instructions from the Trades Hall. The statement is not correct.

Mr. SPEAKER: The leader of the Opposition has asked for a withdrawal.

Mr. BROWN: I withdraw, nevertheless, I am astounded at the leader of the Opposition making such a statement in regard to the Country party. We are here representing the farmers, and each member sitting on these cross benches has been put here by the farmers as their representatives; but we have received no instructions whatever from the Westralian Farmers, Limited, or the Farmers and Settlers' Association.

Hon. P. Collier: You just have a yarn when you meet them?

Mr. BROWN: We may do that. The leader of the Opposition is near the truth now.

Mr. Brown: They have honourable understandings.

Mr. BROWN: In spite of all the opposition levelled against the Westralian Farmers, Limited, that company is going to live, and the farmers have made up their minds to support the company

until it becomes a body of strength, and a body of protection for the individual farmer.

Mr. Munsie: The Westralian Farmers' will live while the I.A.B. exists. Cut that out, and that is the end of the Westralian Farmers.

Mr. BROWN: There is very little business done by I.A.B. settlers with the Westralian Farmers. All those who can pay for their requirements, it has been asserted, have gone to the Westralian Farmers, and only those who are unable to pay, it is said, remain on the board. As regards farmers who are financially sound, let me point out that the transactions in the past between the individual farmer and the private firms prior to the establishment of the Westralian Farmers, were such that the private firms received a profit on all products sold to the farmer, and charged substantial interest on the amounts due if they were not paid immediately. Those private firms have built themselves up out of profits made out of the farmer. It is time the farmers woke up as regard the handling of wheat, from which the agents have in the past made enormous profits. They must have made enormous profits, or they would not have hon. members fighting their cause in this Chamber. The Perth Chamber of Commerce has evidently been at the member for Leonora (Mr. Foley) and bringing pressure to bear on him.

Mr. Foley: I ask for a withdrawal of that statement. Since I have been a member of this House, no man in this State has ever put pressure on me.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Leonora objects to the remark made by the member for Beverley (Mr. Brown).

Mr. BROWN: If the hon. member objects, I withdraw. Respecting the Westralian Farmers and the present agreement, the leader of the Opposition said that pressure had been brought to bear upon the Government. I emphatically deny that.

Hon. P. Collier: What caused the Government's change of attitude?

Mr. BROWN: That will be explained by Ministers: it is not for me to explain. A suggestion was made by myself either to the Premier or to the Honorary Ministers that if tenders were to be called in open competition for the handling of the wheat, a price should be fixed by the Government of so much per bushel at which all could come in. Had that course been adopted, nine-tenths of the wheat would have been handled by the Westralian Farmers. The figures of previous years prove that. During the first year that the Westralian Farmers operated they handled but a very small portion of the wheat, owing to their coming in late. But in the following year they got considerably over half of the wheat.

Mr. Harrison: Three-fifths.

Mr. BROWN: That clearly proves that the Westralian Farmers in fair and open competition would have got nine-tenths of this season's wheat. My objection to the calling of tenders in open competition at prices to be submitted is, as I stated in this House last session, that it would not matter to the other firms if they did the handling at a loss of even one penny per bushel. In view of the enormous handling they have in the Eastern States, such a loss would not have mattered to them here. Their object in incurring the loss would be to prevent the Westralian Farmers from building up an organisation.

Hon. P. Collier: Is that a principle generally adopted by private firms?

Mr. Maley: Yes, absolutely. You know too.

Mr. BROWN: There is not the slightest doubt that that would have happened. The Westralian Farmers would in such a competition not have had the handling of the wheat this year. If with a fixed price per bushel, nine-tenths of the wheat would have been put through the Westralian Farmers.

Hon. P. Collier: In other words, with fair and open competition they could not have got an trade.

Mr. BROWN: I ask the leader of the Opposition how a child, so to speak, coming into a service of this kind could compete with grown up firms?

Hon. P. Collier: The Westralian Farmers can carry on with political backing and influence.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BROWN: As to the Bill itself, I congratulate the Premier on the fulfilment of his promise made to me last year, that the measure would be brought down early this year. The leader of the Opposition has referred to a speech I made last session on the wheat handling of 1917-18. He pointed out that I blamed the Government and spoke strongly against them, for bringing down a measure to be ratified by Parliament in the dying hours of the session. But the leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that at the time that speech was made, and at the time the Bill was before the House, this year had entered upon the month of May.

Hon. P. Collier: Of course.

Mr. BROWN: That disposes of the hon. member's argument.

Hon. P. Collier: But let the hon. member quote what he said.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BROWN: I will leave it to the leader of the Opposition to do that. The Premier has fulfilled his promise as regards the bringing down of the measure. To-day the sheds are floored, and some of them are roofed; and at Spencer's Brook there is new wheat going into the new shed. As regards the handling itself, last year it was the 15th February before the farmers could forward a bush of their wheat. This season it is being delivered as it is taken off the field.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But that has nothing to do with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd.

Mr. BROWN: I do not say it has. I am replying to a criticism of the leader of the Opposition on what I said last session. Last session the Bill was introduced on the 30th May. We have it now before us, and delivery has already been taken of the wheat, and the agreement has been signed. I notice that the Bill provides for an executive board, but so far as I can see the executive board will differ very slightly from the advisory board of which we have had experience. An executive board would be a body operating and having sole control, and if they desired to do anything it would be carried out. But the proposed executive board under this Bill is to consist of two farmers elected by ballot by the wheat growers, of two farmers nominated by the Government and of the Minister as chairman. In all the operations affecting the Wheat Scheme the balance of power is given to the Government, practically the present position.

The Attorney General: You do not suggest that the Government nominees would vote as the Government wish, in opposition to the farmers?

Mr. BROWN: I do not suggest that; but am trying to point out that the executive board

proposed under this Bill would be practically the same as the present advisory board, which consists of two nominees, of the Minister as chairman, and of two farmers appointed by the Government. The only difference between the advisory board and the executive board would be that the latter would include two representatives elected by the wheat growers. I am unable to see that there is any improvement whatever.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you want the board to consist entirely of farmers?

Mr. BROUN: No.

Mr. Teesdale: This Bill gives all the farmers a chance of making a selection. They had not that opportunity previously.

Mr. BROUN: That is so; but the executive board will not have power to say that certain things shall be done. Everything remains subject to the dictation of the Government.

The Attorney General: Very well. Relieve the Government of the responsibility of the guarantee, and we will agree to let the farmers manage everything.

Mr. BROUN: It is nonsense to talk like that. The Commonwealth Government practically commandeered the wheat, and therefore should be responsible for paying for it. Where would the country have been had not the Wheat Pool been brought into existence?

Hon. P. Collier: The Labour Government had to force the Wheat Pool on the farmers; do not forget that.

Mr. Foley: And then the farmers put the Labour Government out of office for doing that.

Mr. BROUN: The executive board, in my opinion, cannot prove satisfactory. Suppose a meeting of the board is attended by four members—the Minister, the two farmers nominated by the Government, and one farmer elected by the wheat growers; then the Minister has the balance of power because of his casting vote. The Minister has practically absolute power to dictate to the board at all times.

Hon. P. Collier: It is the confidence trick at work.

Mr. BROUN: My idea of such a board is one that has absolute power and whose instructions should be carried out. That would do away with the friction and the trouble that is being caused at the present time. It has been stated from time to time, as far as the price that is being paid to the Westralian Farmers is concerned, that it is practically a mere pittance. There is very little profit going to be made out of the handling of this harvest.

Mr. Foley: That is why they are subletting it all.

Mr. BROUN: It has been mentioned by the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) that it has been given in evidence by Mr. Keys, the manager of the Scheme, that £3,000 has been paid to the Westralian Farmers, Limited, for services which they never rendered. I say that has not been done. The Westralian Farmers, Limited, have carried out their agreement to the letter. I would ask the hon. member, was not the eighth of a penny paid to the Westralian Farmers for checking and sampling?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The agreement said "for work done," and they never did the work.

Mr. BROUN: The subagents made a loss on the handling and the Westralian Farmers subsidised them to the extent of £4,000.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They were doing extra work at increased cost.

Mr. BROUN: Nothing of the kind. The subsidy of £4,000 counteracts the statements made that the Westralian Farmers, Limited, received £3,000 more than they should have done for the handling of the wheat. If we want efficient handling a fair price must be paid. The Westralian Farmers, Limited, are handling the wheat at a price this year which, after all is said and done, will mean a big saving to the farmers and to the Wheat Pool. Had it not been for the Westralian Farmers, Limited, operating, the prices to-day would have been very different from what they are. It is the competition of the Westralian Farmers that has caused the price for handling to be as low as it is. The Westralian Farmers, Limited, are prepared to do the whole of the handling of the wheat from the farm or the siding into the depôts or ship's side at a price less than it is being done for in any of the Eastern States to-day. What is more, they are prepared to quote for the handling of that and at the same time pay one-eighth of a penny more to the country agents for handling stuff at the siding.

The Attorney General: The present agreement is lower than any in the Eastern States.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Are you sure?

The Attorney General: Mr. Keys tells us that it is.

Mr. BROUN: The service is very much more difficult, because in the Eastern States the number of bags that go to the siding is greater than is the case here. In Victoria there are 315 stations where the bulk of the wheat is handled and at 60 of these 100,000 bags are received. At the principal sidings here the average is only 8,000 bags.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There are about 50 which receive over 22,000 bags.

Mr. BROUN: But the average is only 8,000. Anyone who has had experience in the handling of wheat knows that the more you have at the depôt the less shifting there will be and the cheaper and the better will the work be done. Therefore, in taking the prices quoted by the Westralian Farmers, Limited, we must come to the conclusion that those prices are as low as they can possibly be. The Westralian Farmers, Limited, are handling the wheat this year at a big saving to the Wheat Pool. Had they not been operating the price would have been much higher.

Mr. Foley: The stacking is much better in the Eastern States.

Mr. BROUN: That has not been proved. The condition of the wheat, at any rate, is very much worse than it is here. It has been mentioned that there could have been a big saving made by the State handling the wheat, that is, if the Scheme employed sub-agents instead of having acquiring agents. My experience of Government handling and Government management is that it has always been very much more expensive than anything done by a private firm or by contract. Work done by contract is generally done much cheaper than by day labour, and under the system of State handling the costs would go up and one would never know where they would end. There would be no limit to the costs that would accrue. There would be no assurance given that the wheat would be handled for a certain figure. They could put up the cost of handling as high as they liked. It would certainly be detrimental to the Pool if the State were given the handling of the wheat at the depôts. It will certainly be done much cheaper by private firms under the system we are now engaged on. There is one thing I have noticed,

and it is that the f.a.q. standard has not been fixed. I do not know whether it is necessary for that to be included in the agreement, but they are already carting wheat into the sheds. I do not know what the position is in regard to that. So far as the handling of the harvest by the Westralian Farmers is concerned, the argument has been advanced against the Westralian Farmers that it has not been efficiently handled in the past, and that therefore they should not be given the sole right to handle the harvest again this year. No doubt some of the blame rests with the Westralian Farmers, Limited, but the major portion of it rests with the Scheme. The Scheme's inspectors are operating at different stations and they are not in close touch with their chiefs to get instructions in time. In many instances last year, owing to the bad management of the Scheme, bags were not procurable and the sub-agents had to hunt around to secure bags, although under the agreement the Government were supposed to supply them. When they had not bags to operate, it meant that their hands were tied and they were forced to look around and pick up bags wherever they could. In regard to the handling of the wheat, in looking through the agreement I find that provision is made for the imposition of penalties on the Westralian Farmers, Limited, penalties for breach of any clauses in the agreement. The Government may be justified in providing for these penalties but I consider they are too drastic.

The Attorney General: They are very small.

Mr. BROWN: But they can be imposed from time to time and those operating the Scheme can make things very objectionable for the Westralian Farmers, Limited.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Quite right too.

Mr. BROWN: Under the different clauses of the Bill it is possible for them to go so far as to carry out the work themselves and then charge the Westralian Farmers with the cost and impose a penalty as well. I would ask whether the Government are suspicious.

The Attorney General: No.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They ought to be, from past experience.

Mr. BROWN: Do they think the Westralian Farmers, Limited, are not going to carry out their work legitimately or honestly?

Mr. Teesdale: Anything they do will be in the interests of the farmers.

Hon. P. Collier: Is a man suspicious when he asks for a receipt for money paid?

The Attorney General: These are the usual terms.

Mr. BROWN: There is right alongside the agreement with the Westralian Farmers, Limited, an agreement with the millers of the State and that agreement contains practically the same clauses, but there are no penalties provided for any breach of contract. Why this discrimination?

The Attorney General: Because the millers' agreement can be put an end to very rapidly.

Mr. BROWN: The miller's agreement I admit is only a short one, but there is the point that the Westralian Farmers can be fined and yet under the millers' agreement there is no provision at all for a penalty.

The Attorney General: The millers' agreement is a very stringent one.

Mr. BROWN: I do not think it is any more stringent than in the case of the Wheat Pool.

The Attorney General: They are on quite different lines.

Mr. BROWN: Do not the Government want the millers—

Hon. P. Collier: The Government are more free to dismiss the millers than to dismiss the Westralian Farmers, Limited.

Mr. BROWN: Nothing of the kind. There are two agreements, one signed by the millers and one by the Westralian Farmers, Limited. As long as they are adhering to their agreement the Westralian Farmers, Limited, can defy the Government.

The Attorney General: The agreement is neutral; they have agreed to this clause.

Mr. BROWN: I know that, but I object to the two agreements being framed in a different manner, such as has been done here. It makes one think that the Government have no confidence in the Westralian Farmers, Limited, although they have been given the handling of the wheat. The Government are imposing these penalties because they think they cannot trust them. I would not mind if the Government imposed these penalties upon the millers also, but I would have pointed out, however, that I think that the clauses containing the penalties were too drastic. There is a tremendous opening for officials to say that the Westralian Farmers, Limited, are not carrying out their contract and to impose penalties on them from time to time. One of the penalties provides for a fine of £10 on each occasion. I do not think the Westralian Farmers, Limited, are likely to break the agreement. With regard to Clause 5, I also understand that the millers have only to put up a bond of £1,000.

The Attorney General: Because they are delivering the goods every day of the week.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They do not put it up at all.

The Attorney General: Yours is a continuing contract for continuing services.

Mr. BROWN: The wheat is continually going into the depôts and the Westralian Farmers, Limited, lose all right and interest in it after that, so far as the agreement is concerned.

The Attorney General: Not until it is passed.

Mr. BROWN: I consider that this £10,000 bond from the Westralian Farmers, Limited, is too heavy a one for any agent handling wheat, in comparison with the bond to be put up by the millers.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is very small in comparison with that provided before, namely £120,000.

Mr. BROWN: This has been reduced considerably already. In all probability the bond has never been put up by any of them. At all events not the whole of it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I think so. I think the Westralian Farmers did but not the millers.

The Attorney General: There is hardly any reason for the bond in the case of the millers. They are continuing to grist the wheat, and are delivering the goods.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Then why put it in the Bill if it is not put up?

Mr. BROWN: In regard to the millers' agreement, it was mentioned by the Attorney General that a saving of £38,000 had been made in the new agreement. This goes to show that the agreement made with the millers previously was a bad one. It also shows that we lost £38,000 last year, or paid more than we should have paid to that amount.

The Attorney General: I gave you my reasons for that.

Mr. BROWN: Who was responsible?

The Attorney General: The weevils were responsible.

Mr. BROWN: Nothing of the kind. The sum of £38,000 too much was paid last year to the millers, and there is no saving on this year's operations. Even now under the new agreement the millers are going to make a substantial profit. Under the agreement last year they were allowed on bags to the equivalent of about 7s. to the ton of flour, and in many cases there were not two bags to the ton which were unfit to use for wheat, and which could not be used again, with the result that there was a profit in practically every case of 6s. on the ton of flour put out by the mill. The £38,000 paid last year represented a loss to the Scheme, and these millers are going to make a substantial profit on all the gristing and handling they do.

Mr. Munsie: No one can make a profit but the farmer.

Mr. BROWN: I have heard insinuations from members of this Chamber, and outside the Chamber, and insulting statements also regarding the Country party from hon. members, and the statement that the farmers have been spoon-fed. The best thing members can do in either House is to call the farmers Bolsheviks, and have done with them.

Mr. O'Loghlen: That would not improve their credit.

Mr. BROWN: Let them withdraw all their support and help they are giving to the farmers. Let them do nothing for them, prevent them from sending a bag of wheat over the railways or from growing a fleece of wool, and tell them to get out of the State. Where would the State be in that event?

Mr. Munsie: This State would not have been bankrupt if it had not had the help of the farmers.

Mr. BROWN: That is a nice statement to come from the hon. member.

Mr. Munsie: It is quite true.

Mr. BROWN: Let members do what I suggest and where would they be at the end of 10 years?

Mr. Munsie: I wish I knew where I would be at the end of 10 years.

Mr. BROWN: If it had not been for the wheat grower and the wool grower where would this State have been?

Hon. P. Collier: And if it had not been for the miner, too?

Mr. BROWN: The State would have been in a peculiar position to-day but for them, and would have been absolutely insolvent.

Hon. P. Collier: You were not very flourishing when the miners came to this State.

Mr. BROWN: Statements have been made by men with wisdom, and if the leader of the Opposition contradicts them he has no wisdom, that the State would have been insolvent if it had not been for the wool and the wheat grown during the war. Only the other day the Prime Minister said he did not know what would have happened but for the Federal Government adopting this spoon-feeding system, and continuing the wheat growing in the Commonwealth. He said nothing about the wool, of which 52 million pounds worth has been exported. Where would the war loans have been but for our products?

The Attorney General: If it had not been for the British Government finding the money for the wheat and the wool, you could not have carried on.

Mr. Munsie: The British Government got no thanks for that.

Mr. BROWN: A good many more would not have been able to carry on but for that. If it had not been for the wheat and the wool, we should

not have had the money in the State which we now have.

Hon. P. Collier: If it had not been for the buyers of the wool and the wheat we would not have had the money.

Mr. BROWN: So far as our wool is concerned, we would have been just as well off as we are to-day. I admit that wool growing is a good thing, but so far as wheat is concerned we might have been in a very different position. It is very hard to say what would have happened if the Wheat Pool had not been in operation. With all due thanks to the central wheat board, I do think they would have done much better if they had made special endeavours to improve the situation. With regard to the value of the wheat in the different pools, we have heard it said by hon. members that, so far as the wheat handling is concerned, the Government are finding the money and financing the Scheme, and are going to make a loss on the operations on the wheat already stacked, and the wheat that is coming in. I think it has been mentioned that the weevils have eaten the wheat, and that it will be unfit for export. I feel sure the Government will find that after the whole of these pools are cleared up, irrespective of America disallowing any importations into their States, they will show a substantial profit over and above that which has been paid.

Hon. P. Collier: That is only a guess.

Mr. BROWN: So far as the weevil is concerned, it is not so bad as hon. members would have us believe. One mill operating, about the third largest mill in the State, turned out last year 42lbs. of flour to the bushel of weevily wheat.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Only two mills did that.

Hon. P. Collier: That was weevil and flour.

Mr. BROWN: With the machinery that these mills have it is quite easy for them to extract 42lbs. of flour to the bushel of good wheat, but I was somewhat surprised to hear of this extraction of 42lbs. of flour from weevily wheat. It shows that the weevils are not doing so much harm to the wheat as a whole.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I suppose you know the reason they did it.

Mr. BROWN: I do not know to what the hon. member is referring. Some of the flour has been exported, and I know it is the best that can be had in the State from this mill. I have myself frequently looked at the wheat stored in the stacks and at the wheat in the trucks in transit. I have frequently got out of a train at a siding and examined a truck of wheat, and on nearly all occasions I have found weevil, but it is by no means bad. Most of the grain is in excellent condition. There has been a considerable amount of wheat sold outside that which was sold to the British Government. There has been sold to South Africa, Japan, and New Zealand 11,645,196 bushels, and four million bushels were sold at the price averaging between 7s. and 9s. a bushel. Some of it has been sold at 9s. 9d., some at 6s. 10d., and some at 7s. With the wheat that we have remaining I have no hesitation in saying that we can make sales outside the British Dominions for all the flour that can be gristed, as soon as shipping accommodation is available, and that the balance of our wheat will be sold also at a reasonable figure. A number of vessels will shortly be released, of 10,000 tons. It will not take long to ship the whole of our wheat by means of these vessels. So far as the central wheat board is concerned, I consider that they have not done as well as they might in regard to the sales of

flour. Only the other day the "Kangaroo" was commandeered. The charter was secured by Mr. Padbury. I congratulate Mr. Padbury on his business acumen in being able to secure the charter and to make a handsome profit out of the sale of flour. He sold over 5,000 tons. The freight paid was £76,125, or £13 per ton. He paid £7,000 odd in commission for bringing off the sale. He sold the flour at £38 per ton and made a net profit of over £20,000. I congratulate Mr. Padbury on this deal; but I do not congratulate the Australian Wheat Board on their actions when private enterprise can come in and bring off a sale of this character.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Are you sure that your statements are correct?

Mr. Broun: I have been given to understand that they are correct, and I have every reason to believe that at least they are very close to the truth.

Mr. Maley: Ockerby was willing to pay £25 per ton freight.

Mr. Broun: If a private firm can bring off such a sale, why are not the Australian Wheat Board able to do the same? It shows that they are not making any special effort to get rid of our wheat. I hope we shall come out on the right side of this wheat proposition, when all is fixed up. My main object in endeavouring to assist the Westralian Farmers, Limited, in securing the handling of the wheat is to keep them in touch with the farmers, so that after the Wheat Pool is abolished and we are again on the world's markets, we shall have the Westralian Farmers, Limited, to handle our products for us at a minimum cost, thus leaving us an enhanced profit. The cost of production of wheat is very much greater to-day than it was a few years ago, and unless we can obtain a certain price to make wheat payable, it will be impossible for farmers to continue growing wheat; and, unfortunately, many of our farmers are unable to grow any other produce. I have certain amendments to ask for when in Committee, and I regret very much that the Government have not seen fit to carry out the recommendation of the Royal Commission in respect of handling the wheat into the depôts. That proposal might well have been included in the agreement, and the Westralian Farmers, Limited, allowed to handle the farmers' product from the siding into the depôt. Whilst the Westralian Farmers, Limited, desire to handle that wheat into the depôt, they agree to the Government taking complete control and having an agreement drawn up binding the Westralian Farmers, Limited, to keep the wheat in proper order and condition. Nothing more can be desired. The Westralian Farmers, Limited, are perfectly willing to do that, and I very much regret that the Government have not seen fit to accept the recommendation of the Royal Commission.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (North-East Fremantle) [8-50]: I rise with a certain amount of diffidence to speak on this question.

The Minister for Works: Not with diffidence.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Speak with diffidence if you like, but not too long.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I shall please myself about that. I notice that one of the Honorary Ministers in dealing with this question has said—

When we remember the volume of evidence the Royal Commission took and the consideration that had to be given to a great number of vital points, we cannot blame them for the delay. The trouble was that the task was too big for

them, and the time at their disposal was too limited.

When we realise that the gentleman who made that statement was able to swallow the whole of the Scheme in 24 hours, I think I am justified in my diffidence about speaking on this question to-night. The first alteration proposed in the Bill, and which the leader of the Opposition says he is not in accord with, is that an executive board be appointed. Like the member for Beverley (Mr. Broun) I regret that the Government have not carried out the recommendation of the Royal Commission in this respect. We have proposed in the Bill an executive board it is true, but after all it is only an advisory board, just as it was previously. There is not much difference. In the first place it was thought advisable that in dealing with a large question such as this, involving millions of money, an advisory board should be appointed to advise the Minister in the administration of the Wheat Pool. That advisory board was really an executive board. The whole of the administration was carried out by the board, in conjunction with the Minister, who was the chairman of the board. The decisions of the board were always carried into effect. That lasted until the change of Government was made. Then for a few months another Minister took control. He ignored the board. He was never present at the board meetings, and nothing was discussed between him and the board except by way of an occasional communication. Then there came another change, and the present Minister was appointed. His knowledge of the position was such that he did away with the board altogether, and for three months there were no meetings of the board. But the Minister's knowledge was not quite sufficient to enable him to grasp the questions arising from day to day. And then of course grievances came in. Does the Minister think that an executive board with full administrative powers—

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I would allow no irresponsible people to have a hand in it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They are not irresponsible.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): They are, and they are selfishly affected as well.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Does the Minister think that an executive board would appoint a manager, and, before the appointment was actually made, allow a bond of £20,000 to be returned to that manager's firm, although the firm had not completed their contract?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): It is a good job it was done.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Royal Commission was of opinion that by appointing a board and giving those who put their wheat into the Pool two representatives on that board—because up to date the farmers have an interest in the Pool; I am not speaking for the future—we thought the Government should appoint two representatives and that the Minister should keep in close touch with the board, while the Government should have absolute control, not in regard to finances for administration, but in regard to the guarantees given to the farmer for the purchase of the wheat. I do not know how the Government can call the proposed board an executive board, because the board will have no power of administration, but only power to advise. If the board is to be like some of the past boards, it will be not even an advisory board but will be an advised board. It is a step in the right direction that there should be

continuity of management, and that those dealing with the question should continue to carry through and so take greater interest in their work than any Minister could do. For that reason the Royal Commission felt that the appointment of an executive board was justified. I hope that when the Bill gets into Committee we shall strike out the words "dealing with the finances for administration" and retain the control of the Government in respect of guarantees.

The Attorney General: How can you separate the one from the other?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The one is merely a managing concern without any guarantee at all. If the board administers its affairs badly, the Government have power to remove any or all of the members of that board.

The Attorney General: But they might lose £50,000 while you are thinking about removing them.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the farmer is to have any increased payments under the Pool, that increase must be brought about by cheapness of administration. Is it likely that the representatives of the farmers will go there for the express purpose of administering extravagantly?

The Attorney General: I do not think for a moment that it would be done deliberately.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They would take every care that it was not done.

The Attorney General: I am sure of that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Next as to the erection of storage sheds and building. According to evidence given before the Royal Commission by the departmental officer concerned, the Government expended last year in this direction £101,000. But according to the evidence given by the hon. H. Stewart, M.L.C., the Minister has furnished him with details of the expenditure showing it to total £113,000. Which is right I cannot say. Mr. Stewart's evidence was given a few weeks later than the departmental officer's, but it jumped the amount by £12,000. Now, this Bill gives the Government power to erect storage sheds and buildings. Previously, there was only implied power. The question has arisen whether the Government had power to spend money on behalf of the Wheat Pool. However, any action taken in that direction is ratified by this Bill. "Buildings" includes silos and grain elevators. I propose to ask the House to insert a provision that this clause shall not give the Government or the executive committee power to erect silos or elevators. That is necessary because last year after Parliament had turned down the agreement entered into with Metcalf & Co. the then advisory board recommended the Minister in spite of Parliament's decision to proceed with the erection of silos. I compliment the Minister on having turned down that recommendation. We must have in this Bill a provision that Parliament shall have the opportunity of reviewing the question before such works are initiated in this State. I hope that in Committee hon. members will assist me to insert such a provision.

The Attorney General: The Government would never be a party to the construction of silos without the consent of Parliament.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But the committee could go on with the construction.

The Attorney General: The financial power rests with the Government.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But the Government are pledged to the construction of silos; they promised to go on with it.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): So were your Government pledged to it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Honorary Minister knows my views on the subject. Next as to the agreement with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. If I were to move an amendment that the Bill should be read a second time this day six months, I could, I think, claim the vote of every member of the Farmers and Settlers' Association who has a seat in this Chamber; that is if those members are true to a principle adopted at one of their conferences. Mr. Basil Murray, a member of the executive in 1916, moved that a plank be added to the platform of the party reading as follows—

The right of every citizen to convey and dispose of his produce in the open market in any part of the Commonwealth without restriction by any combination or Government, consistent with the extension and promulgation of such legislation or regulation as may be necessary for the prevention of the spreading of diseases or pests.

Mr. Murray, who was then not manager of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., nor managing director, believed then in giving to every citizen freedom of action in dealing with his produce. Endeavours were made at that time to stop the Wheat Pool from coming into existence, to prevent any person from being compelled to go into the Pool. The conference resolved that it was unnecessary to insert the principle as a plank of the platform, and that the motion be affirmed as a principle.

Hon. P. Collier: They have reconstructed a lot since then.

The Attorney General: The war has taught us many things.

Hon. P. Collier: But this was in 1916, after two years of war.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is the principle laid down by one of the largest conferences ever held in connection with the Farmers and Settlers' Association. I ask hon. members of this House who are also members of that association, how can they consistently vote for a measure of this kind? To-day we find the very gentleman who moved that motion using all the political influence he can bring to bear, in order to force the Government into a certain line of action. That is the very man who moved the principle affirming freedom of trade. I ask hon. members, has the position changed much since 1916? Mr. Murray himself has changed considerably. He is now managing director of the very company who desire a monopoly of wheat handling in this State. It has been said, and perhaps truthfully, that the Westralian Farmers are not a political organisation. I suppose some hon. members opposite will be surprised to learn that various members on this side of the Chamber are shareholders in the Westralian Farmers, Ltd.

Mr. Maloy: We are not surprised to learn it. We have known it for a long time.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It must be recognised that this question of the agreement with the Westralian Farmers is attended with some difficulty, in view of the fact that about 20 members of Parliament are shareholders in

that company. We are told that the Westralian Farmers are not a political body, because certain members of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association executive resigned from the executive upon accepting office in connection with the Westralian Farmers.

Mr. Maley: That is not so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Those gentlemen say, "We are still members of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association, but we resigned from the association's executive immediately we were appointed to positions connected with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd." Seeing that this Bill provides that members of the executive board to be appointed must not be members of that executive, the Minister has evidently resolved to adopt the same principle. But what is the actual position? A gentleman who was vice-president of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association in 1916 at all events, and named Mr. Prowse—which name we have heard before—advocates that legislation be passed making the wheat pool compulsory for all time. I want hon. members to learn Mr. Prowse's reasons, which gave me a shock. He holds such legislation to be required in order to enable the pool to be carried on after the close of the war. The pool, he says, cannot last except by a system of compulsion.

The Attorney General: Where does Mr. Prowse say that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: On page 232 of the Royal Commission's interim report. After making that statement, he was questioned on the subject—

Do you not think it would be better for the farmers, through co-operation, to take the whole of the responsibility?—Yes, if you would agree to that. We thought possibly the Government would insist on certain conditions. They could put those conditions in, and then stay at home.

You do not think it could be done without an Act of Parliament?—There are those who would default or blackleg. There is nothing finer than that the wheat should be thrown into a pool, so as to avoid exploiting. I wish hon. members to listen to this evidence.

You think it is necessary to provide for compulsion so as to prevent any person blacklegging?—Yes, in this respect.

Mr. Prowse, it is to be seen, has no faith in the farmer. Mr. Prowse says he would legislate to prevent blacklegging by farmers.

Hon. P. Collier: And yet he is one of the executive officers of an association that assisted men to go blacklegging in connection with the wheat handling at Spencer's Brook.

The Attorney General: But Mr. Prowse did not himself use that expression. Those words were put into his mouth.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: He first used the word "blackleg." Let me read that particular question and answer again—

You do not think it could be done without an Act of Parliament?—There are those who would default or blackleg. Thus the words have not been put into his mouth. On the contrary, he put the word "blackleg" into my mouth.

Hon. P. Collier: And Mr. Prowse organised blacklegs at the very time the wheat handling strike was on.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Mr. Prowse says that, in the absence of compulsion, a large number of farmers would revert to the pre-war system of selling their wheat to agents—they would again sell it to the agents to whom they sold it before the war. We are also told that no pressure was brought on the Government in respect to this. When we realise that according to the Farmers and Settlers' Association or their officers, they control the Government, I think we have some reason to feel they are doing so. Perhaps I may read these remarks by Mr. Prowse, for the benefit of hon. members. He said—

It was evident that some people had not had time to study the proceedings of the conference. The conditions had altered and they had altered with them. They had come into existence in the interests of the farmers and to-day had a voice in Parliament (cheers). They were controlling the country and they had before them certain definite requirements. They had their rights and no Government could remain in existence without them.

That is the position we find the Government are in to-day. The Government outlined a policy in August in which they stated they intended to call for tenders from the various firms for the handling of the wheat. For some reason they departed from that policy. The reason, of course, is best known to themselves. No doubt this is contained in Mr. Prowse's speech. The Royal Commission recommended, after taking evidence, that the manager of the Wheat Scheme should be asked to tender for carrying out the work. The member for Beverley who dealt with this subject, pointed out that if the Government handled the harvest it would be detrimental to the interests of the Scheme. Unfortunately for the hon. member, the Commission never recommended the Government to handle it. The Commission recommended the appointment of an executive board, two of whom should be elected by the wheat growers, two by the Minister and the Minister to act as chairman. The board would have control if the Scheme officials' tender was the lowest. I want to show how it could be the lowest without cutting down one penny or interfering in any way whatever with those who were handling the wheat. If members will look at the agreement they will find that there is a farthing per bushel put down for the issuing of certificates. That in the past has been done in the office in Perth. That is all the extra work that the Scheme officials would carry out in connection with the handling of the wheat and the farthing pays well for doing the work.

Mr. Maley: It requires a big staff.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Is the hon. member aware that the Scheme does the checking of these to-day, though sometimes they are nine or ten months behind with the work owing to the agents' books not being in order? There is one-eighth of a penny allowed in the agreement for sampling and checking at depots.

That work is done by the Scheme's officers. At Spencer's Brook they had 13 men employed doing that work and the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., who were paid for it, had one. The Westralian Farmers, Ltd., were accepting the Scheme's figures. I do not know whether any claim can be made for that £3,000, but we had evidence from the Solicitor General, Mr. Sayer, who pointed out clearly that if the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., were paid for that work they should not have been paid for it because the agreement said distinctly that they had to be paid for actual work done. In this case the actual work was not done. Unfortunately the man whom they condemned as working against them entered into an arrangement with them and allowed them to have the various check certificates sent to them, which certificates the girls typed in the office, and he also allowed samples to be handed over to them to relieve them of the work they had to carry out. It shows that that man was not working in opposition to them. That one-eighth of a penny would have saved nearly £4,000. If the Scheme had done it, there would have been no increased expenditure. This year it is anticipated that the acquiring agents will handle over 10½ million bushels of wheat and that quantity of wheat will mean, at about one-eighth of a penny per bushel, something like £5,500. The Minister has camouflaged this. He has tried to flout members of Parliament in regard to it and has endeavoured as far as possible to lead members to believe that some alteration has been made. The Honorary Minister is the man who has proof of this being granted. The Royal Commission has been working since the 26th June, and during that time they have held 78 meetings. They have tried to hurry on the preparation of the report and the printing of the evidence, but, unfortunately, it is not yet completed, though members may possibly have both in their hands to-morrow. Mr. Sayer's evidence is interesting on the point to which I have just referred. He was asked—

You did not have the agreement for a sufficiently long time to enable you to recommend or otherwise it being signed?—It was brought down to me shortly before a Cabinet meeting and the old print with the amendments attached was taken away by Mr. Hall, and he left in my hands a fair copy. But before I had an opportunity of perusing that copy it was sent for, so I had no chance of critically examining it.

It was sent to the Solicitor General's office at 10.30 o'clock in the morning and removed at 2.30. It was an impossibility for him to give it that consideration which it deserved in that time unless, of course, he dropped everything else that he was engaged on. There were many things which appeared in that agreement which do not appear in the agreement we have before us. Some words appear to have been altered. I was dealing with the cost of handling this year. Hon. members will find in the agreement that instead of a farthing per bushel for issuing certificates and one-eighth of a penny per

bushel for actual work in checking and sampling, this year, for issuing certificates, weighing, checking, and sampling at depots, three-eighths of a penny is allowed. The Commission had every opportunity of ascertaining whether the work was done or not last year and, through the wording of the agreement being so clear and definite, it was possible to point out to members of Parliament that they were paying £3,000—the manager says £4,000—for work which was not performed. If the agreement was worded similarly last year the Royal Commission would not have been able to tell the people that £3,000 was paid for work which was not done. One would have thought, realising that the Government had to do this work, that they must check the weight and must sample it for their own protection, that they would merely provide an amount which would cover the cost of one officer during the time the work was being done. As I have stated, the total will amount to £5,500, and the small sum of £500 will be the total value of the work that will be done. That should not be. There is another farthing a bushel which the member for Beverley says there is no profit attached to.

Mr. Broun: Read it. You said it was being paid for doing nothing.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This year it has been camouflaged for the purpose of leading members astray. The one farthing per bushel commission this year means the sum of £10,500, which they should never have had to pay if Mr. Keys had had an opportunity of doing the work himself.

Mr. Maley: What extraordinary rewards they must have been getting in the Eastern States.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This would mean that we are going to pay the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., this year £15,000 more money than—

Mr. Broun: You are fighting for the agents.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the Executive Board, as recommended by the Commission, had carried out the work. This is the officials' evidence. We are making a present this year of £15,500 in this instance alone.

Mr. Griffiths: What were the agents getting in the Eastern States?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I made a statement in the House previously and the managers of the Westralian Farmers took me to task in the "West Australian" about it. The consequence was that the Colonial Secretary stated in the Legislative Council that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., had been the means of saving the Government last year approximately £30,000 on the handling cost, not only in regard to the handling cost, but also in comparison with the cost in the Eastern States. I was at a loss first of all to find out how this applied. We asked for a statement for the purpose of making a comparison. We thought it would be of interest to hon. members to have this comparison in regard to the costs of handling wheat last year under the monopoly system, and the handling of the wheat in the previous years

with the aid of four or five agents. We found, however, that it was difficult to make this comparison. The manager of the scheme said it was impossible to give a statement comparing the present system with what had appertained previously. In 1916-17 the wheat agents had to carry a certain responsibility. Each wheat agent had to put up a bond of £20,000. Under their agreement if wheat was destroyed except by flood, mice and so on, the agent had to make it good. Naturally when he carried that responsibility he charged a certain sum for the purpose. Last year not only the private agents—I am speaking of agents apart from the Westralian Farmers' Ltd.—but also the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., were asked to submit a price, the Government to carry the responsibility. It is, therefore, impossible to make a comparison, and to state what the responsibility would be. Instead of saving last year a sum of £30,000 it is quite possible the Government would have sustained a loss of some hundreds of thousands of pounds. I think, therefore, the Government were justified in adding that provision in the face of what took place previously. It was thought that the wheat would have been shipped much earlier, and if that had been the case a check would have been made upon the private agents in order to ascertain what loss had occurred, but as this was not done, it was impossible to put the responsibility upon the agents. They made a saving, but not through the handling by the Westralian Farmers.

The Attorney General: You are paying for the responsibility, but could not sheet it home.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The year before the Government were paying the Westralian Farmers the same as they were paying the other agents. Last year, if the other agents had handled the wheat, they would not have paid anything for carrying the responsibility. The saving of about £27,000 was to be put in by the agent for the purpose of taking the responsibility of any damage to the wheat. We were told that time would not permit of the Government asking for a price for handling this wheat, or even for the Government or the Scheme carrying out the work themselves this year. The Commission in their interim report recommended that the Scheme should stop sub-letting.

Mr. Maley: They have not the organisation necessary.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We believe that a good deal of damage has been done by sub-letting. We also believe that the men who did the work have not been paid a sufficient rate for so doing.

Hon. P. Collier: That is a fact, too.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We also believe that fair play has not been given to the men who did the work, and that the co-operative societies have become sweating machines instead of co-operative organisations.

Hon. P. Collier: That is also true.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: On the 24th September the Commission put in their report to His Excellency the Governor. On the 23rd November there appeared in the "West Australian" the following advertisement—

Nokaning-Merredin District Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd., Wheat Handling. Tenders will be received immediately for wheat handling at following sidings:—Nowearnie, estimated 25,000 bags; Nankeen, estimated 15,000 bags; Merredin, estimated 3,000 bags; Nokaning, estimated 20,000 bags. For full particulars apply Secretary, Nokaning. Neither the lowest nor any tender necessarily accepted. A. G. Scrymgeour, Secretary.

There was no time for the Government to call for tenders for the work, but there was plenty of time for the co-operative societies to do so. These are societies which members of the Country party were fostering to such an extent. They are also bodies which are becoming sweaters of men. On the 10th September I find that there was another advertisement from the Bruce Rock Society. This society also called tenders for the handling of wheat. The price which was paid for the wheat is as low as it could possibly be handled for. I agree with the Minister in the increase he has given in the price from $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to $\frac{5}{8}$ d. from the wagon into the truck. Whilst the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. paid last year did not pay the men who were handling the wheat, they have not even had the $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

Hon. P. Collier: The others have been making a profit out of him.

Mr. Thomson: One half-penny was the previous charge.

Mr. Broun: Sub-agents are not compelled to handle the wheat.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is stated if any of these co-operative societies lost money in the handling of the wheat it was made up to them. It was made up to them with this increased charge, when they held a pistol at the head of the Government, just as the millers did when they made their agreement, and had the amount increased to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for roofing wheat in the stacks.

The Attorney General: They got an increased price of $\frac{1}{8}$ d.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Secretary of the Nyabing Society, Mr. Coote, in the course of his evidence before the Commission, reported that they had losses there. This will be found on page 288 of the report of the evidence. The evidence in question is as follows—

So far as the actual handling of wheat goes, we have made a loss. We have paid in lumpers' wages for the actual lumping of wheat and plant £442 ls. 11d., and including the travelling expenses of the secretary and other expenses, the total comes to £453 11s. We pay our secretary £5 a week in addition to this, and we have only received for the actual handling of the wheat £416 5s. 4d.

He said he got nothing extra for handling the wheat. He was appealing to the Commission to recommend that a higher rate should be

paid for handling the wheat at small sidings. I have here a letter written by a well known gentleman named W. B. Christie, which is dated 12th November. If the Westralian Farmers were paying extra money for this, and seeing that the wheat was finished with last May, one would have thought that they would have made extra payments before November 12th of this year. The letter is headed "The Vampire and the Ghoul," and is as follows:—

Sir, I had not intended to write you any more on the method of local co-operation in handling the wheat of last year—and also of this—but only this week I have come across the agreement between the Wheat Marketing Scheme and the Farmers' Co-operative Company which opens up a field which demands public investigation, in the interests alike of the workers, the farmers, and the co-operative societies themselves. In sub-letting their contract last season the Chairman and Managing Director of the local company (Messrs. Bagot and Hedges) clearly stated that they were only receiving $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel— $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bag—and that they could not pay more than 1d. per bag for delivery from farmers' wagons into truck.

They were getting $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. but could not pay more than 1d.

Mr. Brown: They were not compelled to do the work.

Hon. P. Collier: That is no excuse.

Mr. Munsie: They were sweating the men.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This is an instance in which the quantity was under 3,000 bags and they were not only paid $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bag but $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel.

Mr. Brown: This is a biased statement. There may be other things leading up to it which will quite alter the conditions.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This is one of the men who did the work. The letter continues—

While for stacking and trucking from stack they were receiving 1d. per bushel (3 d. per bag) and that they could not pay more than 2d. per bag for the work of stacking and loading. In reply to my question "What became of the extra $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 1d. per bag respectively," they told me that it was to cover cost of scales, provision of dunnage, and clerical work in connection with the wheat. Now this was a false and absolutely misleading statement of the position, for in addition to these payments they were receiving, "For work of roofing, screening, and protecting and caretaking of such stacks $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per bushel."

My reason for reading all this is that last year, when on the Estimates, I stated that the agents were receiving one farthing per bushel for roofing and caretaking. That statement was denied. As a matter of fact, the Government were paying to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., for that work one halfpenny per bushel. Yet here is an agent saying that he has received only one farthing per bushel. The statement continues—

This would include the dunnage. Then "for issuing certificates, checking samples

and verifying depot tally notes, three eighths of a penny per bushel." This would cover all clerical work. In further addition to all these there was a commission of one farthing per bushel, while on a ten million bushel crop for the whole State would amount to £10,416, which represents the whole profit it was intended should be made out of the scheme. . . . Now the local Nungarin Co-operative Company, not content with the $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. profit provided by the Scheme—which they would share with the Farmers' Co-operative of Perth—sublet the contract there at 1d. per bag loaded direct into the railway trucks and 2d. per bag stacked and subsequently loaded for consignment at the order of the Minister. For this work they were receiving respectively $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 3d. per bag, and were thus making an additional 50 per cent. out of the personal labour of the unfortunate sub-contractor, into whose neck this vampire directorate fixed their fangs under the leadership of their chairman and managing director to suck the life's blood from the unfortunate man, while, by not paying him promptly and regularly, they compelled him to finance them in carrying out their contract. In my own case I find that the misrepresentations of Messrs. Bagot and Hedges were even worse than at Nungarin. In the first clause of the agreement there is a provision that for sidings where the deliveries do not exceed 3,000 bags the remuneration shall be increased to three farthings per bushel—or $2\frac{1}{4}$ d. per bag—a provision of which I knew nothing till I received the text of the conditions recently. In inducing me by these misrepresentations to take delivery of the wheat at Elabbin for one penny per bag they were deliberately making a profit out of my labour of no less than 125 per cent. I am 73 years of age, and they knew I only consented to undertake the work to oblige them and help the company in its initial year; but consideration for either age or infirmity cannot be expected from men who deliberately misrepresent or suppress the truth—verily the vampires of Nungarin had become the ghouls of Elabbin. After having had my account for three months without any question being raised, when I suggested that a settlement would be acceptable they attempted to cut down the agreed price to one half—on which they would have made a profit of no less than 350 per cent.

He put in a solicitor's letter, and they fell over each other in their hurry to have the agreed upon price paid. There is no doubt the Westralian Farmers Ltd. or their sub-agents are not acting fairly by those to whom they sub-let the work. This is where the Government come in. If the wheat is handled too cheaply it is handled in such a way that the bags are torn and the wheat is wasted. I am almost confident that on this year's harvest the Government are going to make a considerable loss. I regret that it should be so. It is to the Government's interest to see that the wheat is handled pro-

perly and economically, and that the men who handle it are paid a fair price for their work. I regret that the Government have not adopted the recommendations of the Royal Commission and prevented the sub-letting of this work the third time. We had evidence before the Commission that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. were paid 12s. 6d. per 100 bags loaded, plus ten per cent. commission for supervision. They immediately passed on the work to the co-operative societies at 12s. 6d. per 100 bags, while the ten per cent. went into the coffers of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. Then the co-operative societies sublet the work for 10s. 6d. per 100 bags.

Mr. Maley: That would be at a siding where there was one load coming in per day.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Nothing of the sort. It was for removing stacks to the trucks. Under that system bags are torn and the wheat wasted, and the Government have to stand the loss.

Mr. Maley: The lumpers tear the bags with their hooks.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The lumpers had but very little of the handling of the wheat. The system is entirely wrong. Hon. members will agree that the man doing the work should get fair treatment. From what I have gathered, the men actually doing the work are not getting fair treatment. The money is eaten up in directors' and secretaries' salaries. Yet we are continuing this system for another twelve months. If the Scheme had done this work it would have saved £20,000, and would have seen that the work was properly done. The advisory board has paid the Commission a compliment, for everything recommended by the Commission in their interim report has been approved by the advisory board, with one exception, namely, the recommendation that the board should be an executive one. Upon this, apparently, the advisory board do not care to express an opinion. I think the Government have made a serious blunder in the erection of sheds this year. It is a worse blunder even than giving the Westralian Farmers Ltd. the monopoly of the handling. The Commission made close inquiries from experienced men, who recommended that the wheat should be stacked as near as possible to the place where it was grown. This, of course, saves handling and railage. The Commission recommended that at a siding where bags of wheat up to 20,000 were received, a shed should be erected. I regret that the Government did not carry out that recommendation. It would mean a big saving to the farmer, if not to the Government.

The Minister for Works: Would not you require a caretaker at each siding?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That could be easily arranged. The sheds built at the depots have only their breakdown value. They are too large for any other purpose than the storage of wheat. But if the smaller sheds had been built at sidings they could be used afterwards for stacking chaff and other produce. Mr. Piesse, of Katanning, said that before the war he was endeavouring to make arrangements with the Railway Department to erect smaller sheds at sidings. This is how it

would affect the Scheme: the war being over we hope to have plenty of shipping in the future, and so our wheat will not be stored for such lengthy periods. When the Commission wrote their report there were no prospects of the war ceasing. Thousands of pounds worth of wheat has been destroyed by the weather. If the sheds were erected at sidings the wheat could be taken off the wagon and put into stack under cover, where it could remain until the ships or the mills were ready for it. It would have only the one handling. But to-day it is carted to the siding, it is stacked, a special roof is put over it, it has to be handled again to the truck, it is taken to the depot, where it is put into the shed, and afterwards taken from the depot and sent to the port or to the mill. It means an additional railage of 2s. 6d. per ton, so on next year's harvest this alone will represent some £36,000. That is what it means.

The Minister for Works: How do you make the 2s. 6d. extra haulage?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The arrangement is set forth in the evidence of Mr. Keys.

Mr. Thomson: The arrangement was made by the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell).

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No. The arrangement made was that the wheat could be taken from the sidings, say from Kellerberrin, and put into a depot. There was no arrangement relative to mills, so far as I know. Then, if the wheat was to be shipped, it was taken from the depot and sent to the port. The through rate from Kellerberrin to the port had to be paid, plus 2s. 6d. On next year's harvest that would mean a charge of about £36,000, which amount would represent about half the cost of the sheds.

The Minister for Works: But that 2s. 6d. includes 6d. shunting charge at the port.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Let hon. members think of the extra handling which would be saved. For the life of me I do not know why the advisory board turned down the proposal to construct sheds at sidings. There they would be of value to the Railway Department and to the State. Where they are, they are no good, but to-day have only a break-up value. The proposal was turned down by the advisory board when there was ample time for the erection of the sheds. However, when the Royal Commission's report came out, the board approved of our recommendation in this respect. Indeed, they have approved of all our recommendations except the one referring to the advisory committee, on which they said they would express no opinion. There is no need now to keep this a secret, that the Commission, realising that time was limited, had some weeks prior to submitting their report made a recommendation to the Government regarding those sheds, because we knew they had to be built. The advisory board turned down our recommendation. But after our report went in, some five or six weeks later, they approved of our recommendation. However, it was then too late. That will mean a big loss to the farmer, who will have to pay the extra money. I regret very much that the

Commission's recommendation was not carried into effect. Another clause in this agreement which did not appear in last year's agreement—and it is one as to which members might marvel why it is included in the Bill—is that one somewhat after the style of the provision referred to by the leader of the Opposition, warning people when poisoning rabbits not to poison hens and ducks. I refer to Clause 20, "Fiduciary obligation"—

The agent shall in all matters in connection with the Government scheme for marketing the 1918-19 wheat have due regard to its obligations to its principal as agent under this agreement, and will not do anything prejudicial thereto or subversive of the confidential and fiduciary relations between itself and the Minister or his officers.

In other words a clause is inserted telling the agent he has to do his work properly. Previous clauses provide that he shall do his work in a certain way, and that if he does not he shall be fined. To one who has investigated the working of the Wheat Scheme for five or six months, this clause is not a surprise. It represents a warning to the company that they must carry out instructions given them. In the past the Westralian Farmers did not want supervision, and their sub-agents did not want supervision. The Westralian Farmers said, "What necessity is there for the Government agents to come round telling us what to do? You are duplicating the expense. We have sent out our own inspectors for the purposes of this work. Could not they do it all? The Wheat Pool has to pay for the Government inspectors and also for the inspectors of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. Abolish the Government inspector." I asked, what necessity is there for the Westralian Farmers' inspector? Could not he be done away with? They said no, they wanted him, but that they saw no necessity for the Government inspector. I compliment Mr. Baxter on having stood up against the people who have been trying to impose increased charges in connection with this Bill. When he stood up against them, it was for the benefit of the State. Mr. Baxter is a man who has been condemned wrongly for protecting the interests of the State. I do not know who the culprit is, but I honestly believe it is some other Cabinet Minister who is not looking after the interests of the State in the same way as Mr. Baxter is doing.

The Minister for Works: How have you formed that opinion?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It might be the hon. member interjecting, judging from the way he cast his vote the other day. I do not know.

The Minister for Works: That is not a nice insinuation.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It points in one direction.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: From papers and files I have had the opportunity of perusing I am satisfied that Mr. Baxter has been up against a stone wall during the past 12 months.

The Minister for Works: Do not the papers show who the stone wall is?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This is the stone wall. The Westralian Farmers have been do-

ing their very utmost to get behind their agreement. For months and months the Westralian Farmers would not sign the agreement; before they would sign it, the Government had to stop payment in respect of the handling of wheat. The position has been that the Westralian Farmers have continually gone from the Honorary Minister to the Premier for the purpose of undermining the Honorary Minister. What the Westralian Farmers could not get from the Honorary Minister, they went to another Minister for. They wrote letter after letter condemning from every aspect the Minister in charge of the Scheme, simply because they could not get what they wanted.

Hon. P. Collier: They should never have been allowed to go beyond the Honorary Minister.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am of opinion there is some other member of the Cabinet who is more susceptible to the political influence of the Westralian Farmers than is the Honorary Minister, Mr. Baxter. The position is that Mr. Baxter has been condemned right and left for protecting the interests of the State.

Hon. P. Collier: He was tried at a conference and found guilty, and then he threw himself on the mercy of the court.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There would not have been half the trouble last year if the Honorary Minister had had his own way in the matter, because he was working in the right direction, to protect the interests of the State against those who were trying to get from the State something to which they were not entitled.

Hon. P. Collier: That is where the political influence and undue pressure that I have spoken of come in, under the lap.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is not Works, though.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Next in regard to the dockages. I have here a copy of a paper which I regularly read—the "Primary Producer." I am only going to deal with such matter as this issue contains affecting this Bill. There are some astounding statements made in the paper; some of them true, and some of them not. The paper states £60,000 has been saved to the wheat growers by the direct and untiring efforts of their executive during the past 12 months. The paper adds, "This is one of the reasons why the farmers should join the Farmers' and Settlers' Association." Then the dockage of wheat is referred to. That matter comes under this Wheat Marketing Bill; and I hope the Government will adhere to the system that has been in vogue for many years in Western Australia, and which has given satisfaction so far. The position is this: The f.a.q. sample is fixed, after samples have been taken from all parts of the State, by representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and I believe a Government officer. Thus the f.a.q. sample is fixed. Last year the standard was 60½ lbs. There was an outcry. The Minister was condemned inside Parliament and outside Parliament on the subject of dockage. When the 60½ lbs. had been fixed, there was a reduction

of 1d. dockage at 59 lbs. This was in vogue for some years. However, pressure was brought to bear on the Minister to reduce dockage to 58 lbs. On that basis, wheat weighing 58 lbs. was reduced 1d. per bushel, instead of wheat weighing 59 lbs. It looks small, but according to the "Primary Producer" it means £60,000 obtained by the executive of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association for the farmers. The position is that when our wheat is sold in the markets of the world it is sold on the f.a.q. quality fixed by the Chamber of Commerce, and if the Minister alters it again, how is it possible for the f.a.q. standard to be maintained? We visited the Westralian Farmers' office and while there we saw certain large bins in which there were various samples of wheat which had been taken from the various depots. We were informed that this wheat was kept there in case of dispute in the future. At our request one of the bins was opened and a testing machine was brought up and the wheat was weighed. The f.a.q. standard had been fixed by the Chamber of Commerce at 60½ lbs. The first sample that came out weighed 56 lbs. to the bushel. We thought that was wrong so they dipped further down the bin and tried another sample. That weighed 57 lbs. Then they got a third sample and it weighed 58 lbs. That wheat was supposed to be a fair average sample and it was there to prevent disputes in the future. Therefore, I consider that interfering with dockage is going to be detrimental in the future.

The Attorney General: How long had the wheat been there?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It was only last season's wheat.

Mr. Maley: It must have been there a couple of years.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No; it was last season's wheat. There is a danger in interfering with the f.a.q. samples. When the dockage comes down the Government will lose in the sale. Therefore the Minister had no right to agree, when pressure was brought to bear on him, to reduce the dockage. I might state for the information of the member for Greenwood that when we were at Geraldton we took samples of last year's wheat out of the Geraldton stack. That was supposed to be 60½ lbs., but it weighed only 46 lbs.

The Attorney General: It must have been discarded wheat.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, it was f.a.q. wheat and paid for as such. I would draw attention to the fact that this year's wheat, when it is harvested, and the wheat which we have in stock, will only amount to something like 19 or 20 million bushels, about two million bushels more than the harvest of 1915. The total amount of wheat in stock on the 25th November, 1916-17 wheat was 2,867,787 bushels. In 1917-18 wheat was 6,832,227 bushels and of flour there were 32,473 short tons. So our whole stock of wheat next year will only be a small amount over one good year's harvest. That will entirely wipe out the necessity for building silos in which to store the wheat in this

State. We do not want to go to that expense, especially now when we have to pay such an increased price for material. A few words in reply to the member for Beverley with regard to the price of wheat. The wheat we have sold up to date has barely averaged 4s. 9d. per bushel. Our next year's wheat, according to the statement made by Mr. Keys, and also by Mr. Baxter, to the Farmers and Settlers' Association will have to realise 5s. 2d. a bushel to make it pay the State. Seeing that we have sold it in the past at 4s. 9d. I am very much afraid the next harvest will show a considerable loss to the State.

Mr. Draper: Do you know what it actually realised?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member will find it in one of the appendices of the report. The amount is, roughly, 4s. 9d.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. Thomson: How did you arrive at the 5s. 2d.?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I will tell the hon. member directly.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You are mistaken.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not an expert myself; I am only giving figures which have been tendered by experts. On August 29th last the acting Prime Minister advised the State that the board might be disposed to consider an offer of 4s. 6d. for wheat. That shows clearly that he anticipated it was not going to realise anything like 5s. 2d. We might ask ourselves whether there is any reason why the wheat is not likely to reach that price. We saw the other day that so far as the United States are concerned, they intend to prevent any further wheat being imported there. They also pointed out that they would probably have 400 million bushels for export. In England and Wales this year they have 2,665,000 acres under wheat, which is 752,000 acres more than in 1916. These figures were given by Sir Eric Geddes, and I have taken them from the "Times" weekly edition. It was expected that the harvest would be such as would provide for four-fifths of England's requirements.

Mr. Maley: Those are inspired statements.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Nothing of the kind. They are from the "Times" weekly edition of the 31st May last. The position, therefore, so far as the United Kingdom is concerned, is that they are able to supply four-fifths of their own requirements and they will not require our wheat.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They want 200 million bushels.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: According to the acting Prime Minister England does not want any wheat. Of course, if the member for Northam knows better than the acting Prime Minister we may accept his word. I have come across the figures showing how the 5s. 2d. is made up. They are as follows:—Guarantee, less rail freight 4s. 4d.; cost of deposit after allowing one-third of the cost of material as break-down value, 2s.; extra rail freight of 2s. 6d. per ton in-

curred by sending wheat from siding to depot and from depot to port as against rail-
ing direct to port, .8; sub-agents' commis-
sion averaged on the prices paid this year,
namely, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for direct trucking and 1d. for
truckling via stack, say, $\frac{1}{4}$ d., .875; agents'
commission based on the amount paid for
hauling the 1917-18 crop, $\frac{3}{4}$ d., .625; stack-
ing at depots on the basis of the cost of
1917/18 crop, 1d. per bag, say, .333; super-
vision, sampling, tallying, repairing burst
bags, hanging curtains, cleaning up, etc.,
based on amount paid in 1917/18, $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per
bag, say, .166; outwards from depots same as
total inwards, .5; bags and rebagging 3 per
cent. of the crop at 1s. per bag, .125; care-
taking, etc., at depots for 2 years, say, .35;
administration .25; interest, 5 per cent.
on 3s. (1st advance) for 12 months
would be 1.8, say, 1.75; shipping, tally-
ing, rebagging, etc., .125; slinging, har-
bour trust or railway charges, say, 1d. per
bag, .333; provisional costs, such as extra
zonal railage, weevil, mice plague, fire, weath-
er damage, etc., 1.868, or a total of 5s. 2d.
I want to say a few words now about grist-
ing. Gristling last year was not in the best
interests of the Scheme. The price paid
was too high, but I do not agree with the
member for Beverley when he said that a
high charge was paid for gristing because
the manager who had charge of it did not
know anything at all about it. That state-
ment shows that the member for Beverley
knows nothing about it. The facts were
these: Mr. Sibbald, the late manager of the
Scheme, endeavoured to arrange for the
gristing charges. He stated that 30s. a ton
was a fair price to pay and no more should
be paid.

Mr. Broun: He was responsible for the
agreement.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There is a doubt
about that. Mr. Sibbald did not make the
agreement, and as far as I know from the evi-
dence and the files it was $\frac{1}{2}$ d. more per bushel
paid for gristing than Mr. Sibbald ever ap-
proved of. It is unwise to blame a man until we
know the exact position. I took a copy of this
minute, because I know he has been unfairly
blamed. When I have read this to the hon.
member I think he will see that neither Mr.
Sibbald nor the Minister were to blame for
the gristing. The minute is as follows, and is
addressed to the Hon. C. F. Baxter:—

I regret to report that the compromise
which was, I thought, practically agreed
upon yesterday with millers, has fallen
through. Subject to Minister's confirmation
I offered: 1, sixpence half-penny per bushel
for gristing weevily wheat; 2, seven and
sixpence per flour ton allowance for bags;
3, a special allowance for extra cost of calico
bags with flour to Java, Singapore, and other
non-Imperial orders; 4, two and a half per
cent. selling commission on Java, Singapore
and other non-Imperial orders; 5, and on the
offal of gristed weevily (covering del cre-
dere). This morning, however, millers have
informed me that they adhere to the offer
they made on the 16th inst., and will not
entertain any compromise. As I cannot re-

commend the adoption of that offer, it will
be necessary to proceed immediately with the
formation of the Price Fixing Committee,
which is at present short of a representative
of the Scheme with regard to whom I am not
in a position to make any suggestion.

That is the last minute written by Mr. Sibbald
on the question of gristing. The Minister
could not help himself. He was placed in a
position that he had to accept or reject it,
or else take the mills, which he had no power
to do. The wheat was being eaten by weevil,
and the millers said their price was so and so,
and he had to accept it or reject it. Some-
where about four million bushels of wheat has
been gristed. The war is now over, and ship-
ping is more available than it was.

Mr. Broun: It makes no difference to them.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It makes a differ-
ence so far as the gristing charges are con-
cerned. Neither the Hon. Mr. Baxter who has
been condemned, nor Mr. Keys, nor Mr. Sib-
bald, both of whom have been condemned, are
to blame. They could not help themselves, be-
cause the millers took an unfair advantage of
the situation. I am surprised that the Hon-
orary Minister, when he was in conference with
members of the Farmers and Settlers' Associa-
tion, did not tell them the truth of the posi-
tion. I may be violating a confidence in order
to show members the position, but when a
man's reputation is at stake it is often neces-
sary to do these things. The Minister has
been wrongly condemned. I will not mention
any names, but this is an extract from a confi-
dential memorandum from a well-known
miller. It is as follows:—

I do not consider millers should expect to
make a big grinding margin in these times.
In fact, the accustomed grinding margin
would be acceptable to us. Mr. Baxter said
he had been forced into the agreement by
the millers, who should have known how the
Scheme would work out. Ockerby and the
others know full well that under pre-war
conditions it was never possible to get 7d.
plus 2½ per cent., plus 7s. 6d. per ton, and
in common fairness I think it unfair to
attempt to sweat the Pool for it now.

Mr. Teesdale: That is creditable to him
anyhow; you ought to give his name.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I hope I have made
it clear that the Minister was placed in a posi-
tion when he could not help himself. Mem-
bers of the farming community have con-
demned him wrongly so far as the gristing is
concerned. A pistol was levelled at his head
in the same manner as a pistol is levelled at
the head of the Government by the Farmers
and Settlers' Association.

The Attorney General: Not at all. Your
first statement was a very nice one, but not
the second.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Then I withdraw
the second statement. I am afraid the Gov-
ernment will find the present draft agreement
which has been entered into with the millers—
I understand that some of the millers have
refused to sign it—is going to cause a great
deal of litigation. This is the opinion of the
Royal Commission.

The Attorney General: I have not seen the report yet.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We hold this opinion because of the fact that there is a considerable amount of wheat that is still weevily. The Commission are of opinion that the rate should have been fixed on a bushel basis, on the same system as last year, though not at the same price. If that had been done there could have been no complaint. The millers in this agreement have got to turn out 42 lbs. of flour for each bushel of wheat of fair average quality. They have to turn out as much flour as they possibly can from the inferior or weevily wheat, but cannot reject wheat which is weevily. Every stack of wheat in this State has weevil in it, although some of the wheat is not very bad. In several depots that we visited we found that there was weevil in the new stacks. The difficulty will be in regard to settling the quality of the wheat. Who is going to settle that? Litigation is, therefore, bound to follow. There has been nothing but trouble with the millers from the start. So far as the gristing is concerned, this must end in litigation. We think it is a mistake that the gristing should be done on the basis proposed. If it had been provided that the millers were to be paid so much a bushel for gristing, the matter would have been quite clear. We have been paying here about $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. per bushel more for gristing weevily wheat than is the case in South Australia. Last year the millers agreed to buy the wheat from the Scheme and grist a certain quantity of it up to the 31st December. This wheat was for the Imperial order, and the millers entered into an agreement on the 3rd November, 1917, to grist on the bushel basis, and some 25,000 tons of flour had to be gristed under their former contract. Although they were paid an exorbitant rate for gristing, commission, local sales, bags, etc., they also demanded—and this unfortunately is in the agreement— $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the 25,000 tons of flour which was necessary to complete their contract for the previous year. The action of the millers last year shows clearly that the farmers of the State were exploited by them. They have had thousands of pounds to which they are not entitled. I regret very much that the Ministry of the day did not place the whole position before Parliament, which was then in session, for I am confident that when members realised the action that was being taken by the millers, they would have taken the mills from them and paid rental for them rather than allow the millers to impose upon the Government as they did in November, 1916. A pistol was held at the head of the Minister. He was told that their price was so and so. They would make no compromise, and in effect the farmers of the State must have been robbed to the extent of £38,000, mentioned by the Minister for Industries, in the manner I have indicated. It is a scandal that we should have men in our midst under present conditions, in face of the effects of the war, and in face of the fact that farmers have had to pay increased prices in order to put their land under crop, and in face of the difficulty the Government have had

to find money to finance the Scheme, who should under war conditions charge the exorbitant prices they did last year, and compel the Government to pay them. It is a scandal and a disgrace on the part of the millers. I regret indeed that the Government did not take some action to remedy the position. There are many things in the Bill to which I could refer. I hope some amendments will be made to it in Committee, and that some of the agreement clauses especially will be altered. I will try to make those alterations which I think will be in the best interests of the Scheme.

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [9.43]: I want first of all to say that, although perhaps I was not in favour of the method by which the Royal Commission was appointed, nor was I altogether well disposed at the beginning towards the personnel of the Commission—not in regard to individual members of it, but in regard to the fact that with the exception of the member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) there was not a single representative of the farmers on it—now after their laborious efforts during the last six months, and the great amount of work they have done and the thorough research they have made into the matter, they are to be commended in every way by the House for the assiduous manner in which they have attended to their duties in an honorary capacity. I am prepared to say this, that the growers of wheat or the owners of wheat in the Pool, if the Government will carry out the recommendations of the Royal Commission, would be willing to pay the commission an honorarium for the valuable services they have rendered.

The Attorney General: Why not pay them in any event?

Mr. MALEY: I notice that no speaker preceding me, even the Minister, although perhaps he was withholding his praise until the final report of the Royal Commission was in his hands, uttered a word of commendation for the work done by the commission. No word of commendation was uttered by any previous speaker in regard to the work of the commission.

The Attorney General: The greatest commendation would be to adopt all their recommendations.

Mr. MALEY: In regard to the wild and woolly statements of the member for Leonora (Mr. Foley) concerning the executives of the Farmers and Settlers' Association and of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., I do not intend to deal with the hon. member beyond reminding him that we on the cross benches represent farming constituencies, and that our constituents are interested in the Farmers and Settlers' Association. We give an emphatic denial to the statement that we used our influence with the Government to persuade them into doing anything for the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. If the Government had done anything in that direction they have done it because they realise that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., are out to protect and foster the co-operative movement. The Government should do something more than the mere ex-

pression of a pious hope in regard to the co-operative movement. Last session a report by the Hon. J. D. Connolly was laid on the Table. That report was the result of inquiries made in Canada as to how the Government of that Dominion were assisting their farmers. The report stated that, in respect to wheat handling in Canada, the Dominion Government had advanced to the co-operative societies—who had installed grain elevators for the bulk handling of wheat—85 per cent. of the cost of erection. Having given the assurance that they are out to encourage the co-operative movement, the Government are fully justified in following up that assurance with practical assistance. The discussion to-night has ranged around a political organisation which is trying to advance in the House the claims of this company. Until the member for North-East Fremantle commented on it, there has been a singular absence of reference to the iniquitous charges the private millers have imposed, and to the attitude of those millers in holding a loaded pistol to the head of the Government, and demanding rights under which they have wrung enormous profits out of the community.

Mr. Troy: Who gave them that agreement?

Mr. MALEY: I am not concerned in that. One mill in which I am interested on a capital less than £4,000 made, under last year's milling agreement, a profit of over 60 per cent. That, too, after allowing full charges for depreciation and interest and for the exactions of both Federal and State taxation commissioners. And that is one of the smallest mills in the State. If that mill has been able to make that profit, what on earth must some of the big mills in the city have been making? I should like to know why two important mills in the Geraldton district have been absolutely idle since the inception of the Pool.

The Attorney General: Have you suggested to the Honorary Minister that those mills should be set to work?

Mr. MALEY: I have pointed out both to the Honorary Minister and to the Royal Commission the fact that those two mills were not working. The other day I introduced a deputation to the Minister in regard to what arrangements had been made concerning the Geraldton wheat for this season. In the "West Australian" of the following morning a report was published by the Minister stating that a great deal of wheat which could have been stacked at Geraldton this year had not been stacked there, because of the weevil in that district. It was stated publicly that Geraldton was suffering worse from weevil than any part of the State. That is a base libel. The conditions at Geraldton are no worse than the conditions in any other part of the State. That can be borne out by the wheat being brought down from Geraldton now. Some of that wheat was gristed into flour for the shipment by Mr. Padbury which went away in the "Kangaroo." Mr. Padbury paid to the Scheme 7s. per bushel for that wheat. What has given

the Minister and the Scheme officials the impression that the wheat in Geraldton is so badly infected is that some of the old wheat that came into the Geraldton depot and which the Scheme manager at Geraldton pulled out and stacked by itself in an unused shed, was sent down here, where it was seen by the officials, who thereupon gained the idea that all the wheat in Geraldton was similarly affected. In connection with the Royal Commission's report and the question of the Westralian Farmers Ltd., let me point to page 11 of the Commission's report, where we find the following paragraph:—

So far as their investigations have extended, the Commission cannot find that the work of the acquiring agents has been performed better or worse by the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., than by any of the other firms handling wheat.

That is the greatest compliment that could be paid to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., because when they entered into the business of acquiring wheat, the same allegations were made against their lack of business capacity as were made against my friends of the Opposition when they held office. The Westralian Farmers, Ltd., is a co-operative company registered under Table A of the Companies Act, which prescribes that within certain limits embodied in their articles of association they can only pay to shareholders dividends up to seven per cent. They cannot pay out a 12½ per cent. dividend, but what they do is this: every person who trades with the company, whether a shareholder or not, is, after the close of the financial year, reimbursed on the basis of the profits of the company over the seven per cent. That amount is distributed in the form of debentures among those persons doing business with the company. That of itself should dispel some of the impressions held that the company is making and distributing profits of 12½ and 20 per cent. I hope the second reading will be agreed to.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [10.59]: The chairman of the Royal Commission has already exhaustively dealt with a good deal of what has come before the Commission, but there are one or two facts which I wish to place before the Chamber. The member for Greenough paid the Commission a compliment as to their strenuous duties, but he also remarked that there was only one direct representative of the producers on that Commission. From the inception of the Commission no party feeling whatever has existed, and the five members directly represented the wheat producers of the State. There was but one idea among the members of the Commission, namely, that in serving the interests of the growers, they would also serve the interests of the State, and took it as their duty to see what could be recommended for the better administration of the Scheme. There are one or two omissions from this measure which I regret, and which I consider should be emphasised. The Commission's interim report, page V, at the top of the second column, states—

The Commission is strongly of opinion that the proposed system of dual control should not be continued, and that in future agreements the agent should be held responsible, not only for the acquiring of the wheat from the farmer, but also for its care and protection up to and including delivery and stacking into sheds at depots or sidings.

The main element of success or failure in the receiving of the wheat is the work of the man who first handles the wheat. If the checking, weighing, sampling, marking, and so forth are not carried out efficiently in the first instance, the faults that accrue can never be thoroughly remedied. They may be picked up, detected, but they can never be fully remedied, at any later stage. Thus success depends very largely on the original acquiring sub-agent. If a sub-agent neglects his duty, that duty most assuredly cannot be efficiently performed at any later stage of the handling of the wheat. My contention is that the acquiring agency should have control over all these subsidiary agencies acting under the agreement. The public generally do not recognise the full extent to which success depends upon having the right men to do the work in the first instance. During last harvest, men who had been in this walk of life for some years were secured by the local co-operative societies in most instances, to act as sub-agents. If the same sub-agents continue to do the initial work during this harvest, and if more suitable sub-agents are secured in centres where that work was not performed with complete efficiency during that last harvest, we may look for better results this season.

[Mr. Foley called attention to the state of the House. Bells run; a quorum formed.]

Mr. HARRISON: The elimination of dual control would save much duplication of correspondence, and a great deal of worry to the Minister controlling the Scheme, whose administration has inevitably suffered from the many vexatious delays and troubles inseparable from dual control. The first step in the work of wheat acquiring is the selection and preparation of sites and the construction of dunnage of temporary stacks at sidings. Next comes the actual receiving of the wheat. Only one body should be responsible for the receiving of this season's wheat until delivery at the depot, the firm being responsible also for the condition of the wheat when received and stored. Then all the Scheme would have to worry about is the checking and the sampling, and to see that the work of the firm was faithfully performed. Consider our experiences of last season. A great deal of demurrage was unnecessarily incurred. Facilities were not given, in certain cases, for the provision of dunnage: owing to delays in this respect, and owing to lack of direct methods of communication or, I may say direct instructions from the Scheme officers to the men in charge at country centres, wheat was actually deposited on

the ground, and further cost was incurred by its subsequent removal. The best use was not made of railway trucks in the transport of wheat from certain unsuitable sidings to other sidings which had superior facilities for holding the wheat until it was lifted. The Commission have had evidence that the Railway Department proved unequal to the task of moving more than 20 or 25 per cent. of the wheat yield before the wet season. If there is to be a further increase of the yield this year, we shall not reach even the percentage I have quoted in the matter of moving wheat unless a better system is established between those receiving in the country and those taking delivery at the depots. The best and most business-like system would be to have the acquiring agent responsible for the wheat up to its delivery and stacking in depot, or for even a longer period. There has been a feeling that the Royal Commission's recommendations should not go further than necessary, that, the war having ended, the responsibility for further receiving of wheat in depot would be for an unknown period, so that the extent of the obligation in this respect could not be definitely gauged. Accordingly, it was thought, the extra work and responsibility would be mater of speculation. My view is that if that extra work and responsibility were remunerated at so much per annum then, if the wheat were removed in the course of a year, payment might be made pro rata with the number of months the wheat had been held. The chairman of the Royal Commission has mentioned another recommendation which has not been carried into effect—that relating to the building of sheds at country sidings where more than 20,000 bags is received. Had this been done, the higher capital expenditure on sheds in the matter of laying foundations, of boarding and flooring, would have resulted in permanent good. There would have been greater storage accommodation at various country centres, which accommodation would have been of great use not only for wheat but also for other products. The cost of sheds as the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) has pointed out, represents five-sevenths of the cost of erecting sheds last year. The amount quoted by the hon. member covers not only the cost of erection of the sheds, but also the cost of sidings, drainage, and other work connected with shed accommodation. But, taking only the cost of the sheds, five-sevenths of the total cost of shed construction alone could have been saved through 2s. 6d. per ton charged by the railways over through freights for shunting at depots being eliminated. In this way the five-sevenths could have been saved and taking the quantity we are expecting to receive this year, the amount would be no less a sum than £33,782, that is, if we take 37 bushels to the ton. If we take 12 bags to the ton the amount of the saving would be at 2s. 6d. per ton £36,500. If the wheat were delivered direct from the farmers' wagons to the

sheds there would be only one handling. But what do we find to-day? It is first of all delivered from the farmer's wagon into a temporary stack, then from that temporary stack into a truck, then it is handled again from the truck at the depot into the stack at the depot. It is handled from the depot into a truck and then again out of the truck into the mill or else to the ship at the port. These handlings all cost money. Not only that but we have in each handling further damage done to the bags handled, and every time hooks are put into the bags a certain number must be destroyed and there follows a loss of wheat. If that wheat had been stored direct it would have remained in the best condition. What do we find has taken place in the past? We find that wheat has not been lifted until the wet season has set in and then it has been put into the truck wet at the sidings. The wheat has to be conveyed in wet weather and has been further damaged by rain on account of the lack of covering it has had from the temporary stack to the depot. There has been the extra cost of receiving the wet wheat. It has had to be up-ended to be dried before it could be put in the stack, and we found in some cases that the wheat was stacked while it was in a damp condition. Hon. members may not realise what one-eighth of penny per bushel may mean on a harvest of the dimensions of that handled last year. On all these handlings one-eighth of a penny does not seem very much, but when we take the aggregate on, say, a 15-million bushel, that eighth of a penny represents a sum of £7,812. If it were a farthing the amount would be £15,625; if it were a halfpenny it would be £31,250; and if it were a penny the sum would be £62,500 odd. I have the same figures here with regard to the amount which would be involved if the harvest were one of 10 million bushels. At a penny per bushel the amount would be £41,666; at a halfpenny per bushel £20,833; at a farthing per bushel £10,420; and at an eighth of a penny per bushel £5,208. In the old days before we had a Pool, the acquiring agents did not consider 2d. or 3d. per bushel a high sum. When we come to realise what these amounts mean to us we can imagine what they meant in the old days. It shows, as the member for Beverley has stated, that we want to save every farthing of cost. If we do not reduce the cost of marketing I cannot see how to reduce the further cost of production. So far as I can see, unless we adopt different methods we shall not be able to do that. We are to-day working with large implements and large teams, and those items mean so much in the aggregate to the wheat crop. With regard to the Westralian Farmers handling the wheat, it is claimed by that company that whatever profits they make go into the pockets of the wheatgrowers. Only seven per cent. can be paid by that particular company as dividends on shares. Further than that, the wheatgrowers who are not shareholders in the company gain an advantage by the company handling the wheat giving de-

bentures or bonus shares. If that be the case, all the wheatgrowers are working on better terms than could be given by other acquiring agents, who would not be working under such a system. It is therefore good for the State, and for the wheatgrowers, that the wheat should be handled by such a company if the profits which are made are returned to the farmers. There are one or two matters in the report which I would like to draw attention to, namely, demurrage and dual control. If hon. members turn up question 5549 they will find that Mr. Shillington, in the course of his evidence, stated that on one line alone the Railway Department waived an amount of £2,000 in connection with demurrage. On another occasion Mr. Shillington stated that no fewer than 1,000 trucks were held up. In answer to question 5546 he stated that on one occasion 2,000 wagons were under load with wheat. It would be much better if we could dispense with dual control and get the wheat handled at the lowest possible cost so that the growers might derive the greatest advantage. I trust the House will use its influence to see whether something cannot even now be done so that the acquiring agents shall have the full responsibility of delivering and stacking the wheat they have received in good condition at the depôts where it will remain until it is removed.

On motion by Mr. Brown debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.20 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Friday, 13th December, 1918.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Postponement of Debts Continuation.
 - 2, Sale of Liquor Regulation Act Continuation.
 - 3, Licensing Act Amendment Continuance.
- Passed.*

BILL—ROADS ACT CONTINUATION.

Third Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [3.4]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [3.5]: Unfortunately I was not here when the second reading was carried, and so I wish to make a few remarks on the third reading. I