

the board, if they so desire, to take electricity from the Government. It will be beneficial not only to the Government scheme, but also to the municipality. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [3.32]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Friday, 26th November, at 3 p.m.

Question passed.

House adjourned at 3.32 a.m. (Friday).

Legislative Council,

Friday, 26th November, 1915.

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PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Regulations passed by the Executive Council under Section 29 of the Industries Assistance Act. 2, Midland Junction municipality by-law. 3, Perth Public Hospital, Annual Report.

BILL—WAR COUNCIL.

Message received from the Assembly notifying that the Council's amendment had been agreed to.

BILL—SALE OF LIQUOR REGULATION (No. 2).

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had disagreed to the amendments made by the Council.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [3.5]: It is my intention to ask the House to agree to a conference.

That the following Message be sent to the Legislative Assembly:—"In reply to Message No. 46 from the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council requests a conference to consider the amendments made by the Legislative Council in the Sale of Liquor Regulation Bill, to which the Legislative Assembly has disagreed; the conference to consist of three managers, namely, the Hon. J. M. Drew, Hon. J. J. Holmes, and Hon. A. J. H. Saw.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [3.15]: Have we reached the proper stage for a conference? The Bill was sent to us, we made amendments to it, and sent it to another place which disagreed with the amendments. We have had no opportunity of considering their reasons for the disagreement and we have had no opportunity of saying whether we are determined to press our amendments or not. I would like to know whether we have reached the stage for a conference.

The PRESIDENT: I do not think we have. I think we ought to go into Com-

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

mittee and consider the Message. The leader of the House has the conduct of the business. He told me, however, that he proposed to have a conference, hence the motion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [3.16]: I think it will come to a conference but for the time being I shall move—

That the President leave the Chair for the purpose of going into Committee to consider the Assembly's Message.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [3.17]: I am not going to oppose the motion nor am I going to oppose the motion for a conference. As a matter of fact I think a conference is the only way out of the difficulty. Speaking as a private member, I do not think the stage for a conference has been reached because a conference is only a last resort on any Bill, but I would also point out that there is nothing in our Standing Orders to that effect. They are silent as regards the stage at which a conference may be asked for and the authorities on the question are not too explicit. This House has granted conferences which have been asked for by the Assembly at a stage similar to this and there is this reason, that with a Bill which originates in the Assembly it is in the power of the Assembly only to ask for a conference at the proper stage. With regard to the Land Bill, that has reached the stage at which a conference can be asked for by the Assembly. If the Assembly does not ask for a conference in regard to the Sale of Liquor Regulation Bill, that Bill is gone. Only the House that is in possession of the Bill may ask for a conference. I think it has been proved that even if a conference is not granted on the ground that the proper stage is not yet reached, at all events this House is desirous of doing what it can to save the Bill. It lies in the power of another place as to whether that Bill shall or shall not go if we insist on our amendments. Personally I know what I shall do in the matter. If you, Mr. President, go out of the Chair, the leader of the

House will not be able to ask for a conference. If he asks for a conference at this stage, I shall support him because I think a conference will bring about some settlement of the difficulty between the two Houses, otherwise, and I say it without bitterness, if we insist on our amendments and they are sent back, another place will not be reluctant to drop the measure in question. I shall feel inclined, for the sake of the measure, and for other reasons, to support the leader of the House in his request for a conference.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [3.20]: The view expressed by Mr. Kingsmill is exactly the view I take. I could see nothing in the Standing Orders to prevent a conference taking place at this stage and it seemed to me there was no hope of arriving at finality without a conference. With the permission of the House I will withdraw the motion to go into Committee.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew): I now move—

That the following Message be sent to the Legislative Assembly:—"In reply to Message No. 46 from the Legislative Assembly the Legislative Council requests a conference to consider the amendments made by the Legislative Council in the Sale of Liquor Regulation Bill, to which the Legislative Assembly has disagreed; the conference to consist of three managers, namely, the Hon. J. M. Drew, Hon. J. J. Holmes, and Hon. A. J. H. Saw."

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [3.21]: When a conference takes place there is something to give and take. In regard to the Irrigation, and Mines Bills there were a number of complicated and debatable clauses and one was able to give a little here and take a little there. Surely in this case the issue is too clear for any negotiations. How do hon. members propose to negotiate? If the House insists on the amendments, I believe a majority of the people inside and outside believe the Bill will go, and if there are hon. members who

are keen on getting one or two things through, the proper course is to accept the referendum.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW (Metropolitan-Suburban) [3.22]: I would like to controvert Mr. Sanderson's argument that there is nothing on which we can have a conference. It seems to me that there is a *via media* to be found. As some objection has been raised to my name in connection with the conference I may be permitted to explain my attitude on the question. I was in favour of 8 to 8 and I was in favour of 9 to 9, and when it appeared to me that the opportunity of getting 9 to 9 was lost, rather than see the Bill wrecked I voted for a referendum but my opinion is still, as it always has been, that the proper solution of this difficulty is the fixing of the hours at 9 to 9. The real advantage of the referendum, so far as I can see, is that the State is divided into districts and consequently there is an opportunity for the special circumstances to be considered in the particular districts. The advantage of the 9 to 9 is, firstly, that the hours are fixed from the time the Bill is passed by the House or shortly afterwards, so that there is no delay, and there is also a considerable saving in expense by not having a referendum. We might combine the advantages of these two methods by the suggestion which I intended to move this afternoon, if the House had gone into Committee to consider the Message from another place, and the *via media* I was trying to find was this, that the hours of 9 to 9 should still be retained and that the referendum should be struck out and that we should add a proviso to this effect—

Provided that the Government may by proclamation declare that in any district defined in such proclamation the period for keeping open licensed premises may be extended to any hour, not being before 6 a.m. or after 11 p.m.

Those are the hours in the present Licensing Act. That is the way out of the difficulty, which I think both Houses could agree to without loss of dignity and

it would be a satisfactory solution of this trouble.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [3.26]: I will support the motion for a conference and I ask the leader of the House to follow the usual custom in nominating the representatives to attend the conference, which is that there should be two who are in favour of the position and one against. The other House will appoint two in favour of the referendum and one in favour of our amendments. I will suggest that either the Colonial Secretary or Dr. Saw should withdraw and that Mr. Colebatch should be nominated.

The PRESIDENT: I would draw attention to the fact that in the case of members for a conference, where any name has been objected to, the rule is that the personnel of the conference should be decided by ballot.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [3.28]: I intend to support this motion for a conference because it is the only way I see of saving the Bill. In spite of the malicious statements made outside this House in regard to the attitude of this Chamber on the matter, I think I am right in saying that a majority of members are desirous of seeing the Bill go through, and the best answer to those who slander us outside will be to let them see that the Council is desirous of getting the Bill passed. The only way of getting it through is to have the conference, because I am certain, if our amendments are insisted upon, another place will be only too glad to take the opportunity of dropping the measure. With regard to the subjects for discussion, I do not agree with Mr. Sanderson that the issue is so clear cut that there is nothing to debate. I venture to say the managers for the two Houses will not be at all short of conversation during the time they are together. There are all sorts of modifications which might be arrived at. Most certainly the referendum, as proposed in the crude measure brought down by the Government, is susceptible of a great deal of improvement. It is susceptible of improvement in the method alluded to by Mr. Cornell and in

other ways. The time for holding the referendum has yet to be fixed. There are many subjects for discussion and the managers, with so wide a choice of subjects at their disposal and so much to give and take, ought to have no difficulty in a reasonable time in arriving at a decision, which I think will be fairly satisfactory to both branches of the Legislature. I support the proposal for a conference as the only way of saving this Bill.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS (Metropolitan) [3.31]: I support the proposal for a conference, although I think this is not the time when a conference should be asked for. If a conference is desired on the Bill, it should be asked for by another place, but rather than see the measure go to the wall I will support a conference, so that at any rate the reasonable thinking public may know this House is not—as has been stated most venomously and viciously outside the Chamber by men who certainly should have known better—against any reform. More lies have been told about the attitude of this Chamber in the last few days than one could possibly think responsible men would utter. I join issue with gentlemen in prominent places who state that this House is the stronghold of the liquor trade. It is no such thing. There are just as many men in this Chamber, desirous of having proper liquor reform at this stage, as there are in another place or among any outside public body. It is all very well to say this matter has received consideration. It has received no consideration at all in another place. They have not had a division on it. Hon. members cannot tell me they have treated the amendments of this Chamber in a proper way. During the last few days temperance reformers have said that they are in favour of the 9 to 9 clause. Numerous members in another place have said that if 9 to 9 was favoured by the Council, it would receive consideration in the Assembly, but when this House agreed to 9 to 9 another place did not go to a division on it and we do not know what the opinion of another place is.

Hon. J. Duffell: It has never been desired that we should.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: They have allowed it to be decided on the voices.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: They want to lose the Bill.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: Possibly they do. It would not be right for the Colonial Secretary and Dr. Saw to be on the conference. Mr. Colebatch is the member who moved the amendment for the hours of 9 to 9 and who took a most prominent part in the debate on the whole question.

The PRESIDENT: I have already decided that the managers must be chosen by ballot.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: I am merely giving reasons for disagreeing with the appointment of both the Colonial Secretary and Dr. Saw. Dr. Saw has explained his attitude, but he cannot get away from the fact that he voted for the referendum against the wishes of a majority of this House. Therefore, the wishes of a majority of this House should be represented on the conference. I support the conference gladly because I want to show reasonable thinking people outside the Chamber that we are not desirous, and our attitude during the last few days proves conclusively that we were not desirous of hindering any attempt to bring about liquor reform.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [3.36]: I support the motion, but I cannot do so without pointing out very clearly the difficulty in which we are likely to land ourselves. It seems obvious that the proper course to take now is to consider the Message from the Assembly. If we are going to a conference, we shall be casting upon the shoulders of the managers the responsibility of deciding matters which have not been discussed or considered by this Chamber. I am quite prepared to allow them to take that responsibility and I am quite prepared to vote for the three members who have been suggested as managers, but I want them and this Chamber to know what the position will be. Mr. Kingsmill has suggested that, in many respects, the method of taking the referendum might be

amended. If we decide on this course—and it seems to be the only course left open to save the Bill—and if we allow this matter to go to a conference now, when the details of the referendum proposal have not been debated in this House, our managers will have to accept the responsibility of saying what view this House would have taken had the question been debated. There is also the important question of the division of the State into districts which has not been debated in this House, and the managers would have to form their own conclusion as to the desire of this Chamber. I would again point out that at previous referendums taken when there was no general election 16 per cent. of the people voted on one issue and the greatest proportion who voted was 30 per cent. on the temperance question and that after 44 per cent. of the people had been brought to the polls to vote on another issue. Our managers will have to take this matter into consideration. The only excuse for holding this referendum is that there is some difficulty in enforcing temperance reform, and the only way to do it is to get a solid body of public opinion behind us. Fancy taking a referendum and getting a vote of ayes and noes combined of 30 per cent. of those entitled to vote and, on that small vote, deciding to close hotels at 6 o'clock and to stipulate that people residing in hotels and clubs must not have a drink with their dinner! Is it going to give us "a solid body of public opinion" to have a referendum of this kind allowing the goldfields perhaps to trade until 11 p.m. on a total vote of probably not more than 25 per cent. of the people, and the two sides fairly evenly distributed, and to close hotels in other parts of the State perhaps at 6 p.m. and impose such drastic provisions that even residents of a club or an hotel cannot have a drink after that hour? Is such legislation going to make for temperance reform and the decent conduct of the community? Will not it lead to abuses of all sorts? In spite of all this, I support the proposed conference, because I intend to make it

as difficult as possible for those who are trying to prevent any temperance reform to achieve their ends. I am entitled to make this statement. Mr. Jenkins was not quite correct when he said that no division was taken in another place.

Hon. A. G. Jenkins: Not on the 9 to 9 question.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: No division was taken on the vote to strike out Clauses 2 to 14. A subsequent division was taken and only nine members voted in favour of the amendments submitted by this House. More than double nine members had given me their personal assurance that they would vote for the hours of 9 to 9 and two Ministers of the Crown have assured me that, although they were pledged to the referendum, they considered that the hours of 9 to 9 would be a far more workable proposition and hoped the proposal would be carried into effect. Yet, in the face of that, when we send down amendments to another place, they are rejected with contempt and in the hope that we shall press them so that the Bill can be laid aside and the Legislative Council blamed for its loss. I am willing to let this Bill go to a conference in order to make it as hard as possible for temperance reform to be evaded in this way. I am prepared to take something unsatisfactory and something which might land us in trouble in future rather than get nothing at all. A little while ago, we were called upon to deal with a Bill to continue the Licensing Act Amendment Act of 1914, a Bill which gave the Government power to close licensed houses during war time when they thought fit. We inserted amendments in that Bill and were condemned all over the country for doing so. People suggested that we were trying to take away from the Government the power to close hotels when they liked. All sorts of misrepresentations were made against us, when as a matter of fact, we did not attempt to interfere with the powers of the Government at all. The Assembly refused to consider our amendments. A Message came back and we waived our rights and withdrew our amendments, but

the Government never took the trouble to put the Bill on the Notice Paper and it is not on the Notice Paper of either House to-day. If the Government had their way, we should go into recess and that measure would be lost. We have withdrawn all objection to the Bill and what has become of it? It has disappeared; no one cares whether it is read a third time or not and yet we have been abused up hill and down dale for allegedly trying to take away the special powers given to the Government under the Bill which powers we recognised they should continue to have. I shall support any course which will lead to temperance reform at the present juncture.

The PRESIDENT: I have excised the names of the members suggested as managers and will put the motion for a conference. If the motion is passed three managers will then be chosen by ballot.

Question put and passed.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: It might be possible to agree to three managers without taking a ballot.

The PRESIDENT: No; objection having been taken to the members mentioned, I rule that a ballot must be resorted to.

Ballot taken, and Hon. J. M. Drew, Hon. H. P. Colebatch, and Hon. J. J. Holmes appointed managers to represent the Council.

Resolution reported, the report adopted, and a Message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

BILL—PRICE OF GOODS.

Received from the Assembly, and read a first time.

Second Reading—Defeated.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [3.56] in moving the second reading said: The Government are not prepared to carry the responsibility of going into recess—if they are permitted to go into recess—without making an effort to place on the statute-book some measure for the regulation of the prices of the necessities of life, in view of the abnormal times exist-

ing. Such a measure appears to be necessary, not only in the interests of the consumer, but in the interests of the producer as well. During the last few weeks, as every housewife can testify, there have been increases in the prices of some of the necessities of life; and in some cases where there should have been reduction, no reduction has taken place. Various reasons are assigned, but whether or not those reasons rest on a sound foundation it is impossible to say in the absence of machinery to enable the question to be investigated. Inquiry might possibly show legitimate grounds for these increases. In times like these, many factors operate in the direction of adding to the cost of articles manufactured outside the State and overseas; but, without such legislation as is provided in this measure, there is no means of ascertaining whether the prices charged for necessities are or are not justified. The Bill contains a principle entirely different from that embodied in any measure of the kind previously introduced here. It not only enables maximum prices to be fixed, but also gives power to fix minimum prices. At the first glance it may seem an absurd and ridiculous proposition to prevent any person from selling his goods at as low a price as he might think fit, but when we consider the class in whose interest this particular part of the Bill is to be exercised, we must admit that such legislation is warranted by the conditions now obtaining. The provision in question is inserted purely in the interests of the farmer. It is intended for the purpose of protecting the farmer against himself. The welfare of the State demands that our agricultural producer shall get a fair price for his products—that he shall not be victimised. A scheme has been prepared which assists towards that end, but the chief object of that scheme will to a large extent be frustrated if the farmer, through the machinations of interested firms, becomes seized with panic and sells his produce at a price below its real value. The Bill gives power to the commission which will

administer the measure to fix the lowest price at which it will be legal to sell wheat, and any person who infringes the statute, either as buyer or as seller, will render himself liable to a penalty of £100. That is a new and important principle which makes the Bill quite different from any measure which has previously been before the House. It would not be desirable, as hon. members will recognise, that such a provision should remain on the statute-book longer than is absolutely necessary in order to accomplish the purpose in view. Hence it is provided that the Act shall remain in force until 31st December, 1916, and no longer, unless, of course, Parliament gives it a fresh lease of life per medium of a resolution. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Point of Order.

Hon. J. F. Cullen (South-East) [4.10]: I desire your ruling, Mr. President, as to whether the Bill is not out of order. Standing Order 120 provides that no question can be entertained which is the same in substance as a question dealt with at an earlier stage in the same session. I submit that this is almost absolutely the same Bill, under an alias, as one previously before us. As a matter of fact, the similarity of Title is suggestive that it is purely an alias. Not only so, but I will assure you that most of the clauses are word for word with those of the Bill which was thrown out, which still further confirms my statement that the question is the same in substance as that previously dealt with. I may point out that the Bill for the control of trade in war time was passed and ranks No. 5 of the year 1914. An amendment of that measure was passed and numbered 22 of 1915, and was embodied in the previous measure. A Bill to continue the Act for the control of trade in war time was brought down during the present session. I submit that the Bill now before the House is practically, and absolutely in substance, the same as the Act No. 5 of 1914, which it was sought to be

continued by the Bill rejected in this Chamber during this session. The substance of it is the control of trade in war time, the control of trade in the necessities of life. According to this Title, this Bill is to temporarily control the sale of goods, which is purely an alias and nothing more. In addition to that, Clause 2 of the Bill is word for word the same as Clause 2 of No. 5 of 1914. Clause 3 is the same as Clause 2 of No. 22 of 1915, Clause 9 is the same as Clause 4 of No. 22 of 1915, Clause 10 is the same as Clause 10 of No. 5 of 1914, and Clause 11 is the same as Clause 11 of No. 5 of 1914. The only possible point of escape from the operation of Standing Order 120 is that there is a slight addition in this Bill. The Bill rejected provided to continue the power of fixing prices, not necessarily the maximum prices only, but the fixing of prices. It is quite true that in some cases under that Bill it was only sought to fix the maximum. But as a matter of fact the commissioners, the controlling power of that Bill, treated that as the only price, so it was the minimum, as well as the maximum. It was a Bill to fix prices; so is this. And the fact that it mentions the word "minimum" as well as "maximum" does not affect the substance of the Bill. It will be asked, why take this point? I take it because I believe the operation of the previous Act was absolutely pernicious. It caused uncertainty, and uncertainty means a blight on enterprise in a community. Industries and trades were at the mercy of a commission, which, however right thinking, might altogether frustrate the plans and purposes of those carrying on those industries and trades. As a matter of fact the operations of the Act which the previous Bill sought to continue, and which this Bill seeks to revive were so disturbing that right throughout the country there was a condition of unrest in some cases.

The President: I wish the hon. member would confine his attention to the point, showing it is the same in substance as the former Bill. That is the point I want enlightenment upon.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: I submit I have already done that. Perhaps I was digressing in saying that my reason is not a careless and thoughtless reason, but to pass the Bill would be damaging and already the former Act has cost £13,000 of the taxpayers' money. With a desire to help the country, I take the point and I hope the Bill will be ruled out of order.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Can there be any discussion?

The President: I would like to have the point discussed. I know nothing about the Bill, and I have to decide if it is the same in substance as the former Bill.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: I shall be glad if the point is not upheld. Standing Order 120 says—

No question or amendment shall be proposed which is the same in substance as any question or amendment which, during the same session, has been resolved in the affirmative or negative.

The question which was resolved in the negative in this House was that the Act of 1914 should be continued, not that it should be enacted but continued. This question is nothing of the sort. It is a Bill that contains an important difference which should be considered by the House. Under those circumstances I respectfully submit, and I am speaking only to the point of order, there are numerous reasons, in my opinion, why the House should not reject the Bill, but on the point of order, and at the outset I confine myself to the point of order, the question is not the same as that previously considered. It will be placing on the statute-book a Bill different in a very important particular from the Bill the hon. member has alluded to. This is not a continuance Bill but a Bill different in a very important particular from the previous measure.

The Colonial Secretary: This is an entirely different Bill from that which was originally introduced in 1914, which it was sought to continue by the Bill introduced in this Chamber in September last and defeated. The original Act was an

Act for the control of trade in war time and it stated—

This Act shall have operation only during such period as the Governor may from time to time by proclamation declare, when a state of war exists between the United Kingdom and some other power.

That Act was to remain in operation when a state of war existed between the United Kingdom and some other power. The Bill introduced to-day has no reference to war. It is a Bill that may be continued. It is to remain in operation until the 31st December, 1916, and although the war may end next month, still, even if it does, this Bill can continue in operation until the 31st December, 1916, and for a longer period. It must come up for review and a resolution of the two Houses of Parliament will continue the Bill. It has a very different operation from the Act of 1914, a Bill that would cease at the end of the war. There is no reference whatever in the Bill to the war but there is a very important principle in the Bill giving the commissioner the right and power to fix a minimum price as well as a maximum price and very many members who would not support the other Bill might support this measure containing this new principle.

The President: Will the hon. member consider the point that Act No. 22 of 1915 sought to fix a minimum price not expressly but impliedly?

The Colonial Secretary: There was no such power in the Bill and it was never attempted or suggested. The matter was discussed in this Chamber and no reference to the alleged effect was stated. There was no power to fix a minimum price.

The President: I shall decide that the Bill—and I am straining a point—is in order, and if any wrong is done the House by its decision afterwards can put the matter right by defeating the Bill.

Debate resumed.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [4.20]: I am pleased the Government have seen fit to introduce a measure of this kind

and that the objection raised by Mr. Cullen has not been upheld. I think the House made it quite clear, when dealing with the other Act referred to, that it was not the Act itself but the manner in which it was administered.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: The same will occur again.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I hope the experience of the past will enable us to introduce amendments to overcome the difficulty. The manner in which the Act was being administered is what the House objected to, and the fact of there being three commissioners drawing £750 per annum each, and incurring an expenditure of £13,000 going round the country fixing the price of jams and pickles, reducing the price of one by $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and increasing the other by $\frac{1}{2}$ d., that is what the House objected to. The moral effect of an Act of this description is bound to have some good in the community. In this State we have something above the average in honest traders but in every community there is a certain section who take advantage of anything that occurs, and the moral effect of this Bill will have more to do in regulating the prices than the action of the commissioner who may be appointed. What I am concerned about is what commissioner is to administer the Act, and approximately what is it going to cost? When discussing the continuance of the last Act I made a suggestion to the Colonial Secretary that the Government Storekeeper should be appointed the commissioner with all powers required under the Act, and if a promise of that description had been then given the House would not have rejected the measure.

The Colonial Secretary: The Premier told me last night that the Government intended to appoint Mr. Simpson.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: A single commissioner?

The Colonial Secretary: Yes.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Colonial Secretary said that this has become a matter of urgency, and yet within two minutes of making that announcement he

complained that the House was not being allowed to go into recess. We claim that when matters at this juncture require to be dealt with they should be dealt with, and the announcement of the leader of the House that this is important legislation justifies the Council in taking time to consider it. This question of the minimum price is something new. The Colonial Secretary says it has not been enacted before. I entirely agree that it is entirely new, and I want to know how the minimum price system will work. It is easy to fix a minimum price at which a person can sell, but if the buyer refuses to pay that price, then the goods must remain in the hands of the producer. The question of supply and demand always regulates prices. This year we have an abundant harvest.

Hon. J. Cornell: It has not had any effect on the price of bread so far.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: For the reason that the Government kept up the price of flour by sending flour to other States and selling it at a less price than to our own people. That being so, how can we expect to have cheap bread? But the Government themselves as monopolists control all the flour in the State and charge the baker a higher price by £2, £3, or £4 a ton in this State than in the other States. This is the result of the Government dipping their fingers into things they do not understand, and which the merchants of the State should have been allowed to deal with. Supply and demand is going to regulate prices. We have an abundant harvest and the man who is wanting to sell has got to take the local value. As far as regulating minimum and maximum prices is concerned for anything imported, that resolves itself into this: if prices are fixed that will not allow the merchant a margin of profit, then the public will have to go without the article. Much could be said on this matter. I would like the two points which I have mentioned cleared up. How is the commission going to fix a minimum price and how do the commission propose to make the purchaser pay the minimum price when it will not pay him to give that price? The other point is this: I

understand that the Government Store-keeper is to be the commissioner. If that is done there will be very little expenditure. It is an experiment, and if the experiment will not cost anything or very little, as far as I am concerned the Government can have a try at the proposal.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: A poor ground on which to support a Bill.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I said at the outset the moral effect of legislation of this kind is going to have more effect than fixing a maximum and a minimum price. Place the Bill on the statute-book and it can be administered by a Government officer.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.29]: I support this as a war measure.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: It is not a war measure.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I support it as a war measure. It seems to me that at a time like this the Government should have the power which they ask for to deal with questions which might arise under a war measure. I am aware that many people in this country are apparently conducting their affairs as if there was no war at all. We never know what is going to happen. It is only thanks to the British fleet that we can go on as we are. No one can tell me that the war is over yet, or when it will be over. In a country in a time of war it is no use talking about the law of supply and demand. That should not operate in war time.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: It does.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: No one is a stronger believer in the law of supply and demand than I am, but I say one could stop it temporarily, at any rate. I agree that the law of supply and demand will operate for a time. As a matter of fact, it can be stopped immediately or for a few weeks or months and possibly for 12 months. I maintain that the Government are perfectly right in wanting these powers.

Hon. H. Millington: The regulation of supply does it.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The law of supply and demand has got to go by the

board when a war is on. The administration of the Act is an entirely different matter. It wants, however, a certain amount of sagacity to do this, and this sagacity probably the Government have not got. I am quite aware of that aspect of the question. We cannot get rid of this Government. No one wants them apparently; they are like the old man of the sea. Apparently the only way to get rid of them is by a general election. I should be prepared, stipulating, of course, that it is a war measure, to give the Government or any Government the power for which they ask under this Bill. We can discuss one or two clauses in Committee and, no doubt, they can be severely criticised. I will certainly support the second reading, regarding the Bill as a war measure.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [4.33]: When the measure, which was almost of the same terms as this one, was introduced in 1914, I took the same view as that taken by the Hon. Mr. Sanderson just now, that these powers are powers which should be conferred upon the Government in time of war. But as a matter of fact, these powers have been used in exactly the opposite direction to that in which they were intended, and which this legislature at all events expected, they should be used. It was said that they were not to be used in regard to the farmers' wheat, but the farmers' wheat was one of the chief matters in regard to which action was taken. Mr. Sanderson says it is possible to put out of office the law of supply and demand. In this case an effort was made to do it in order to cheapen food, with the result that the Western Australian farmer got less for his wheat than the farmers in any other State of the Commonwealth, and the Western Australian consumer paid more for his bread than any other body of consumers in the Commonwealth, whilst the Government lost thousands and thousands of pounds by the transaction.

Hon. J. Cornell: Who made the money?

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I will give the hon. member a little information on that point. That will happen every time

an attempt is made to put out of office the law of supply and demand. It will beat one every time. The farmers in this State were compelled to sell their wheat at 4s. 6d. when it was honestly worth 6s. or 7s. a bushel. Then at a later stage, when the Government were importing wheat costing 8s. 4d. a bushel on the wharf, they were compelling the farmers in the State to sell them a superior article at 6s. 7d. The consumer was getting no benefit but was paying the highest price for his flour charged anywhere in Australia, the Government were losing money, and the farmer was being robbed of the fair value of his wheat. Mr. Holmes says he will support the Bill because of its moral effect, but I am opposed to it because of its immoral effect. May I say a few words in regard to the origin of this particular measure. Yesterday morning members of both Houses of Parliament were invited to attend a meeting called in the Legislative Assembly Chamber to hear the particulars as to the arrangements made between the Commonwealth and the State Government for the export of wheat. During the discussion of these arrangements the question arose as to how the sacrifice of a portion of the farmers' wheat, which is required for local purposes, might be avoided. The position is this: the Government have made the arrangements for the export of wheat, and from the farmers' point of view there are two objectionable features to that scheme. I mention this matter because I shall show how it has led up directly to the Bill, and how it will be affected by the Bill. The farmer, as I say, has two objections to this scheme: one is that the Commonwealth Government have decided practically to do all the exportation of the farmers' wheat, instead of allowing it to go through the ordinary course of trade. I am prepared to admit that there were reasons why probably that had to be done, namely, on the question of arranging for freight, but I have not sufficient information on the subject to enable me to express an opinion as to the advisability of this course. In normal years

when the farmer exports his wheat he does so through the competing buying firms which are operating in the State, or it cost him at the outside 4d. a bushel plus railway freight and steamer freight. With the freight at 25s. per ton, which is equal to 8d. a bushel, and railway freight of 4d. a bushel, making a total of 1s. a bushel, it costs the farmer another 4d. a bushel to get his wheat from his siding to the London market and sell it, covering all charges. In many cases it has been done, however, as cheaply as 2½d. I think Mr. Hamersley has done this himself many times and will bear out my statement. But 4d. was regarded as the maximum cost apart from the railway freights and shipping freights. The farmer recognises that shipping freights are bounding up, and as a matter of fact, though some farmers will not admit it, the farming community is not prejudiced to any great extent by that increase in the shipping freights, for the simple reason that the value of wheat is determined by its value in London, which in turn is determined by the value of freights. If the shipping freights were cheaper than they are at the present time I think it would be found that with the supply of wheat there is in the world to-day it would be cheaper in London now than it has been for many years past.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: The Argentine is playing an important part in the wheat market.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: There is also a lot of Russian wheat in the Baltic. If it were not for the war and the present high shipping freights wheat should be cheap, and the farmer should get no less for his wheat in London after paying these high freights than he would get if it were not for the existence of these high freights. The farmer recognises this increase in the freights and he discovers that instead of the cost over and above the shipping and railway freights being 4d. a bushel, under this scheme it will be 7d. a bushel. The result of altering the method and removing competitive business and taking away the elements of the

law of supply and demand, even if we admitted that this was necessary, has been to add 3d. per bushel on to the cost of handling the farmers' wheat, irrespective of the freights, which cannot be helped in these circumstances. That makes the farmer dissatisfied with this scheme. The Minister says that this is the outside estimate of the cost.

Hon. V. Hamersley: It should only cost 3d. per bushel.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Under the estimate under this scheme it is going to cost 7d. per bushel. The second objection on the part of the farmer is that for his wheat he is to get a certificate entitling him to an advance of 3s. a bushel f.o.b. at Fremantle. There is still a difference of opinion as to what 3s. f.o.b. Fremantle means. The Commissioner (Mr. Sutton), however, says it is minus railway freight, which would mean that in taking the average for our wheat-growing areas there would be an advance of 2s. 8d. a bushel. The Minister says it is minus the railway freight and local handling charges, which means 3d. for the agent, the figure varying between one farthing and a little over three farthings for handling through the Fremantle Harbour Trust according to whether the wheat goes straight to the ship or through the shed. If the Commissioner is right, the farmer will only be getting 2s. 4½d. a bushel. The whole point I am leading up to is that the farmer has rushed in and sold his wheat for less than it is worth to the local millers. This has been sold largely at 3s. 9d. a bushel, and even as low as 3s. 7½d.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: That is in the country.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Quite so. A portion of the arrangement was that the disposal of the wheat, as announced by the Prime Minister, except that required for seed and feed (not food) for the farmers' stock and for use on his farm, had to be done through the pool. If a large number of the farmers sell the wheat required for local consumption direct to the millers at probably 6d. or 9d. a bushel less than the parity of Lon-

don value, it means that they are not only depriving themselves of the full value but are also robbing the pool. Up to the present I believe that something like 300,000 bushels of wheat have been sold for local consumption in this way at probably considerably below the London parity value. When the Minister outlined the scheme yesterday Mr. James Gardiner made a remark that this probably would have been avoided if the Control of Trade in War Time Legislation had still been in existence. I disputed that contention, arguing that the Control of Trade in War Time Act as we knew it before, provided only for the fixing of a maximum price, and unless some means could be devised whereby we could fix a minimum price, we could not possibly help the farmer. The result of that was a conference between Mr. Gardiner, the members of the Ministry, and the Crown Solicitor. Mr. Gardiner came to me afterwards and asked me my ideas on the question. My idea, I told him, was that a Bill should be framed to deal with this wheat problem. Mr. Gardiner said, "Suppose we provide for a maximum and a minimum price in the Bill: would you see any objection to that?" I said that I would have to see the Bill, and I also added that I could not see how we were going to provide for a minimum price. He made the suggestion that the minimum price should be not less than the parity of London value. There is no provision of that kind in this Bill. To my mind it appears to me that those words "minimum price" have simply been put into the Bill in order to catch the votes of the people who previously voted against it, and in order that the Government may have this legislation to use in the way they want to. It has been argued that this legislation is necessary because of the high prices of flour and bread, and although wheat is selling at 3s. 9d. a bushel, flour is still quoted at £16 10s. a ton. The reason why flour has been at £16 10s. a ton for several weeks past is that the Government had 1,600 tons of Argentine flour which they

have been endeavouring to sell at £16 10s., and the millers have found it easy to sell their own in competition with the Government flour at £16 10s. As a matter of fact, the Argentine flour has cost the Government probably not less than £19 a ton, and some day we shall know exactly how much has been lost on the transaction.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Never.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: A little while ago we were told in another place that about 2,000 tons of Government flour had been exported to the Eastern States at £15 5s. per ton on board at Fremantle. That was about £4 less than it cost, and about £3 less than the Government were demanding from the local consumer, and, as a matter of fact, it was so far below the price that it enabled the people who got it in South Australia to reship flour made from local wheat to this State and sell it against the Government's own flour. I am absolutely certain that, so long as the Government are in business with these things the fat man will continue to wax fatter. The three big buying firms, Bell & Co., Dalgety & Co., and Darling & Co., will have the seasons of their lives. The head of one of those firms the other day expressed the opinion that Mr. Hughes was the greatest statesman the Commonwealth had ever produced, and if anyone acquainted with these firms read their reports, they would find in those reports glowing tributes to the Federal Government, now that that Government have given them a monopoly. So long as we have this legislation, and use it, the fat man will continue to wax fatter. Whilst the Government have been trying to sell their Argentine flour at £16 10s. and the local millers have been doing the same, the Government have about 280 tons of flour made from old season's wheat which they have been trying to sell for £18 10s., and quite recently the Government offered the millers the flour they had as low as £12 10s. a ton. At the present time the price of flour made from local

wheat is £13 10s. a ton, and the Government are still left with a very large quantity of flour which must have cost about £18 or £19. I repeat, the whole of this business has resulted in the farmer getting less for his wheat, the consumer paying more for his bread, and the Government losing all its money. What is the good of this legislation? We are told that there is to be a minimum price. We can fix a maximum price because if a person has the goods and will not sell at the maximum price, he can be compelled to do so. We can fix a minimum price in the same way if we provide that the man who has the money shall be compelled to buy at the minimum price. But how can we do it? If we do not do that, what are we going to do? During the last few days there have been potatoes on the Perth market and not a bid for them. Are we going to fix a minimum price for them, and if there are no buyers at that price, what are we going to do? Are we going to say to the merchant, "You must take them," or to the man who grew them "You must wait a day or two until they are absolutely rotten"? For any perishable article of produce it is impossible to fix a minimum price, and so far as passing this Bill to fix a minimum price for wheat is concerned, it seems like burning down a house to roast a pig. Another ill effect of this sort of legislation is that it makes the position of business men very difficult. I know that would be a useless argument unless I was able to show that the difficulty can be passed on. If we have legislation of this kind we stifle enterprise and industry, and we stifle the business people who are afraid to import when they know that, having imported, a price will be fixed which will settle them. As a matter of fact, after this legislation was enacted in 1914, and when it became evident that there was not sufficient wheat in the State to supply the requirements of the people, the flour millers went to the Commission appointed under the Act, and said, "If we import wheat to meet the requirements of the people, will you un-

dertake that this legislation shall not be used so as to prevent us getting a legitimate price" The Commission, however, refused to give any undertaking whatever.

Hon. H. Millington: They wanted a speculative profit.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I have yet to learn that that reason was ever urged against them. It would have been an easy matter to deal with, because the cost of the milling is so easily ascertained that it would have been the simplest matter possible for a fair price to be fixed, and that is all the millers asked the Commission to do. The Commission said No, and the millers refused to import. That phase of the question will apply to all other articles of commerce. The existence of this legislation will not make things cheaper, and it will drive out of the trade those people who are best able to handle it. The Government will rush in and the result will be as in the past, the producer will get less, the consumer will pay more, and the taxpayer will be mulcted to a considerable extent. I intend to oppose the Bill, and I repeat that the words "minimum price" have been put in here merely to catch votes, the votes of those who are known to be opposed to the principle of fixing a maximum price.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [4.55]: I have listened with a good deal of amusement to the arguments of Mr. Holmes and Mr. Sanderson. If they had been giving reasons for opposing this Bill they could not have been more effective. Mr. Holmes supported it in the hope that it would never be used. Mr. Sanderson supported it for the same reason and they both admitted that it seeks to run in the teeth of all business principles, and that, unless the Government will give a promise that they will not waste money over it. It will be a bad thing to have the Bill. That is something new in this House. As a matter of fact, as Mr. Colebatch has explained, this Bill is Mr. James Gardiner's Bill. Ever since the little picnic to Mid-

land, Mr. Gardiner has been the bosom friend of the Government.

Hon. J. Cornell: Oh, do be fair.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: And this is his suggestion, made at the conference yesterday. Mr. Gardiner said that if we had the Control of Trade in War Time Act we would raise the price of wheat for the poor farmer, and we would lower the price of bread for the poor consumer. I could not help interjecting "Jack Cade, the revolutionist."

Hon. J. Cornell: It is Cade, not Cadd.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Pronounce it as you like. Of course, I was not referring to the hangman but to the revolutionary leader of 1450 who promised his fellows a quart of ale out of a pint pot. Mr. Gardiner promised to raise the price of everything the farmers grew, and lower the price of everything which was being consumed a demagogue's argument from a demagogue. And the Premier jumped at it, and said, "We will do it." They were immediately faced with the difficulty which I referred to, and they got over it by a little contrivance, which seems greatly to delight one hon. member not far from me, this little contrivance of fixing a minimum. They had that power under the previously passed law, but they found they could not apply it. "Oh," said Mr. Gardiner, "we will put in this amendment. It will tickle Parliament and the farmers, and it will perhaps get over any points of order that may be raised." The impossible minimum which no one but a demagogue would pretend to regard as practicable. I will not labour that point, as Mr. Colebatch has put it so plainly that no man, picked out at random in the street, could fail to grasp it. We cannot fix a minimum; the Government cannot fix a minimum. Look at the fun of the Government's attempt to trade in wheat and flour. It is as good as a comedy as detailed by Mr. Colebatch today. They are fixing the selling price of flour in this State and they are selling it to the other States so much lower that the buyers in the other States can send it back here and make a profit. These are the men who are going to come

to the help of the farmer and damn his whole business. It is impossible to estimate the waste in money, in the blighting of enterprise and in preventing industry during the regime of the old Bath-Rae Commission, but in actual cash spent by them some £13,000 was thrown away. One hon. member said if they had not acted, the moral effect of having the measure on the statute-book would have done good. Perhaps so. It was on that argument that all these emergency Bills were passed. They were to be powers in reserve to frighten possible wrong doers and, in all probability, they would never be put into force, but do members think that when the Government get powers to exercise patronage, they are going to allow any measure to rest a dead letter? Never. They believe that the more money they spend, the better for a big section of this country, and they spend it and appoint every man who can be appointed under the powers of legislation. There is something in the Colonial Secretary's statement that if this Bill is passed, only the Government Storekeeper will be appointed as the Royal Commission, but will the Minister guarantee this? It might have some effect.

The Colonial Secretary: I was informed by the Premier last night that that is the intention.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: That will minimise the apprehensions of members very greatly. I live in the centre of an agricultural community. I am in absolute touch with them in their industries and their difficulties and battles and from end to end of my province, that old commission is a by-word.

Hon. J. Cornell: Thanks to the hon. member.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: They remember with bitterness their contact with that old commission, and they were delighted when the Continuance Bill was emphatically rejected by this House. I am satisfied the feeling in my province is still the same. I want to know what Mr. James Gardiner had to go upon to inspire the Government to bring in this Bill. There have been a few cock-and-bull stories raised, chiefly in Perth by men who know

practically nothing about the matter, hinting at possible dangers of tradesmen raising prices against consumers. There is not a centre of population of any size in this country where there is not active lively and effective competition in every line of trade, and a man who thinks he can raise his prices to the consumer very quickly finds himself left.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: What about those who supply the traders?

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: The trader can look after himself pretty well. There are plenty of competing merchants in this State. "But," say a number of people, "wheat has been sold at less than London parity." Why?

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Because of the scheme.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Where that has happened, it has happened through fears of the scheme. A scheme kept in secrecy—I do not mean to say that the framers of the scheme could, at an early date, have given the full details, but when we got rumours of a big monopoly by the Federal Government which would stifle and choke off all competition, and when the actual prices could not be given, it is easy to understand that some of the wheat-growers became nervous and said, "If we can get a firm offer at anything like a reasonable price, we had better take it rather than run the unknown risks of this wheat pool. I believe there have been a few cases, not many, and this is how they have happened. The attitude of the millers for some weeks has been this—"We shall go slow. We shall buy only what we actually want to keep business going for, under the big scheme, we shall get wheat much more cheaply than we can buy it now." Where here and there a nervous wheat-grower has sold at less than London parity, it has been through fear of this unrevealed scheme which was being matured behind the backs of the wheat-growers. When it was entered upon, the millers and shipping people were consulted and the Government who profess to know all about it, but they never thought of the grower of wheat. The Farmers and Settlers, at a later conference, compelled attention to

their side of the case and got a belated hearing for some of their delegates. It was the fact that this big scheme was being matured behind the backs of the growers that led, in a few cases, to sales below London parity, and the millers for some weeks have been of opinion that wheat will be lower and they have only to keep their business going for the present by buying hand-to-mouth supplies. This is what they are doing. It will pay them better to come under the big wheat scheme and to take their wheat from the pool, except for one possible risk. The administrators of the business might be foolish enough to do what the commission we are about to resuscitate did. The commission assembled a lot of produce at central depôts and loaded it gratuitously with two freights, both of which should have been avoided. If the administrators of the wheat scheme are foolish enough to assemble all their produce at central depôts and then make the millers take it back, there will be a good deal of waste as against buying in the district around them. Taking it all round, however, the millers have concluded that they are going to get cheaper wheat through the pool than even by offering farmers a lower price than London parity. I shall not go back on the fact that I still hold the Bill should not be submitted. However, the Bill is here and what is to be done with it? Without the slightest hesitation, I say reject it. There is not a specific case of hardship that the starters of these cock-and-bull stories have dared to quote. A few men from the Trades Hall have concluded that there must be abuses because the commission they looked upon to protect them is dead, and so they have started an agitation for the Government to revive the old commission and return to the fine old wasteful system of spending £13,000 in less than 12 months. In the country districts, not a single case of overcharging has been cited. There is ample competition to check any tradesmen who might feel inclined to overcharge. Even the Government overcharge if they get the slightest chance, and they

pride themselves on having done it in certain cases. I suppose that is human nature. Only a monopolist, and Governments are the rankest monopolists of all, would dare attempt to do it. I hope the House will not stultify itself by going back on its vote of a couple of months ago. When the proposal to continue the Act which is to be resuscitated by this Bill came before the House, it was thrown out. There has been nothing to justify any change. Why should members go back on their opinions? Are they impressed by Mr. James Gardiner? If so they do not estimate him as I do. I look upon him as the rankest demagogue in the public life of this country, and an utterly unsafe guide in a matter of this kind. Will members, without a single argument except such as we have heard from Mr. Holmes and Mr. Sanderson, say this will be a good measure to have on the shelf though not to use?

Hon. R. J. LYNN (West): [5.12]: Some few months ago I was very much disposed to support a measure of this description, but I think there is no occasion for it to-day. If only out of consideration for and in justice to the body of millers who have done so much in the interests of the farming community and to safeguard the interests the State during the crisis we have passed through, I think they should not be interfered with in their business during the coming year. In the early stages after the original Act was passed, the Grain and Foodstuff Board communicated with the millers' association, and as they had the organisation to operate and purchase wheat and flour, an agreement was entered into between the board and the millers' association to allow them 2d. per bushel commission on wheat and 2½ per cent. on flour purchased. The millers' association comprises all the millers in the State—some seven or eight in number. Be it said to their credit that they assured the board that in the event of any profit being derived from the transaction, they would be prepared to refund it. That was not part of the agreement. The

agreement distinctly stated that the millers were to receive 2d. per bushel commission for the purchase of wheat, and 2½ per cent. on the price of flour. Out of that amount they were called upon to pay sub-agents in the country districts, the cost of checking and weighing, and all other incidentals relative to the operation of the business. When the end of the year came, a month ago, the millers presented their balance sheet to the Grain and Foodstuff Board, showing a surplus of no less than £1,890. That is to say, after paying bare out-of-pocket expenses—not allowing a shilling for travelling expenses of all the millers to come from the country to the City, but just allowing bare out-of-pocket expenses—they had a sum of £1,890 in hand; and they immediately paid over that amount in full to the Industries Assistance Board. They gave all their organisation, all the system they had in operation, all their business acumen, everything at their disposal, and handed back every penny of profit derived from the transaction. I understand the millers have been criticised severely. It has been said that owing to the millers' association the price of flour has been maintained at a very high level. I do not think that criticism is deserved. I understand that, as a result of yesterday's meeting in the Assembly room, this Bill has emanated. I do not know how, exactly, it is proposed to arrive at a minimum and maximum price, and how it is proposed to interfere with the law of supply and demand. We are told that there will be plenty of tonnage to take the wheat away. To start with, I do not believe that. My opinion is that a considerable quantity of the wheat of Western Australian farmers will be in this State this day twelve months by reason of no ships being available. At Katanning flour is now being sold at £18 10s. per ton, and this is the very flour which was bought by the Millers' Association at £15 12s. 6d. for the Grain and Foodstuff Board. Therefore the price of flour to-day has nothing at all to do with the millers. The price to-day is regulated by the board, not by the millers' associa-

tion. Not one ton of flour is held by the millers' association. The flour is all held by the Government to-day. Even at Cottesloe, where there is a store of Ockerby & Co., flour has been sold for some months past to be shipped to the Eastern States. I am not going to say that the flour was rebagged and relabelled, and then sent back for consumption, but I know that the weekly steamers have been taking away 200 to 300 tons of flour at a time, and have been bringing back the same quantities of flour from the Eastern States. I could understand it if this was one of the Colonial Secretary's pet steamer schemes, because it would be providing freight.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Back loading.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Yes. I can hardly understand, however, why flour at £15 per ton should be sent from here to Adelaide at a back loading freight of 15s. per ton and then carried back here at a freight of 25s. per ton. That would bring the cost up to £17 per ton. With £1 profit it could be sold here at £18. South Australia would be getting the benefit of the transaction. That is the position of affairs to-day, and that has been the position for some time.

Hon. W. Patrick: Where did the profit come in?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: It came in because while the market value of flour was £18 per ton in Fremantle or Perth and £17 per ton in Adelaide it paid to buy flour here at £15 10s. per ton and take it over to Adelaide and then send it back again.

Hon. W. Patrick: Who sold it here?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I do not know the names of those who sold it here, but it was sold through indent agents for the various millers. I can assure the House that flour was coming in in the quantities I have stated. There is no exaggeration about the matter. I am not saying that the same flour came back, but I think our Western Australian wheat milled here would be quite good enough to make bread for the South Australians. Possibly, also, their flour was coming here to be mixed with ours. Theirs may not have

been of such good quality. Perhaps the South Australians were sending their flour here in order to level it up, and not to level down. The millers' association have been severely criticised for their actions in connection with the alleged cornering of flour. But the fact is that the businesses of the members of the millers' association were absolutely dislocated and disorganised. They placed all their business machinery at the disposal of the Government, and during the twelve months which have passed they have not made one penny profit. On the contrary, all their operations have been suspended; large business organisations have had to be closed down; and these things in themselves would mean very heavy loss to the millers. When flour was acquired by the Government—and that was recently—the rate proclaimed as the value of the flour was proclaimed by the Grain and Food-stuff Board and not by any association or combination or monopoly. Therefore I consider what was said at yesterday's meeting, according to reports appearing in the Press to-day, is not worthy of any credence. I have here a balance sheet of all the transactions relating to the purchase of flour and wheat on behalf of the Government. The total represents a large sum of money. As I have said, not one penny of all the profit made in the twelve months' transactions has remained in the hands of the millers. It was all handed over to the Industries Assistance Board in order to help towards reduction of the price of seed wheat to the farmers. In view of that fact, and as times are more normal than when the original Act was passed, and as the House saw fit a few months ago to reject the continuance Bill, I see no urgency for this measure to-day, and for that reason I am not prepared to support it. I would like to mention, however, that reference has been made to the Royal Commissioner under this Bill; and I understand the name of Mr. G. W. Simpson, the Stores Manager, has been mentioned for the position. It would be impossible for the Government to have a more capable man as Commissioner than Mr. Simpson, so that my refusal to support the measure has no reference to the

personality of the probable Commissioner.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: But the Bill says "a Commission," not "a Commissioner."

Hon. R. J. LYNN: The Government do not propose to appoint more than one Commissioner, I understand. If the Bill gets through its second reading, I hope the leader of the House will see his way clear to have the name of the Commissioner mentioned in the Bill, because I am sure it will allay the fears of many people to know that Mr. G. W. Simpson is to be the nominee of the Government for carrying out the provisions of the Bill. At the same time, I really see no necessity for this measure.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [5.27]: I intend to support the second reading of the Bill. I do not agree with some members who have preceded me as to the reasons for the Bill. It is characteristic of Mr. Cullen to make attacks on individuals who are not members of this Chamber, or to make attacks on persons who are members of this Chamber, and then to clear out after he has made his attack. One remark made by Mr. Cullen I absolutely resent in the interests of hospitality alone. He referred to Mr. Gardiner as a demagogue. If I were asked to find a fit term for Mr. Cullen, I would say that he is an oracle. Mr. Cullen said that this Bill was the result of Mr. Gardiner's picnic along the Midland Railway; and Mr. Cullen used words to the effect that those who had accepted Mr. Gardiner's hospitality fed out of his hand and worshipped him. I think that the remark is entirely beside the question, and I think there was no need to introduce it into the discussion on this Bill, or to make it in this House at all. I, in common with other members of this Chamber, accepted the invitation of Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Lefroy, and enjoyed the trip, besides becoming a little more enlightened by reason of it. I advise Mr. Cullen to associate himself with that kind of adventure in future, as it may have the effect of broadening his mind a little. To a considerable extent I agree with Mr. Colebatch that the object which this Bill purposes to accomplish is largely academic. The position, as it presents it-

self to my mind to-day, is that there are two sections of the community now being squeezed who were not being squeezed during the existence of the Control of Trade in War Time Act. The two sections I refer to are the primary producers, who are mostly confined to the land, and the consumers. Both these sections are being squeezed by the middle man, and I agree with Mr. Colebatch that they will continue to be squeezed by the middle man so long as the middle man follows his occupation. It is by squeezing that the middle man gets his livelihood. In my opinion, it would be a stretch of the imagination for any hon. member to assert that there is any need whatever for 90 per cent. of the middle men operating to-day. The fixing of prices is in the direction of protecting the primary producer.

Hon. W. Patrick: How do you think it will work?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I have said it is largely academic, but I do say we can never find a way out till we try.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Sometimes not then.

Hon. J. CORNELL: But if we never try we will never find a way. I support the Bill for the one reason that it is an endeavour to find a way out, to assist two sections of the community which are being kept down by the barnacles that live upon them. The fixing of the maximum price is less academical than the fixing of the minimum. I do not altogether agree with Mr. Colebatch in the statement that the operations of the Government in respect to flour have kept up the price of that commodity. I am not going into that question, because I know nothing about it, but I think it must be in the minds of many members that when the late Commission fixed the present price of bread, the plea the bakers brought before them for an increase in price was, not the high price ruling for flour, but the high prices then ruling for horse feed. I think it will be found on record that on that ground alone the Commission allowed an extra farthing a loaf to be placed on bread. Since then horse-feed has fallen

£8 or £10 a ton, yet bread has maintained its high price.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: You know the Government have kept up the price of flour.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That may have been a slight factor in keeping up the price of bread, but the price of flour was not the reason given for the raising of the price of bread. It is an accepted axiom that while it is easy to raise prices it is very difficult to get them down again. Whether or not the Bill solve the problem before us time alone will tell, but the line of action advocated by the opponents of the Bill will certainly not remove our difficulties. The policy of the opponents of the Bill is simply a negation. Supply and demand may have operated, in fact did operate, when every individual in business stood for himself, but in these days of honourable understanding and trusts and combines the old theory that supply and demand adjust everything is as dead as Julius Cæsar. The argument used by Mr. Lynn is almost pathetic. He admits the justice of the Bill, but claims that because of the sacrifices they made last year, the millers should not be interfered with this year. They may have made sacrifices, but it is a time of sacrifice. The Bill aims at doing something for those who are least able to do anything for themselves, namely the poorer classes, who are making the greatest sacrifices of all. I hope the House will agree to the second reading. I cannot support Mr. Lynn in his demand that Mr. Simpson's name should be inserted in the Bill. It would be a very improper thing to do.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We could insert "The Government Storekeeper."

Hon. J. CORNELL: I have nothing to say against Mr. Simpson, but I think that if Mr. Simpson is appointed to act, and acts, he will be referred to in similar terms to those used by Mr. Cullen when referring to his pet bogey, namely, "the Bath-Rae blight." I do not think it wise to place the name of any man or the title of any officer in the Bill as commis-

sioner. The appointment should be left to the Government of the day. I regret that the Bill did not come down earlier in the session, but now that it is here I appeal to hon. members to support it.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [5.42]: It is my intention to support the Bill at this juncture. I say that advisedly, because I may find it necessary at a later stage to withdraw my support. I am very glad the Bill survived the point of order raised against it. If it is to go out I would prefer that it went out on its merits rather than on a technicality.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Or by the High Court.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Or by the High Court. It has been said that certain members are not to be commended for saying that it is a good Bill to be placed on the shelf. I can be included with those members, because I think the shelf is the proper place on which to keep a Bill of this class until there is a use for it. The Bill is like the Yankee's gun, in that we do not want it often, but when we want it we want it mighty bad. I am satisfied that if that policy had been followed by the commissioners under the previous Act, the continuance of which was refused, there would not have been any refusal. It was simply that their activities were too great and ill-advised which led to the destruction of the measure under which they worked. I am at one with the principle of the Bill. I think at present that when we have a period approaching during which wheat will be phenomenally cheap—because I take it from the information which I had the profit of listening to yesterday at the conference on the wheat scheme, that one of the principal effects of that scheme will be a great reduction in price of wheat for local consumption—it behoves us to see that the consumers get the benefit of the cheap wheat, even if we cannot raise the price of wheat for the farmer who produces it. I am prepared to admit that the question of fixing a minimum price is one of great difficulty. I do not know what is to be done in the way of

punishment. The only satisfactory punishment I can advise is that any person who sells a commodity below the minimum shall be presented by the Government with double the quantity of the commodity he has sold, so that if he persists in his crime he shall at last perish under an ever-increasing accumulated load of unwanted goods. The fixing of a minimum has an attractive sound. It would be a good thing to sell anything by, I should say. But when one looks into it, one finds nothing more than a somewhat empty phrase. I do not see what punishment is to be devised unless the suggestion I have put forward is adopted, and I make the Government a present of it. They have considered worse in their time. I therefore present it for their consideration for what it is worth. I have said that I intend to support the Bill at this juncture, because I voted for the destruction of the previous Act, not that I disagreed with the principle, but I objected to the injudicious administration of the Act. The second point on which I disagreed was the enormous disproportionate cost. So far as I am concerned, if Clause 3 is left in the Bill in its present form, when the measure leaves Committee I shall feel it my duty to vote against the third reading to help in throwing the measure out. Clause 3 provides that the Governor may, on the advice of a Royal Commission, which the Governor is hereby authorised to appoint, do certain things—

The PRESIDENT: I must interrupt the hon. member for the purpose of a conference. The hon. member may resume at some future time.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Request for Conference.

Message received from the Assembly requesting the Council to grant a conference respecting the Land Act Amendment Bill, and notifying that, should the conference be granted, the managers for the Assembly on that conference would be Hon. H. B. Lefroy, Mr. Cunningham, and Hon. W. D. Johnson.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [5.50]: I move—

That, in reply to Message 49 from the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council agrees to a conference and appoints the Hon. C. F. Baxter, Hon. H. Millington, and Hon. V. Hamersley managers for the Legislative Council, and fixed 7.30 as the time, and the President's room as the place for holding the conference.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Does this hour harmonise with the hour for the other conference?

The PRESIDENT: It does not.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Would it not save a lot of time if the hours were coincident?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not see any necessity for altering the hour.

Question put and passed.

BILL—SALE OF LIQUOR REGULATION (No. 2).

Conference with Assembly.

Message received from the Assembly notifying that it had agreed to a conference on the Sale of Liquor Regulation Bill.

Sitting suspended from 5.50 to 8 p.m.

Managers' Report.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have to bring up the report of the managers.

Report received and read.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I now move—

That the report be adopted.

The managers have decided to recommend that in the metropolitan area and also in the agricultural districts exclusive of the townsite of Westonia the hours shall be from nine to nine. The hours will not, however, be fixed on the goldfields, nor in the townsite of Westonia. Upon receipt of a requisition signed by not less than 2,000 residents of the goldfields district No. 2, the question of the closing time is to be sub-

mitted to the electors resident in that district. If there is a desire for early closing in the district, there must be a movement for the presentation of a requisition to the Governor signed by not less than 2,000 persons.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I do not like the Colonial Secretary's motion to be carried without offering my congratulations to the gentlemen who formed the conference. It seems to me, at the first glance at all events, that they showed a high degree of ingenuity and cleverness in getting out of a very awkward position with credit to themselves, and indeed with credit to all parties concerned. No other words but ingenuity and cleverness will describe the manner in which they extricated themselves and the two branches of the Legislature, if not also some people outside, from what threatened to be a very serious position indeed. I have much pleasure in supporting the adoption of the report.

Question put and passed.

In Committee.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The method to be pursued in dealing with this Bill is that we will now consider Message No. 46 from the Assembly, in which our amendments are disagreed to. The Colonial Secretary will move the amendments which he foreshadowed in the remarks he made when moving the adoption of the report, as alternative amendments to those which have not been agreed to by the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Perhaps it would be better to withdraw the whole of our amendments and take the Bill as it came to us from the Assembly in the first instance.

Clause 3—Districts:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subclause 2 the words "and the townsite of Westonia in the Atton electoral district" be inserted.

Amendment passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move a further amendment—

That after "Avon" in line 2 of Sub-clause 3, the words "exclusive of the townsite of Westonia" be inserted.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 4—Referendum as to closing time:

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY clause negatived.

Clause 8—Returning Officer:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment:—

That in line 2 "each" be struck out and "the goldfields" inserted in lieu.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 11—Notification of result of poll:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 "every" be struck out and "the" inserted in lieu.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 12—Closing hour to be fixed by proclamation:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 "each" be struck out and "the goldfields" inserted in lieu.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 13—Licensed premises not to be open after closing hour:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We are passing this hurried legislation and members are not clearly aware what they are doing. I would like to know through the leader of the House what will be the position of lodgers and inmates under these proposals.

Hon. W. Patriek: This is the result of the conference.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: And neither House has had a fair opportunity of dealing with the proposal.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The managers considered this clause too drastic, and decided that it should be struck out, thus leaving the existing provisions

of the Licensing Act to apply in respect to lodgers.

On motion by COLONIAL SECRETARY clause put and negatived.

Clause 15—Apportionment of rent and premium:

On motion by COLONIAL SECRETARY clause negatived.

New clause:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the following be added as a new clause:—"The North-West district, number 4, is excluded from the operation of this Act."

New clause passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the following be added as a new clause:—"Section 97 of the Licensing Act, 1911, is amended by striking out the word 'six' in line 6 thereof, and inserting the word 'nine,' and by striking out the word 'eleven' in line 7 thereof and inserting the word 'nine.'"

New clause passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the following be added as a new clause:—"Upon receipt of a requisition signed by not less than 2,000 electors of the goldfields district No. 2 the Governor shall, on a date to be fixed by proclamation in the prescribed manner, submit to the electors resident in such district the question of the closing time of licensed premises in the district."

New clause passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the following be added as a new clause:—"If at the commencement of this Act any licensed premises are held under lease the lessee shall be allowed by the lessor a proportionate reduction of the rent of the premises, in the same ratio to the full rent as the reduction in hours bears to the time during which the premises might have been lawfully open for the sale of liquor except for this Act, and a like proportionate re-

turn of a part of the premium (if any) paid by the lessee to the lessor, apportioned to the period during which this Act is in force: Provided that if any lessee or lessor considers himself unduly penalised by the incidence of this section he may require the question of adjustment of rent or rent and premium to be submitted to arbitration under the provisions of the Arbitration Act, 1895, and by an award to be made thereunder the rent or rent and premium to be payable by the lessee or sub-lessee during and in respect of such period shall be at such reduced rate as in the circumstances of the case may be deemed reasonable, and the award shall be binding upon the parties and final. Provided that this section (a) shall only apply to premises for which a publican's general license, an hotel license, a way-side house license, an Australian wine and beer license, a railway refreshment-room license, or a railway restaurant car license is held; and (b) shall not apply to premises not licensed at the commencement of the lease, unless the amount of rent or premium (if any) was fixed in view of a prospective license. In this section of the Act 'lessee' includes the mesne lessee and an assignee of a lease and a sub-lessee, and also a mortgagee of a lease or sub-lease; 'lessor' includes a mesne lessor and the person for the time being entitled to the rent of the premises, and also a mortgagee of the lessor or of the land comprised in the lease."

New clause passed.

Title:

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I understand that the amendment already made in the Title by the Council holds good. It will be necessary to insert after the word "to" the words "amend the Licensing Act, 1911 and to."

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY the Title was amended by inserting after "to" the words "amend the Licensing Act, 1911, and to."

[The President resumed the Chair.]

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Bill reported, with amendments, and the report adopted.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: We should have a fair print of the Bill made in some manner or other. I am not aware of the intentions of the House in regard to prorogation.

The Colonial Secretary: I hope to close down to-night.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: If the Government want to close down at any particular time they should have proper machinery for attending to the clerical wants of both Houses of Parliament in readiness to carry out these wants. It is one of the most important and responsible parts of my duty as Chairman of Committees, that of the certification of Bills. I never certify to a Bill unless I am satisfied that the Bill is a fair print of the Bill as it has gone through Committee. I am in the hands of the House as regards the procuring of a fair print. I must be satisfied that the fair print is a fair print. I do not take it as part of my duty to prepare the Bill.

The Colonial Secretary: Of course not.

The PRESIDENT: This might be postponed until the fair print of the Bill has been secured.

[Later.]

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That a Message be forwarded to the Assembly.

Motion passed.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Conference Managers' Report.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (East) [8.45]: I beg to report that the conference of managers have agreed that the Council shall no longer insist on their amendments Nos. 1, 4, 5, and 6, and have agreed to amend Clause 4 to provide for the deferment of the payment of rent for any period up to five years on Conditional Purchase leases which are situated more than 12½ miles from an existing railway.

In Committee.

Hon W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The following Message has been received from the Assembly—

The Legislative Assembly acquaints the Legislative Council that in accordance with the report of the managers' conference on the Land Act Amendment Bill it has agreed to No. 3 of the amendments insisted upon by the Legislative Council in the amended form shown in the schedule annexed, and, as agreed at the conference, continues to disagree to Nos. 1, 4, 5, and 6. It will not be necessary to read to hon. members Nos. 1, 4, 5 and 6, as they will find these amendments set out on No. 38 of the Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the following alternative amendment of the conference of managers be agreed to:—In respect of any land held under Conditional Purchase lease coming within the meaning of this Act, which is more than twelve and a half miles from an existing railway, the Minister may defer the payment of rent for any period up to five years, and may extend the term of the lease, subject to the conditions set out in the last preceding section.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This amendment is practically the one that carries the most sting. It is the one which has given the greatest trouble. I feel pleased that the managers arrived at the unanimous decision to recommend it in the form in which it has been read.

Question passed; the alternative amendment agreed to.

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Nos. 1, 4, 5, and 6 not further insisted on.

BILL—PRICE OF GOODS.

Second Reading—defeated.

Debate continued from an earlier period of the sitting.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (continuing his speech): I think I was saying just

before the interruption that the contention that the necessity for this Bill has disappeared, is not in my opinion a legitimate contention, or one that has a great foundation in fact. Speaking as one of the members of the Metropolitan Province, I feel it is quite possible that the Metropolitan Province, which contains, as hon. members well know, a number of consumers, may suffer somewhat of an injustice by not being allowed to participate in what is to them the boon of having cheap wheat. How far the price of that wheat is to be kept up by the comic opera proposals of the Government to fix the minimum price, I do not know. It will afford a great deal of pleasant speculation to hon. members to see what does occur. What I want to see is that the consuming portion of the public I represent get whatever advantage there is accruing to them from the fixing of a maximum price for flour and bread under this proposed Bill. That is one of my principal reasons for supporting it. With regard to the personnel of the Commission, the Bill proposes that a Royal Commission shall be appointed, and it gives the Government power to appoint such Commission. I would like to see this clause materially altered. I do not go so far as some hon. members, as to suggest that the name of the Commissioner should appear in the Bill, although that is not so uncommon as hon. members think. It has been frequently done in Bills of short duration, and the name of the Commissioner has been mentioned. But I think that in this particular case the administration of the measure might be left in the hands of the gentleman who is acting in the capacity of Government Storekeeper, Mr. Simpson. This gentleman was the least criticised of the members of the last Commission, which ceased its labours some little time ago.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Because he knew his business.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I was going to say that it was because he was tactful and more discreet, and this, added to the fact that he is already a Government officer, I think it would be a

most admirable step if the office of Government Storekeeper were inserted in Clause 3. This is the suggestion which I hope the Minister will be able to fall in with. At all events I can tell him the sole reason why I voted for the deletion from the statute-book of the former Act. It was because I was satisfied it was costing too much, was too cumbersome, and was not satisfactory. If the clause can be amended in the direction in which I have suggested, I shall vote for the third reading of the Bill. If not, I shall certainly vote against it. While we have had an inadequate return for the £13,000 which has been expended on the previous Commission, and while we have available all the machinery and all the information necessary for the administration of a measure such as this, I see no reason why the course I have suggested should not be adopted. That being so, I think we might appoint a man who might be termed a sort of commercial policeman, and he could administer the Act whenever the occasion arose, and in the intervals he could maintain a judicious silence, which would have a beneficial effect on the minds of the traders. In that way, I think the measure, if passed, would be fairly effective. As I have stated, I am going to support the second reading, but I shall vote against the third reading if the amendment I have foreshadowed is not made.

Personal Explanation.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch : May I be permitted at this stage to make a personal explanation. It has been published in two newspapers to-day that I gave an assurance that I was going to support this Bill and endeavour to secure its passage through this House, and without a personal explanation on my part it might appear that I had gone back on my word, or that a member of another place, Mr. Gardiner, who was responsible for the statement, had said something which was not true. I want to remove both impressions. I do not think, in a matter like this, I would presume to make a suggestion as to what

this House would be likely to do. What actually happened at the conference which was held yesterday in regard to the wheat question was that, while this matter was under discussion, Mr. Gardiner left the Chamber, and whilst he was away the business was terminated, and the Premier addressed the gathering on the question of introducing legislation to control the operations of the War Council. He had almost concluded his speech when Mr. Gardiner returned to the Chamber. The Premier then sat down, and referring to the Bill dealing with the War Council, I said that so far as I was entitled to speak for those members of the Legislative Council then present, they would vote for it, as we recognised the importance of it, and that we would do everything in our power to pass it through. Mr. Gardiner assumed that we were still discussing the prices of goods, as that matter was under discussion when he left the Chamber. He subsequently informed the Attorney General and one or two others that I was in favour of the Price of Goods Bill, and that is how the misunderstanding arose. To-day Mr. Gardiner expressed his regret to me for the mistake which he had made, and now I only want hon. members to understand that I gave no undertaking to support this Bill. Mr. Gardiner was labouring under a mistake, and had no wish to misrepresent me.

Debate resumed.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [8.55] : I am opposed to this measure. It may be said that I am looking at it from a one-eyed point of view, but I am perfectly satisfied that it will do a great deal of harm, having in mind what transpired as the result of the work of the Royal Commission under the Control of Trade in War Time Act. The country districts do not want anything more of that nature, and they will feel a sense of irritation if they know that a Bill like this is hanging over their heads. The mere fact that many have been

pressed into selling their wheat now for what has been considered an inadequate price is due to the fear of what may happen to them in regard to the handling of the wheat, and knowing the difficulties of last season I do not blame them in the least for the course many of them have taken. If this measure goes through, I am perfectly satisfied that a great many farmers will rush their produce on the market to get rid of it, so that there may be no chance of the measure operating so far as they are concerned. Mr. Colebatch outlined many instances of what might follow the selling at a minimum price. Matters would be made very difficult, and I am quite satisfied that there is absolutely no necessity for such a course. If the community are left to work out their own problems they will do much better. Many wheat growers believe that the control by the Government will mean they will not get a final clean up of their exports until the end of 1916, but I think it will be well into 1917. When the Government steamers leave our shores the wheat will be sold probably twice before it is landed, and if the purchasers find the market against them they will be inclined to alter the route of the vessel as is often done and either send her to another port or keep her at sea until the market becomes more favourable. Many men are selling their wheat to-day at 3s. 9d., 4s. and 4s. 3d. Many have quite recently sold at 6s. and 5s. 6d. While there is such a range of prices it might seem extraordinary that men should accept 3s. 9d., but they feel they would rather have 3s. 9d. to-day than risk receiving 3s.—less certain charges—and have to wait until 1916 or 1917 before getting the balance. The 3s. 9d. in their own district to-day is of infinitely greater value to them than 4s. 11d., less railage and other charges bringing it down to 4s. 6d., would be 12 months hence. Many of those who are inclined to take the advance and sit back would be forced into the position of selling their wheat immediately if this measure were brought into operation. I supported the Control

of Trade in War Time Bill, but I never expected it would be used for any other purpose than to meet an extraordinary position such as has not yet arisen, and there is less likelihood of it arising now than before. At the inception of the war, enemy ships were on the ocean bordering our shores and serious results might have occurred, but that position of affairs is not likely to arise now, and there is less reason for having a measure of this description on the statute-book to-day than there was at that time. Having had the experience of the operations of that Act and knowing so many of the men who were harassed and irritated and actually robbed by the operations of the board, I shall not vote to place them again in the same unhappy and unfortunate position.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (East) [9.5]: I have been patiently listening for some argument in support of the measure, and I find myself compelled to take a very narrow view of it—which is unusual for me—and to look at it merely from the standpoint of the producer. Some of the representatives of country districts in another place were of opinion that the Bill would be a good thing for the producer and would ensure for him a fair price for his produce. I have studied the Bill and I cannot find any portion which is likely to be of benefit to the producer, but I can see portions which will harass and hamper his business operations. Farmers are not going to be so foolish as to throw their wheat away at a low price, more especially after yesterday's explanation of the export scheme. They can see that, under the scheme, they are sure of securing at least 4s. a bushel for their wheat.

Hon. V. Hamersley: If it is sold quickly.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: I wish we had a guarantee of that.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: So far as I can see after having shipped wheat for the last 10 years, I think we shall get 4s. and no farmer is likely to let his wheat go for any appreciable amount below that. We were at first told the advance would be 2s. 5d. at the siding but now

we find it will be 2s. 8½d. or 2s. 9d. and this will assist to liquidate any pressing debts and enable the farmers to carry on. The arguments advanced in favour of the minimum price for produce are erroneous; it is impossible to fix a minimum price. I do not see any one feature in the Bill which will suit the farmers and I shall oppose the measure.

Hon. W. PATRICK (Central) [9.8]: After looking through the Bill, I confess I do not understand it. I cannot see how it is possible to fix minimum and maximum prices for any article. According to to-day's market report, 40 tons of chaff was sent to auction, some of which was sold at £3 5s. and some could not be sold. A fair sample of chaff should be worth about £3 5s. If a commissioner under this measure fixed the minimum price at £3 5s. and, when the chaff arrived at the market, an offer of £3 was made, the owner could not sell. It would be ruination to send that chaff home again and, if he stored it, he would be charged for storage and about a week later the chaff would be worth £2 10s. a ton. This measure seems to have originated at yesterday's conference regarding the great wheat deal undertaken by the Commonwealth and State Governments. Whatever the result of that great deal, involving some 30 millions sterling, representing the labour of the hardest working people in Australia, such a commission as this could have nothing to do with fixing a maximum or minimum price for that wheat. The commission would have power to deal with only local supplies. The producers of Australia will be handicapped quite enough in having about seven-eighths of their crops bought and sold without being able to exercise any control, and the little remnant left to them should not also be taken from their control. I hope the Bill will not pass the second reading but, if it does, the reference to fixing the minimum price should be deleted, because it is equivalent to saying it is possible to make a sovereign 15s. or 25s. It is impossible to fix maximum and minimum prices. It is a great mistake to interfere with these

matters at all. At the conference yesterday I mentioned that I was in a quandary to know whether the flour exported from the State would go into the pool or, if there was any profit from it, would the farmer gain by it? I pointed out that the freight fixed to Singapore, South Africa and the East Indies was 30s. a ton while to the United Kingdom the freight was 85s., a difference of over 1s. 6d. in favour of the person exporting wheat or flour to the East Indies and I asked where that 1s. 6d. would go. The Premier remarked that they had to compete with America, but America has to bear the burden of heavy freight the same as other people. The whole cause of the present high price of wheat in the old country, as was pointed out by Mr. Colebatch, is due to the high freight ruling. The quotation for wheat in Chicago a couple of days ago was 4s. 5d. and the value of wheat in London on the same day was nearly 8s. a bushel, showing that even from America to England the freight is something terrific. Under normal conditions, wheat can be shipped from Chicago to London for a few pence per bushel. The great wheat deal, however, has taken this business out of the farmers' hands. To begin with, the farmer was never consulted. Finally, on a protest coming, I believe, chiefly from the executive of the farmers' association, they were allowed some say in the matter. It was a marvellous thing. The whole of the producers of wheat in Australia were supposed to have nothing to do with this gigantic business of theirs. The representatives of the Commonwealth and State Governments coolly came to the conclusion that it was not the business of the farmers to deal with their own product. I hope the result will be satisfactory in the end. As regards the little bit of wheat left, I think we have no business to introduce legislation for the purpose of fixing either a maximum or a minimum price for it. To show how pernicious such action can be, I will refer to the matter of corn sacks. Up to this year anyone could buy cornsacks in Western Australia at from 6s. 6d. to 7s. per dozen. On account of

the Government having control of a considerable portion of the wheat areas of this State, the merchants did not know what to do, whether to import cornsacks for the whole of the farmers in Western Australia, or let the Government import portion. It went on at battledore and shuttlecock between the Minister for Lands and the farmers' association and the merchants of the State, until after all this tomfoolery the result was that the farmer had in nearly every case to pay 9s. 6d. per dozen for cornsacks, or 3s. per dozen more than he would have had to pay if the ordinary arrangements had been made. The fact is that nothing was done until the market rose. Certainly to my mind a measure of this kind is totally unnecessary. The work of the recent Royal Commission was most disastrous from every point of view—from the point of view of the consumer and also from that of the producer. For instance, the price of chaff was fixed at £14 per ton. Of course the Royal Commission really had nothing to do with the price, because the moment chaff became plentiful the price tumbled down to £3 per ton. Shortly it will be down to the unpayable price of 50s. per ton. This is a Bill of a mischievous nature, and of no use to anybody. Therefore I intend to vote against the second reading.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [9.19]: I am prepared to support this Bill insofar as the fixing of maximum prices is concerned, and I dispute the assertion that it is an economic fallacy to fix maximum prices. The fallacy is not in the fixing of a price; the fallacy comes in when an attempt is made to fix a price below the true commercial value. If, as has been stated, competition and the law of supply and demand would attend to these things, all would be well; and the only time it would be necessary to interfere is when some other force comes into play. Now, in spite of what is said concerning the law of supply and demand, it is possible to regulate supply to demand. As regards minimum prices, I admit that I can find no argument to

show how it is possible or practicable to fix them. I presume the provision for minimum prices is inserted in the Bill for one purpose, and one only, which is the regulation of the price of wheat. To my mind the difficulty is this: the responsibility would rest on the Government, and personally I think they would be extremely foolish to accept that responsibility. If the power to fix minimum prices is in the Bill, some who are not particularly friendly to this measure will see that that power is put into operation, and to my mind the power will work out this way. We will say, for instance, that a farmer has an offer of 4s. per bushel for his wheat from a miller in this country. The farmer is told that the minimum price of wheat is 4s. 3d. per bushel, and that it would be illegal for him to sell to the miller for 4s. Then he is justified, if the law prohibits him from selling his wheat, in demanding that the Government shall provide him with a buyer at the legal minimum price. The Government will then advise him to put his wheat into the pool and get what the pool brings. Thereupon the farmer would be justified in immediately demanding that the Government guarantee him at least as much as he was offered by the miller. I am strongly opposed to the Government giving any such guarantee. The wheat can go into the pool all right, but I am against the State having any responsibility in regard to what the farmer shall get for his wheat. A maximum price it is possible to fix, and the position is economically sound, provided the mistake is not made, which is sometimes made, of fixing a price below the true commercial value. In regard to the justification of Mr. Holmes, which was objected to by Mr. Cullen and others, I maintain that I defended the other measure on exactly the same grounds. When a similar measure to this was enacted last year, it had exactly the effect that was predicted. It did not require to be put into operation in order to have the effect desired. It did have an immediate effect on the tradespeople of this State. In the same way, if this mea-

sure is enacted it will undoubtedly, as has been stated, act as a commercial policeman for the State of Western Australia. However, I cannot get very excited over this Bill, for the simple reason that the other measure got a particularly rough time. In the first place I note that the various tradespeople throughout Western Australia, the commercial men, store-keepers, and traders of all descriptions dealing in the necessities of life, were totally opposed to the measure, and drastically opposed to the Royal Commission. Not only were the traders absolutely sure that they were unduly interfered with, but the consumers in very few districts were satisfied that the Royal Commission had done their duty. Thus the Commission could please no one. Traders were confident that they were being unduly interfered with, and the consumers were not confident that the Commission were not interfering sufficiently with the traders. So the unpopularity of the Royal Commission can easily be understood. They could please no party, and consequently had to put up with adverse criticism from all over the State. At the same time I believe that some such measure as that which we have now before us should at such a time as this be on the statute-book, although, as I have said, I fail to see how the provision for fixing the minimum price could possibly be put into operation or could possibly be justified. I am satisfied that those in whose interests it is proposed to enact that provision will not thank the Government for it, and I fail to see why it should be enacted, seeing that those in whose interests it is proposed are adverse to it. The Government are doing their best not only to obtain a fair price for the wheat grown in this State, but also to solve the much more difficult problem of providing that the harvest shall be taken away from Western Australia. At one time the position appeared to be that, whilst we had a bountiful harvest, there was great danger that the harvest would not be conveyed to the world's markets in sufficient time. I do not know whether that difficulty has been wholly overcome, but at any rate there is now some order and some organised sys-

tem being evolved, which will, I think, render the position considerably more assured than it was. So far the Government deserve credit. Personally, as I say, I am prepared to support that portion of the Bill which proposes maximum prices, but I am not prepared to support, nor have I heard any reason why I should support, the fixing of minimum prices, which provision, I believe, is to be offered for one commodity only.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	8
Noes	..	..	..	10
				—
Majority against				2
				—

AYES.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh	Hon. W. Kingsmill
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. H. Millington
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. A. G. Jenkins	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
	(Teller).

NOES.

Hon. J. F. Allen	Hon. J. Duffell
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. R. J. Lynn
Hon. F. Connor	Hon. W. Patrick
Hon. J. F. Cullen	Hon. H. Carson
	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

Bill defeated.

BILL — FREMANTLE MUNICIPAL TRAMWAYS AND ELECTRIC LIGHTING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

All stages.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [9.30] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is introduced for the purpose of giving the Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Board power to enter into contracts with any person or Government department for the supply of electric current to the board. Negotiations have been proceeding between the

Government and the Fremantle Municipal Council for the supply of electric current, but an amendment of the Act is necessary to enable a contract to be legally made. I beg to move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVE. (No. 2.)

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly notifying that it disagreed with the amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the amendment be not insisted upon.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Perhaps the Minister has some information to give us. Why cannot the Minister take the Committee into his confidence? We are asked to act in the dark. Information comes to us from outside that a rival project has been before some of the Ministers, if not before Cabinet, for two years, and that the promoters of that project gave substantial guarantees of their bona fides. Why have those applicants been delayed for two years, and why are they still kept waiting? There was an important discussion in another place the other day in regard to the construction of a light railway in connection with this project, and at its conclusion the Minister said that if the mover of the motion would withdraw it, he (the Minister) would consider it. The Colonial Secretary will not give us any information about this. Why should not the Committee have all the

facts of the case? What is there to conceal? I certainly shall not vote for the motion.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The remarks of the last speaker are deserving of support. It is altogether wrong to ask us to rush these matters through and to trust the Minister. I am not prepared to trust the Minister without further information.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have told Mr. Cullen time after time that I approached the Minister for Works on three occasions and that the Minister told me he had no information except that these limestone quarries had been located and that a South Australian company intended to make application for them. I have no further information.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: On the last occasion I gave my reasons for moving the amendment, and I then understood that it had the approval of the leader of the House. I see no reason why the amendment should not be insisted upon. One minute we are told that nobody is in treaty, and the next we are informed that this matter must not be delayed.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I hope the amendment will not be insisted upon. Members have been willing to hand over to the Government absolute control of all the trade of the State, but when it comes to a limestone deposit they want to insist upon the amendment. I have no doubt the Government will make the best deal in connection with this industry in the interests of the State.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: In view of the remarks that have been made about the probable consumption of Collie coal if this industry is started, it would appear that the Collie coal has some interest in this proposal. As a matter of fact, the Lake Clifton people will burn just as much Collie coal in all probability as these people. It appears that Cabinet have not been consulted in the matter. One Minister says casually to another "I am having a little Bill put through the Assembly to alter a Class A reserve and I want you to put it through the Legislative Council." That is not the way to

deal with Class (A) reserves, which should be under the control of Parliament, and it is a loose way of dealing with Parliament itself. Why was this matter left until after the date which the Government meant to prorogue, and why are Bills of this nature brought in at a time when it is thought that members will be too tired to deal with them?

The Colonial Secretary: It has been here nearly a fortnight.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: It came to the House after the date when Ministers had announced that they were going to prorogue.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in not accepting the assurance of the Minister, and further in not discussing the amendment.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I do not doubt the Minister's word but only his memory.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I do not feel inclined to insist upon this amendment.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I am sorry that any inference should have been drawn from any remarks made by me that Collie coal is interested in this. I do not know even that these people prefer to use Collie coal. In industries of this class gas is often used instead of coal, and in that case perhaps Mr. Cullen might be able to assist in that direction.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Bill was introduced on the 2nd November, over three weeks ago, and has been before the House ever since. If hon. members desired to get information during that time they could have obtained it by asking questions.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: A Bill is not actually in the minds of members until its second reading has been moved.

The Colonial Secretary: The second reading was moved on the 2nd November.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: This is a Bill which was intended to be slipped through. If the Committee is content to rush a Bill through in this way and leave the whole of these matters entirely in the hands of Ministers, and allow strangers to have an advantage over the pioneers

of the industry, then it must take the responsibility of doing so.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	9
Noes	..	..	..	8
Majority for ..				1

AYES.

Hon. J. F. Allen	Hon. R. J. Lynn
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. H. Millington
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. F. Connor
Hon. J. Duffell	(Teller)

NOES.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh	Hon. A. G. Jenkins
Hon. H. Carson	Hon. W. Patrick
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. J. F. Cullen
	(Teller)

Question thus passed; the Council's amendment not insisted on.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Resolution reported, the report adopted, and a Message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day; Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Schedule D:

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported, on recommittal, on Schedule D, to which an amendment has been moved to strike out under the heading of "other undertakings" the figures "160,697" and insert "11,603" in lieu thereof.

Amendment put and negatived.

Schedule put and passed.

Bill reported with an amendment.

Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. J. F. CULLEN, Bill recommitted for the purpose of further considering Schedules E and F.

Schedule E:

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I want to know why this vote has risen to such a considerable extent. In the earlier years I understood the vote was £150,000. Then it rose to £200,000, at which figure it remained till the year before last. Last year it was jumped up to £350,000 and this year it stands at £400,000. That is too much to put into the hands of the Government for mere excessing of votes and other emergency matters, and it offers a strong temptation to Ministers to launch out on some policy of their own. I believe this vote is responsible for the launching of the State Steamship Service. I move—

That the figures "£400,000" be struck out and "£200,000" be inserted in lieu.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The explanation of the increase is that previously there were two separate schedules entitled "Loan Suspense" and "Treasurer's Advance." The two have been lumped together now, in accordance, I understand, with the instructions of the Auditor General. The former Loan Suspense Account method, which was adopted during the term of the previous Administration and for a period of our Administration, was not constitutional. This method is constitutional.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Did the two together amount to something like this?

The Colonial Secretary: I think the other was £250,000.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: On that explanation I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Schedule put and passed.

Schedule F:

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: At an earlier stage the Committee struck out an item of £200 representing a grant to the Young Australia League. I put it to the Committee that it is a pity for this Chamber to touch mere trifles. Such a procedure is not in keeping with the dignity of the Legislative Council. I presume I can move that the amount be reinstated?

The CHAIRMAN: I think it is possible for the hon. gentleman to move such an amendment, because, after all, it is not an increase in expenditure.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I move an amendment—

That under the head "Sundry Grants and Services," between "Grant to Pharmaceutical Council £2 10s." and "Cheques received as revenue and lost in transit £3 17s. 6d.," there be inserted "Grant to Young Australia League £300."

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: I am not going to divide the Committee on this item again. I protested against it, and protested strongly. I think it is a disgraceful item, and one by no means redounding to the credit of whoever caused it to be placed on the Estimates. I have made my protest, and am glad to think I had a majority of members with me. It is not a matter of a trifle, but a matter of principle. I do not propose to hang up the Bill for the sake of the item, although I have been assured by numerous members of another place that this item would not have gone through another place had members' attention been drawn to it. Unfortunately it passed late at night, when perhaps close attention was not given to the matter.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I would not like to be thought to be reflecting on Mr. Jenkins's action in moving the omission of the item. I am sure he acted purely on the ground of principle. At the close of the session, however, to send back this ground of dispute between the two Houses is undesirable.

Amendment put and passed (item reinstated).

Schedule, as amended, put and passed.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and passed.

Sitting suspended from 10.13 p.m. to 12.5 a.m. (Saturday).

ADJOURNMENT—CLOSE OF SESSION.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn to the 25th February, 1916.

Question passed.

*House adjourned at 12.7 a.m.
(Saturday).*

Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 26th November, 1915.

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

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Honorary Minister: Perth Public Hospital, report for the year ended 30th June, 1915.

BILL—PROHIBITION OF TREATING ON LICENSED PREMISES.

Second Reading—Defeated.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore) [3.5] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill which was introduced in another place and passed there, and is now sent to us for consideration. The Bill, no

doubt, is novel in character; by some people it may even be considered ridiculous. However, we are living in difficult times, we are passing through a period in the history of the British Empire when we are called upon to do things which might not be done at other times. The provisions of the Bill have been adopted in Great Britain, where I believe they are the law of the land. This is what might shortly and vulgarly be termed an anti-shouting Bill. I do not quite know why I was selected to pilot the measure through this House, unless it be for the fact that I am well-known to be one who endeavours to practice temperance in all things. Although I am not an abstainer, still I believe in making proper use of the things that the gods send us, and hold that they are not sent to us for their abuse. The question here is not one of abstinence, but of the encouragement of abstinence. The Bill provides against shouting in the ordinary acceptance of the term, and I myself honestly believe that the system of shouting as it has been carried on for years past has not been in the best interests of the country. I honestly believe that, although at the same time I think that perhaps without the shouting system in a mild form there might not be the good comradeship and good fellowship which frequently we find existing. I consider that the time has come when we ought to husband our resources as much as we possibly can, when people should be encouraged not to spend their money in drinking excessively of intoxicating liquors. The measure provides—

No person shall . . . sell or supply liquor to any person on licensed premises, for consumption on the premises, unless the liquor is ordered and paid for by the person to whom it is supplied, and by whom it is consumed or intended to be consumed.

A penalty of £5 is provided for the offence, and a similar penalty for the person consuming the liquor. I know that this is a question which has been seriously thought over by many of us, and we recognise that considerable harm