

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 4th October, 1921.

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

QUESTION—GOVERNMENT OFFICES IN PRIVATE BUILDINGS, RENTS.

Mr. SIMONS asked the Premier: 1, What amount has been paid by the State in rent to private owners for buildings occupied by Government departments in the metropolitan area for each year from 1915 to 1920? 2, What are the names of owners and the amounts paid to each?

The PREMIER replied: 1 and 2, Particulars are given on return tabled to-day.

QUESTION—HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE, ROYAL COMMISSION:

Mr. RICHARDSON (for Mrs. Cowan) asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, In view of the fact that there are 363 women and children in the Claremont Hospital for the Insane, has it been definitely decided that no woman is to be included in the personnel of the Royal Commission of inquiry? 2, If so, why?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, The Commission has been appointed, and the Government see no reason to alter or add to the personnel. 2, Answered by No. 1.

MOTION—GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [4.35]: I move—

That on Wednesday, 5th October, and each alternate Wednesday thereafter, Government business shall take precedence of all Motions and Orders of the Day, in addition to the days already provided.

I am anxious to get some business passed on to the Legislative Council. There is very little private members' business on the Notice Paper. There is, however, one motion that ought to be discussed without delay, and that is the motion of the Leader of the Op-

position dealing with the price of wheat for local consumption. I propose, with the concurrence of the House, that this shall be considered after the Wheat Marketing Bill has been dealt with this evening.

Question put and passed.

BILLS (5)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Criminal Code Amendment.
- 2, Northam Municipal Ice Works.
- 3, Permanent Reserve (Point Walter).
Transmitted to the Council.
- 4, Official Trustee.
- 5, Fremantle Lands.
Passed.

BILL—GOLD BUYERS.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [4.47] in moving the second reading said: The Bill I am submitting this afternoon is one to amend the Mining Act, which was amended last session to provide amongst other things for different conditions to apply to the letting of tributes on mining leases. It will be remembered that since that Bill became law the leaseholders almost throughout the State declined to let tributes on their mining leases on the ground of their objection to the conditions set out in the new legislation. We reached such a deadlock that the Government considered it desirable that a Commission should be appointed to take evidence from all sections interested, and we also asked the Commission to keep in mind the fact that there was a third party, the Crown, equally interested with the others as the landlord holding the land. The Commission has made its report. I venture to say that while it may not meet with the approval of the whole of the members of this Chamber, it will at least be regarded as a compromise which may fairly be accepted so that tributing may be established on our mining leases. I do not want to retract in any way from the attitude I adopted last session. I believe even now, if it were possible to insist, as of course Parliament could if it desired, that the conditions set forth in the amending Act had to be complied with, it would be to the general benefit of the State. I do not venture to say that it would be beneficial to the leaseholder in every instance. After all, the leaseholder is only one party to what may be called an agreement. A tribute agreement is made under the Act and permits the leaseholder to operate on Crown lands to the exclusion of all other persons, subject to the leaseholder complying with certain conditions which are laid down by the

Act or by regulations. The principal in connection with that agreement under the Act is the Crown, the State. The purposes in view is to provide either by legislation or by regulation a method under which the land can be successfully worked in the interests not alone of the leaseholder, but of the State as well. I want to repeat now what I said last session, that a great number of the conditions imposed, or sought to be imposed, by the leaseholder have the effect of preventing the working of land which would otherwise be worked by tributers. I suppose it would be as well for me to tell the Chamber that the Government have at their disposal means by which, if they felt so inclined, they could compel the acceptance of the conditions enacted last session. Personally, I do not think such a step desirable at this stage, since we have had a Royal Commission inquiring into the matter, and since all parties, having been heard by the Commission, are agreed, so far as I can judge, to accept the compromise suggested by the Commission. Therefore, at this stage, I consider it undesirable to adopt the strong method of calling upon the occupants of the Crown lands in question to comply with the conditions of the Act of last session. The first, and probably the principal, objection raised by the leaseholder is to the provision in last session's Act, that if a tribute is let under the block system, by metes and bounds, the term shall be not less than six months, and shall be continued from time to time until the tribute block has been exhausted. I pointed out at the time that by this provision we were calling upon the leaseholder to place the sub-lessee, the tributer, in exactly the same position as that in which the Crown establishes the leaseholder. The Crown gives the leaseholder a defined area, known as a mining lease, marked out by metes and bounds, for a period of 21 years, with a right of renewal for further periods. As everyone knows, the leaseholder can obtain a renewal from time to time until he has worked out the whole of the ground. What we asked of the leaseholder by last session's Act was that he should portion out a part of the area that has been granted to him practically without any time limit stated—at all events, not less than 21 years—and that until such time as the particular part portioned out—after all, a very small part indeed of the area of the lease—has been worked out by the tributer, the tributer shall be allowed to continue in possession. To this provision the leaseholder objects for a number of reasons. The reason particularly advanced against the provision is that if a company desire to dispose of their assets to another company, they cannot do so immediately if they have let a tribute agreement under last session's Act. The Royal Commission, having reviewed the evidence, submit what I consider is a fair compromise, one which might well be acceptable to the tributer. It is contained in Clause 4, which proposes the repeal of Section 26 of last

session's Act and the substitution thereof of the following:—

No tribute agreement shall be made for a lesser period than six months, but by mutual consent such agreement may be entered into for a longer period, always provided that such agreement is to continue for the period stated in the agreement, and thereafter subject to six months' notice on either side to determine the same, unless such agreement shall become liable to cancellation under Section 33.

The proposed section means that the parties may by mutual agreement make a tribute agreement for, say, three years, but that, they having mutually agreed for such a period, the tribute shall operate for such period, and that no tribute shall operate for less than six months, and that the tribute shall, at the expiration of the term, continue for a further period of six months until one party gives notice of termination, which notice must be a period of six months. Actually, I infer, the period of a tribute could not be less than seven months under that proposed section. If a tributing party were operating for, say, four or five months without having obtained anything like a fair return for their labour, and then struck something rich, the company would not be able to displace them for a period of six months.

Mr. Munsie: The proposed section really provides for a 12 months term.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not think so. I should regard it as wrong to mislead the tributer. That is not what the Bill says.

Mr. Munsie: Anyhow, that is the intention of the Royal Commission.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It is not the intention of the Royal Commission as expressed in the clause prepared on the basis of their report.

Mr. Munsie: It is the intention, though.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot help the intention of the Commission. I have not altered a word or a comma in the Commission's report. What the Bill proposes represents the Commission's report. I gave instructions that the Commission's recommendations, as expressed in their report, should be submitted to Parliament in a Bill. My reading of the proposed section is that one month, or one week, after the commencement of a tribute, the company may give six months' notice of the termination of the tribute. I may be wrong, of course; and if the hon. member can give me an assurance that the intention of the Commission was otherwise—

Mr. Munsie: The intention of the Commission was the 12-months term. Otherwise, why did they insert the words "and thereafter subject to six months' notice on either side"?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I am extremely doubtful whether the proposed section would stand the test of being interpreted as providing for a 12-months term.

Mr. Munsie: The warden says so. The section represents his words. His intention is that the term should be 12 months.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I will make quite certain on the point by obtaining the opinion of the Crown Law Department as to whether the section, as drafted, bears that construction.

Mr. Munsie: I wish you would.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: My own belief is that six months' notice can be given at any time during the currency of the tribute agreement.

Mr. Munsie: There are three words to come out of that proposed section—three words which the Commission never intended to have in it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Let me repeat that the Bill, according to my understanding, embodies the recommendations of the Commission without any alteration whatever. Another important point for the Royal Commission's consideration was the question as to what tribute should be paid, as to what deductions should be made before tribute should be paid. Section 27 of last session's amendment Act provides:—

That no tribute shall be payable unless the tributers engaged in the actual working of the ground have earned per man per week a sum equal to the ruling rate of wages as prescribed for the time being by any current industrial agreement or award in force in the district, after paying the costs, charges, and expenses of mining, treatment, and realisation. For the purpose of this subsection, in calculating the sum any tributer may have earned in any week, any wages or emoluments he may have received outside the working of the tribute shall be included in the aforesaid sum. In calculating such expenses, wages to employees shall be at the ruling rate in the district for the hours of labour actually spent in working the tribute.

To this provision the leaseholder objects that it is not right to put tributers in a position where, by laying their heads together, they may avoid paying any tribute whatever, simply taking out enough to pay ruling wages. The Royal Commission propose to substitute, for that provision, the following:—

That no tribute shall be payable unless those tributers engaged in the actual working of the ground have earned at the rate of £3 10s. per man per week for the period worked by them respectively after paying the cost and expenses of mining, treatment, and realisation, and such expenses shall be exclusive of their own wages. In calculating such deductions, the wages to employees shall be at the ruling rate in the district for the hours of labour actually spent in working the tribute area.

The alteration is slight, but practically it provides that tributers shall pay royalty after they have earned £3 10s. per week per man. Another provision of last session's Act objected to by the leaseholder is Section 28, which reads:—

(1) Any party to a tribute agreement made after the commencement of this Act

may, by plaint and summons in the warden's court, claim that the conditions of working under such agreement may be reviewed by the warden.

The Commission submit that that section should be deleted, which would mean no appeal whatever, either to the warden or to anybody else, once the parties have come to an agreement. I submitted last session that it was quite contrary to our usual methods to allow one party to apply to have an agreement reviewed immediately after making it. The two parties having come to an agreement, they should both abide by it. The Commission point out, moreover, that in the event of any breach of the agreement the aggrieved party can appeal to the courts under our mining laws—which represent a fair safeguard. There is also the other safeguard, that a tribute shall not be let unless the warden approves of the conditions. The Royal Commission considered that an agreement mutually arrived at between two parties should not be subject to appeal before a warden's court or any other court. The Royal Commission further propose an amendment of Section 31 of last session's Act, which section reads—

Where any dispute as to the ground held under tribute, or as to the product from such ground, occurs between the lessee of any mine and a tributer, such dispute shall be determined by the warden on the complaint of either party, and the decision of the warden shall be final and conclusive, and without appeal.

The Commission propose the deletion of the words "and the decision of the warden shall be final and conclusive, and without appeal," and the substitution thereof of the words "under the provisions of Part X. of the principal Act." That is to say, the Commission suggest that there shall be an appeal to the warden, and an appeal from the warden to the courts. I have now explained the principal amendments proposed by the Bill, except that the measure provides that sleeping partners in a tribute shall be registered. This matter is dealt with in Clause 2, as follows:—

Every person from time to time beneficially interested in a tribute agreement, and who is not a party to it, shall within 28 days of becoming so interested register in the office of the warden a memorandum in writing containing particulars of the date, the parties to; and the number of the tribute agreement, and of the interest therein of the person registering the memorandum.

For failure to register, the clause provides the following penalty, which is pretty severe:—

Any moneys paid as a share or part of a share of, or commission on the profits of a party to a tribute agreement to any person who has not complied with the requirements of the section, may be recovered back from him by the person who may have paid the same.

By that, of course, it is meant that should any person fail to register and should any other party interested in a tribute make payment to him, the latter may recover his payment because of the failure to register. There is also an alteration to Section 25 of the Act which is to be amended by omitting the words "of not less than the prescribed dimensions." Section 25 deals with what is known as the block system. That is practically the whole of the major amendments proposed. Members who are interested in the subject will have read the Commission's report. There is an addendum to it by the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie). In that addendum the hon. member makes certain proposals. I have not included any of them in the amending Bill for the reason that I consider I must accept the report of the majority of the Commission. In point of fact, the member for Hannans did not disagree with the findings of the Commission except that he indicated that his agreement was subject to certain conditions. Personally, I have no objection to the conditions he set out, but, in the circumstances, I think members will agree with me that I had to submit the Bill as recommended by the majority of the Commission. If hon. members desire, they may further amend it in the directions indicated by the member for Hannans.

Mr. Munsie: What about the remaining sections of the Act? Do they remain as they are?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is so; they remain as they are. I do not propose to make any amendments except those proposed by the Royal Commission. I could detain the House for some time relating some of the difficulties that have arisen both prior to, and subsequent to the passing of the Act. The action of the mine owners was quite contrary to what is the recognised principle in any British self governing community. That principle is that if persons disagree with the law they are entitled to raise their protests.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Directly.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not care how they raise their protests. I have always held that any section of the community having a grievance, is entitled to make it known. That is the way in which matters can be rectified. I object, on the other hand, to any person, or set of persons, taking the law into their own hands, whether it be the humble wage earner or a man in other walks of life. Unquestionably the mine owners introduced a practice which may prove to be a boomerang; it may come back on them. I regret exceedingly that the mine owners adopted that attitude. I approached the tributers as well as the Chamber of Mines before I introduced the Bill last session. I embodied in the Bill as far as possible, what I considered was a fair compromise between the views of the two sections. The Bill I submitted on that

occasion was not entirely acceptable to the tributers, nor was it entirely acceptable to the mine owners. When it is remembered that the purpose of the measure was to overcome very serious difficulties affecting the mining industry, hon. members will realise that the existing circumstances made it necessary to introduce some things that would not be required under more normal conditions. It has happened that ground has been broken up which contained gold up to 14 dwts., but it had to be left in the mines because the owners imposed conditions on the tributers, making it impossible for the latter to raise the ore for treatment. That ore was thus left in the ground, and in some cases it must be left there for all time, thus depriving the State from receiving the benefit of the wealth contained in that ore. This is an aspect of importance to the State. I maintain that, notwithstanding that the Royal Commission presented the report I have referred to, they did not keep in mind that there is a third party interested in the letting of tributes, a party more interested than the others concerned. That third party is the State itself. The State is interested in the conditions imposed as between the mine owner and the tributer, when those conditions affect the interests of the State directly, and that is why I say there should be an appeal to the warden. My personal opinion is that if the State is dissatisfied with conditions under which a leaseholder is operating a mine, owing to the conditions he lays down in his sub-lease, we should be in a position to compel the leaseholder to rectify the position. If it is detrimental to the State, we should have that power. It is unquestionably detrimental to the interests of the community as a whole that a person having the exclusive right to recover gold from a block of ground, should impose conditions that make it impossible for the sub-lessee to recover the gold, having the effect of keeping the gold in the ground for all time. There is the case of the Great Fingal Coy. which operated on the Murchison. Owing to the methods adopted by that company, thousands of tons of ore, and valuable ore too, remain in the ground. It will never be recovered. That result was achieved by the company introducing methods which represented a profitable process over a limited period.

Mr. Mann: It was profitable for the time being.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yet, the State, as an interested party in securing the recovery of gold for the benefit of the community as a whole, had to permit that practice to continue, knowing full well that the day of reckoning would come. That day has come, for the ore must remain in the mine although broken; it cannot be recovered. In these circumstances, the State, being the landlord, is entitled to make provision enabling us to prevent the

continuance of operations which are detrimental from the point of view of the State itself. The Royal Commission do not appear to have taken that aspect into account very seriously. I presume therefore it is of little use pursuing the policy much further along those lines. Some day the State will recognise the effects of the policy I have referred to. They will realise that if mine owners cease operating along certain recognised lines because of momentary advantages, due to existing conditions, it will result in great loss to the State because ore will be left in the ground which will never be recovered in the years to come. I asked the Royal Commission to deal with companies in liquidation. That certainly has no bearing on the Bill as presented, and no recommendation is made by the Commission regarding that aspect. It does not deal with tributers alone. That subject was introduced because of the case of the Perseverance mine at Kalgoorlie. That company is in liquidation, but at the same time it has had a greater number of tributers working in the mine and it has been producing more gold than any other mine.

Mr. Munsie: The tributers have produced more gold from that mine than all the other tributers in Western Australia put together.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: In addition, the operations of the mine under the tributing system have paid handsomely. I also had in mind the fact that there are other mines in the State which have been in liquidation for years, mines which, like the words of the song "Kathleen Mavourneen," "may be for years and may be for ever." This is not in the interests of the State. We have a cumbersome legal process to comply with, before we could impose conditions which would be considered satisfactory in the interests of the State. As the Commission merely recommend that the department should apply the law to such cases and make application to the warden to impose conditions to meet the circumstances, I do not propose to take any steps by way of legislation.

Mr. Munsie: Do you not think it necessary to amend the Companies Act?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I think the sections of that Act operate to-day.

Mr. Munsie: I think they do not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If the hon. member looks up the Companies Act he will find that what the Commission recommend can be put into operation.

Mr. Munsie: Oh no.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: At any rate that is the advice I have received from a quarter where one would expect it should be possible to get such advice. Further than that, when the attention of the Chairman of the Commission was drawn to this aspect, he admitted there was no necessity for it.

Mr. Munsie: Since the report was furnished?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

Mr. Munsie: We had the advice of the warden who has had experience in these things for years, and he said that it was necessary to amend the Companies Act. That was also said by an officer of your department.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No.

Mr. Munsie: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The permanent head of my department says that he gave evidence to concentrate the attention of the Commission on the difficulties we have to contend with, particularly with companies in liquidation. He also tried by questions put to witnesses who appeared before the Commission, to show that the conditions to-day are unsatisfactory. He assures me that the alteration proposed by the Commission is not required, because the power is already there. It is not a fair proposition to suggest that the Department of Mines should be turned into a kind of detective force, going round the country saying to individuals: "You are not operating your lease as we think you should, and we will make you show cause." This is a matter which should be considered by the mining community who should be able to say whether or not a mine is being properly worked, and the conditions complied with.

Mr. Chesson: That is proposed when it is under the jurisdiction of the Warden of the district.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) knows that what I am saying is correct.

Mr. Marshall: Only too well.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Take the case of a mine at Mulline. For years attempts have been made to get a certain lease worked or forfeited. They cannot go before the warden unless they go through the Supreme Court first. As a matter of fact they did go to the Supreme Court and moved that body for the purpose of compelling certain action to be taken. What was the result? They lost the case and had to pay costs. The prospectors at Mulline will not continue adopting such a course, and they ask what the department intend doing, for the purpose of getting an application regarding this lease before the warden. Before I can do anything in that matter I have to cause a special inquiry to be made after first giving notice to the leaseholder. If I find, on receiving the report as a result of the inquiry, that the leaseholder is not complying with the requirements of the law, the department then will take action. The department should not be placed in that position. It should be open to any person in Mulline to go to the warden and apply to get the lease cancelled if the covenants are not complied with.

Mr. Munsie: I say so too.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: You are not suggesting that course.

Mr. Munsie: I say we are.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Let us see. Question No. 5 that I put to the Commission was as follows:—

Do the winding-up provisions of the Companies Act, 1893, and particularly Section 114, unduly affect the right conferred on miners by Section 99 of the Mining Act, 1904, to apply for forfeiture for breach of labour conditions; or do such provisions unduly facilitate the evasion of labour conditions of the leases of companies in liquidation, and if so, what remedy is suggested?

I do not think that the matter could have been put more clearly to the Commission. This is their reply:—

Yes. If present conditions as to tenure of leases are to remain, there appears no reason why mining companies in liquidation should receive special treatment, and your Commission recommends that the winding-up provisions of the Companies Act, 1893, particularly Section 114, be amended in such manner as to make it compulsory for the liquidator of any company owning mining leases to apply to the Warden for exemption in all cases where such company is for some sufficient reason unable to comply with the labour covenants required by the Mining Act, 1904, and the amendments thereunder, or any other cause deemed just and reasonable by the Warden, for exemption for such period or periods as will enable such company to complete the winding-up, disposal of its assets, etc., re-working, or re-construction.

He has to go to the warden to get exemption.

Mr. Munsie: Can a man apply for the forfeiture of the lease?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, that is what I want. I thought the Commission would have recommended an amendment of the Act to provide that a company in liquidation should be subject to the covenants unless they secured exemption, the same as any other leaseholder, and that any person might be able to apply to the warden for the forfeiture of the lease. But the Commission did not recommend that in the event of the leaseholder failing to get exemption any person shall be entitled to apply for forfeiture of the lease.

Mr. Marshall: But why cannot any person so apply?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Because it is necessary to go to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Munsie: We have advised that the Act be so amended.

Mr. Marshall: There is no provision in the Companies Act covering that point.

Mr. SPEAKER: All this can be better discussed in Committee.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am not denying that it is possible to so amend the Companies Act, but I point out that the Commission did not recommend that. They recommended an amendment of the Companies Act to provide that a liquidator shall go be-

fore the warden for exemption. He has to do that to-day. I want to see it carried further and provided that if he fails to comply with the conditions, or if he cannot get exemption from the warden, his lease shall be subject to forfeiture on the application of any person to the warden. To-day it is necessary to go to the Supreme Court for that.

Mr. Munsie: We desire to see that amended.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Commission did not say so.

Mr. Munsie: The warden distinctly said that was the intention, and I understood it to be so.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There is not the slightest evidence that such a point was considered by the Commission. It is a question, not of the liquidator going before the warden, but of any person going before the warden with an application for forfeiture. The proper process is to provide that any person may apply to the warden for forfeiture.

Mr. Marshall: You believe in such a provision?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Certainly.

Mr. Marshall: I am having a Bill drafted to give effect to it. I hope I shall have your support.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot make any promise until I see the Bill. If it is in the direction I have outlined, certainly I will support it. Let me not be misunderstood. I say that if a company goes into liquidation, the liquidator should apply for exemption to the warden in open court. He will state his grounds and get his exemption. If he wants an extension of the exemption he must again apply to the warden, whereupon the warden may impose certain conditions. If the liquidator fail to comply with the decision of the warden's court, he should be in precisely the same position as every other leaseholder in the State.

Mr. Munsie: That is the opinion of the Commission, also.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Commission did not say so.

Mr. Munsie: I think they did.

Mr. SPEAKER: I cannot allow this to be argued on the second reading.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know at what other stage I can argue it. It is essential among the points submitted to the Commission for consideration. The Perseverance mine is supposed to be in process of winding up, yet the tributaries are still operating it, and on conditions which may or may not be satisfactory to the State, the third party. I should like to have the point cleared up. However, I will not now prolong the discussion beyond saying that the Bill embodies the recommendations of the Royal Commission, which heard evidence from all quarters—although I am not certain that the evidence was as strong as I had expected it to be.

Mr. Munsie: Nor am I.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Some of the witnesses were not quite so emphatic in their statements as I had expected them to be.

Mr. Willcock: They were afraid of being victimised, of being denied further tributes.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I know the men at Kalgoorlie, and I am not sure that they would worry much about the possibility of being victimised. A number of those who could have given evidence were not at all likely to be affected. The fact remains that the Commission had a good deal of evidence, taken on oath. It was a fairly representative Commission and in the circumstances I have no hesitation in submitting their recommendations in the form of the Bill. I hope to bring about a compromise which will allow tributing to continue. On the recommendation of the Commission I have given my word that existing tributes may continue to the end of the year. After that date I hope tributes will be made as freely as in the past and will be found to work more smoothly than ever before. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Munsie, debate adjourned.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

In Committee.

Resumed from 20th September; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair, the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clause 13—Price of wheat for local consumption:

The CHAIRMAN: The Leader of the Opposition has moved an amendment that the words "shall be based" in the fourth line be struck out, and "subject as hereinafter shall be fixed" inserted in lieu.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On further consideration I have decided not to press the amendment, for I have come to see that it is as well to have a little elasticity in the fixing of the price.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should like an explanation of the words in line 5 "but with due regard to the price to be charged by millers for the products of wheat." I am unable to understand what is sought to be accomplished by the inclusion of those words. It seems to me the aim is to give the Minister power to so fix the price of wheat as to control the price charged by the millers for the products of wheat. If so, all the power necessary is provided in Subclause 2, which prescribed that the Governor may fix the maximum price for bread and the products of wheat. That being so, the words "with due regard to the prices to be charged by millers for the products of wheat" are entirely superfluous.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Those words are consequential rather than superfluous. If the variations in the average price at the monthly sales cannot reasonably be passed on to the consumers of bread, the variations will be made to apply to bran and pollard rather than to flour. I cannot agree to the elimination of the words referred to.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Apparently it is one of those cases in which the phrase objected to will do no harm. Certainly those words will not confer any greater power on the Minister or the board, for the necessary power is provided in Subclause 2. However, I move an amendment—

That after "wheat" in line 6, "provided that such price shall not exceed 7s. per bushel" be inserted.

Mr. Mann: Or less than 5s.?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, I have no wish to set any such limit to the downward variation. My amendment will mean that the price fixed every month shall be based on the equivalent of London parity provided that in no case shall the price of wheat for local consumption exceed 7s. per bushel. This is a fair compromise. We have heard that there is no likelihood of the London parity falling below 6s.

Mr. Sampson: What about the farmer receiving a fair living wage?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member does not expect me to sit here like a dummy while the farmer has the advantage both ways. For the past twelve months I have made the offer of a fair wage to the farmer on behalf of the party I represent, but it has been rejected.

Mr. Latham: But you had not the power to do so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Members on the Government side declined to accept a fair return, but determined to take all they could get, which was more than a fair return to the farmer and was also greater than the equivalent of London parity by 2s. a bushel. After the consumers have submitted to this for 12 months, farmers now want the advantage both ways.

Mr. Mann: Your first idea was a sound one.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Does the hon. member think that the local equivalent will fall below 5s. this year?

Mr. Mann: No, but there should be that precaution.

Mr. C. C. Maley: Would you guarantee 7s. a bushel for the next 12 months?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not at this stage. I offered to guarantee a fair thing and I considered 7s. a fair thing 12 months ago, but those who were representing the farmers refused to accept my offer.

Mr. Mann: There are different conditions prevailing now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: My amendment will not take from the farmer anything which

is already provided for in the Bill. The Bill provides for the local equivalent of London parity.

Mr. Pickering: But you say provided it does not exceed 7s.

Mr. C. C. Maley: You seem to forget that the farmer has to provide that wheat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Government consider that the equivalent of London parity is a fair thing no matter whether it is 3s. a bushel. I say we should adopt that equivalent with a maximum of 7s. Everyone knows that to-day wheat is below 7s., and the chances are a hundred to one against it exceeding 7s. during the next 12 months.

Mr. Latham: Then why insert the amendment?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Merely as a safeguard. The hon. member has not the slightest expectation that the local equivalent for London parity will exceed 7s.

Mr. Latham: I know it will not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Therefore my amendment takes nothing from the farmer.

Mr. Mann: But there is generally some method behind anything you do.

Mr. Munsie: It is to prevent the wheat board from going mad and fixing more than a fair price.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is merely a safeguard.

Mr. Latham: We will be satisfied with 7s.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not want to leave consumers absolutely at the mercy of a board, the composition of which I know nothing at present. Neither do I wish to leave them at the mercy of any irresponsible Minister who may succeed the present Minister, and who might be so entirely unconcerned about London parity as to take advantage of the flexibility of the clause.

Mr. Latham: Why not fix it at 7s.?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I thought there was some limit to the extortions which the farmers were prepared to practise at the expense of the consumers after having received 9s. a bushel during the last 12 months.

Mr. Latham: We do not want to fix it at 7s.

Mr. C. C. Maley: We have to keep our wheat in order to feed the community.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member cannot get away from the fact that during the last six or seven months the farmers have been getting 2s. a bushel more for wheat sold to the people in this State than for wheat sold outside the State.

Mr. C. C. Maley: How long has the farmer had to keep the wheat in store?

Mr. Mann: Why have you changed your mind with regard to the minimum price?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Seeing that the policy which I considered a sound one for the farmers has been rejected by their representatives—

Mr. Mann: You only made that offer a week ago.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Seeing it has been rejected by the farmers, I am not going to

place myself in this position, that should the price of wheat fall—

Mr. Sampson: When was this offer of yours rejected?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has been rejected during the past 12 months.

Mr. Mann: You made your suggestion a week ago; what has transpired since then to cause you to change your mind?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I saw fit to alter it.

Mr. Mann: Why?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I was about to tell the hon. member when the member for Swan interrupted. Seeing that those concerned have for the past 12 months rejected a standing offer of a fair price to the grower for wheat for local consumption, after further consideration, I am not going to place myself in a position of having to defend myself before the consumers I represent if the London parity price should fall to, say, 4s. 6d. a bushel. I am not going to be held responsible for making consumers pay 5s. when, but for the maximum of 5s., they might be obtaining wheat on the London parity at 4s. 6d. a bushel. My decision is influenced by the fact that the standing offer I tried to force on the House 12 months ago has been refused.

Mr. Pickering: You are in accord with the general attitude towards the producer of fixing the maximum but not the minimum?

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is not my attitude. I do not know whether the member for Sussex is serious.

Mr. Johnston: What if London parity goes to 17s.?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Consumers here will pay 7s., which is a fair thing.

Mr. C. C. Maley: Suppose the Minister for Agriculture sold the whole of the wheat we have in Western Australia—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He cannot sell the two million bushels which he is now holding.

Mr. C. C. Maley: If the London parity was 10s., what would happen if he sold the lot held for local consumption?

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the hon. member could have sold the whole of his wheat for 10s. a bushel, there would have been no clamour for a pool this year. Rather the hon. member and his friends would be declaiming against the pool. It is a fact that the farmer anticipates that he cannot get 10s., or 5s., or even a payable price, and consequently we have before us this Bill providing for a pool.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Leader of the Opposition has complained bitterly about the price of 9s. a bushel for local consumption during the last 12 monthly period, but the farmer had just as much reason to complain at the price he received during the previous 12 months. The Leader of the Opposition wishes to repeat what has been the cause of irritation to both the producer and the consumer—the arbitrary fixing of the price. The hon. member said that on present indications the price of wheat, based on London parity, would not exceed 7s. The same statement could have been made 12

months ago when we fixed the price at 9s. All the information in possession of the expert advisers of the Australian Wheat Board in January last went to show that the price would be in the vicinity of 9s. This is borne out by the fact that, with the exception of 20 million bushels or more, the whole of the wheat in Australia has realised in the vicinity of the original estimate. The principle sought to be set up by the Leader of the Opposition is absolutely wrong. A producer is entitled to the market value of his commodity.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Then throw this Bill out and let him go on the market.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is only a step further to say that wool and everything else we produce—

Hon. P. Collier: The producer is entitled to the market price if he can market his goods without Government assistance.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not know about standing on our own; each section of the community is dependent on the other. I am opposed to what the hon. member suggests; nothing fairer has ever been given in any of the other Wheat Marketing Acts in regard to the fixing of the price for local consumption. The Leader of Opposition is not justified in once again putting in an arbitrary limit one way or the other.

Mr. McCALLUM: The Minister surely will realise that the people of the State are entitled to some consideration for the assistance they give to the wheat growers. Do the people of England, France, Germany, or the niggers of Egypt or throughout the Orient, give the wheat farmers of this State the same assistance as is given by the people of Western Australia? What are we losing in railway freights by the concessions which we give to the farmers? The railways are subsidising the wheat growing industry to the extent of over half a million a year. On artificial manures alone the railways are losing over £100,000 a year.

The Minister for Agriculture: Wheat is a payable freight.

Mr. McCALLUM: The Minister for Railways told me by way of answer to a question I asked that there had been a loss on every commodity which was carried on the railways for the benefit of the farmers. If the consumers are to be treated in the same way as foreigners, why not say to the wheat-growers, "We shall treat you on the same basis as you treat us." Why the necessity for financial backing? Why should the Minister argue that the stand taken by the Leader of the Opposition is illogical? It is the attitude of the Government that is illogical. The Government are legislating for a section of the community; they are out for class distinction, to build up one section of the community at the expense of the others, and they are perpetrating all the sins that for years past they have accused this side of the House of having committed. They are establishing here a precedent which some day the members on this side of the House when

they get on the other side, will be able to use in the form of a lever in order to assist our own people. If the argument of the Minister is logical, why ask the community to stand behind the farmers? If that is necessary, surely the people who have gone to the rescue and put the industry on such a profitable footing, are entitled to some return.

Mr. Mann: Do you not think there should be a minimum reserve?

Mr. McCALLUM: The Bill provides for a minimum reserve.

Hon. P. Collier: Three shillings and eightpence guaranteed.

Mr. McCALLUM: Up to about 3s. 10d. guaranteed now with nothing less than world's parity.

Mr. Mann: I should like to know what has made you change your policy.

Mr. McCALLUM: We are following the lines that we have adopted for many months past. It is over 12 months since the Leader of the party on this side of the House moved a similar motion. What logical argument can be advanced against fixing a figure for the maximum? So long as the people of the State are called upon to shoulder the responsibility of subsidising the industry to the enormous extent that is being done to-day, and which has been done for years past, they should be given the consideration which is now sought. If our friends opposite believe that the people of the State have not done anything, why do they not go to private institutions? Why not wipe out the Industries Assistance Board, Government subsidies, railway concessions, and all the other things, and place the industry on the same footing as every other industry, and compel the farmers to go to private financiers?

The Premier: Where would you find yourself then?

Mr. McCALLUM: Our friends on the other side of the House are not prepared to treat us as favourably as they treat Germans, French, Egyptians, and others. They are not even inclined to treat us on the same level. No one can say that the figure fixed by the Leader of the Opposition is unreasonable. The farmers will be lucky if they get anything approaching 7s. in the next 12 months. If it is desired to have a continuation of the policy that has operated in this State for years past, if the majority of the people are to be expected to continue to support financially and otherwise this industry, if the consumers are to be expected not to tire of the burden of assisting the wheat farmers, those farmers will be well advised to give consideration to the fixing of a limit. If what has been proposed is not agreed to, sooner or later there will be a revulsion of feeling.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I hope the Committee will not accept the amendment.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We will make it 6s. Will that please you better?

Mr. A. THOMSON: The member for South Fremantle has told the Committee that the farming community had derived great benefits from the taxpayers. I am quite pre-

pared to admit that when the Industries Assistance Board was brought into existence, the object was two-fold. One reason was that it was desired to assist the farmers out of their parlous condition, and the other was to conserve the interests of the State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The farmers are a part of the State. You want to make a distinction.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Judging by the tirade of the member for South Fremantle, one wonders whether the farmers are considered part and parcel of this State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: One would say not, judging by the way you are talking.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Where would the State be if, for instance, we wiped out the wheat growing industry? All that the farmers are asking for is world's parity, but one would think they were asking for something iniquitous.

Mr. Munsie: We would not think that if they were not getting more than that to-day.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Prior to the war all that the farmers ever received was world's parity, except in times of stress or drought. If Western Australia had been obliged to import wheat, the consumers would have had to pay a great deal more for it than they have done. The farmers are not asking for any special favour in asking for world's parity.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What is world's parity? They are not asking for that.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Call it London parity. It has been said that because the farmers have been getting 9s. per bushel the consumers have been paying more for their wheat than they should have to pay. I admit they are paying more than world's parity at present.

Mr. Marshall: You only admit what you cannot deny.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am admitting that. In 1916 the average price charged to the local consumer was 4s. 9d., and the average price received for the whole of the wheat sold was 4s. 10d. In 1917 the average price charged to the local consumer was 4s. 9d., and the average price received was 4s. 11¼d. In 1918 the average price charged to the local consumer was 4s. 9d., and the average price received was 4s. 10¼d. In 1919-20 the average price charged to the local consumer was 5s. 6d., and the average price received was 10s., and the consumers on this occasion got their wheat at half-price.

Hon. P. Collier: Where did you get those figures?

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am surprised at the attitude of members opposite. Upon all the alleged concessions to farmers in connection with the I.A.B. and the Agricultural Bank, they have paid the current rate of interest, as laid down by the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. P. Collier: That is why the I.A.B. has written off £95,000.

Mr. A. THOMSON: How much more would the State have had to write off but for the I.A.B.? Members opposite have the

privilege of going to the Arbitration Court, and having the price for their labour fixed for a definite period in an award. No employer can break the obligation thus cast upon him.

Mr. Munsie: Employers are doing it every day.

Mr. Heron: They dodge it.

Mr. A. THOMSON: How can they dodge that obligation?

Mr. Heron: By shutting down the industry.

Mr. A. THOMSON: If the farmers were to shut down their industry, where would the money come from for the payment of the increased wages awarded to miners?

Mr. Marshall: From the mining industry.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I wish the hon. member meant that. By the imposition through the Federal Parliament of a high protective tariff, farmers have to pay high duties upon their machinery and everything they use. They have no redress.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Who is responsible for that?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Some of those politicians, supported by members opposite, who are in favour of the policy of protection.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Your colleagues could have stopped the whole thing.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The protection given in the case of the sugar industry has cost the Commonwealth something like 26 million pounds. No protection is given to the wheat producer, who has to compete with others in the world's market. It is expected that the State wheat yield this year will be about 13 million bushels, of which only about two million bushels will be required for local consumption. The bulk of the harvest will have to be sold overseas. I admit that Western Australia is guaranteeing the wheat pool, but as against that there are the assets of the farming community, and there is the product of the farmers' labour, namely wheat. The Leader of the Opposition is playing with a double-headed penny. According to the Notice Paper he intends to move an amendment imposing a maximum of 7s. and a minimum of 5s. for wheat for local consumption.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I wonder what the Leader of the Opposition, who has moved the amendment, would say if it were proposed to enact a law providing that when the Arbitration Court had fixed a minimum rate of wages, that minimum should also be the maximum; that if the Arbitration Court fixed a minimum of, say, 7s. per day, no employer should pay more than 7s. per day. The primary producers are not asking for an award at all. We, as representatives of the primary producers, are in principle opposed to price fixing. We have been compelled to submit to price fixing in respect of wheat because of the establishment of wheat pools.

Those pools were invariably established in the interests of the consumers. When the price of 9s. was fixed for wheat for local consumption, the Prime Minister said that the Commonwealth had to consider the interests of the producers. If I could sincerely believe it to be the desire of the Leader of the Opposition to conserve the interests of the producers, I would accept his amendment; but he has stated quite frankly that he is endeavouring to conserve the interests of the consumers and does not want the farmers to get more than 7s. per bushel for their wheat. Now, the farmer must accept the world's price for his product. He gets no protection whatever. He has to observe Arbitration Court awards. He has to pay heavy duties on his machinery—in which respect he has no appeal whatever. In this connection let me quote some evidence given by a practical farmer, Mr. F. A. Chaffey, M.L.A., before a select committee which sat in New South Wales last year. Comparing the cost of wheat production in 1904 with the cost in 1920, Mr. Chaffey gave the following figures: plough, six-furrows, cost in 1904 £33, cost in 1920 £96; swings, chains, etc., cost in 1904 £7, cost in 1920 £17; set harrows, six leaves complete, £10 and £24; 8-ft. reaper thresher, £90 and £251 10s.; 6-ft. binder, £38 and £106; cultivator, £24 and £50; 6-ton lorry and frame, £30 and £110; spring dray, £14 and £30; 10 horse-power engine, £150 and £210; 9½ chaffcutter and bagger, £50 and £160; wheat grader, £15 and £50; trap and harness, £20 and £55; ten draught horses, £200 and £250; two light horses, £30 and £30; ten sets plough and wagon harness, £40 and £80 12s.; two wagon saddles and spring dray harness, £15 and £30; ploughshares, tools, and sundries, £25 and £60. Thus the total cost of plant and machinery required by a farmer to put in and take off a crop rose from £821 in 1904 to £1,686 11s. in 1920—an increase of over 100 per cent.

Mr. Munsie: Since 1904 there has been an increase of just about 100 per cent. in the price of wheat.

Mr. A. THOMSON: But the member for Hannans will admit that the farmer was justly entitled to an increase in the price of his product. Further heavy imposts have been placed on the farmer by recent alterations in the Federal tariff. For a 12-bushel crop the same witness, Mr. Chaffey, gave the following estimate, per acre: one bushel graded seed wheat, 8s. 6d.; skim ploughing or cultivating, two operations at 6s., 12s.; drilling in wheat, 12 acres per day, 4s. per acre, 4s.; harrowing, two or more operations, at 2s., 4s.; harvesting and bag-sewing and stacking, 10s.; oil, grease, and bluestone, 1s. 3d.; four bags at 1s. 3d. each, 5s.; sewing twine, 5d.; cartage to rail (average price, 1s.), 4s.; rail freight and pool charges, 8s.; rent of land, 10s.; insurance, 1s.; depreciation of working plant, £1,656 11s. at 10 per cent., 16s. 6d.; total, £4 4s. 8d. per acre.

Mr. Munsie: I have been over that gentleman's farm many times, and I am sure those are not his costs.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The estimates may be a little high, but Mr. Chaffey is a practical farmer.

Mr. Mann: Those costs seem above the average.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Possibly they are a little above the average; they include rent of land and depreciation of working plant. However, Mr. Chaffey brings out the average cost at £4 4s. 8d. per acre. I sincerely trust the Committee will not fix a price for wheat for local consumption. The farmers merely ask for the price they have always obtained hitherto: a price based on London parity.

Mr. LAMBERT: I feel that there is no necessity to stress the fact that all parties are desirous of helping the farmers of this State as far as they legitimately can. At the same time it is essential to take stock of our resources to see to what extent we can go in assisting them. As the member for South Fremantle has pointed out, there is a considerable loss sanctioned each year in order to assist the farmers. The representatives of the farmers should feel that a continuance of the pool, backed by the financial resources of the State, is a generous concession to them. If they are not prepared to accept that, they will find that there will be such a revulsion of feeling on the part of the general community that no party on the floor of the House will help them.

Mr. A. Thomson: If you cut out the pool there will be such a financial revulsion that there will be trouble in the future.

Mr. LAMBERT: I believe that the Government, seeing that they have the support of members of the Country Party, feel there is an obligation upon them to stabilise the wheat industry as far as possible. To what extent that is possible, is for the Committee to say. I think it will be easy to arrive at the maximum price which should be fixed for wheat for home consumption. Due regard should only be had for the fair average profit that the farmer can expect. I do not think even the member for Katanning will take exception to that principle, whether it be applied to wheat, manganese, or anything else. To perpetuate the highway robbery which has existed for two years, and allow farmers to charge enormous prices for wheat for home consumption, to an extent that has amounted almost to a scandal, will not be in the interests of the State. If we had a free market for wheat in Western Australia to-day, we would possibly find that we could buy wheat for home consumption at from 4s. to 5s. per bushel.

Col. Denton: Perhaps not.

Mr. LAMBERT: The member for Katanning stressed the point that the farmers have experienced enormous increases in the cost of machinery. It is true there have been those enormous increases but it is not the farmer alone who has had to pay such increases. If the hon. member analysed the

figures, he would realise that even the increases he has referred to, ranging over 100 per cent., would only mean a fraction of 1d. per bushel spread over the crop garnered by a man farming on the lines he suggested. I hope those members who are not slavishly attached to the Government will realise their responsibilities to the State. They had an opportunity the other night but they missed it. It is time that big outside organisations, whether semi-political or not, should not be allowed to dominate politics in this Chamber, or to domineer members of this House. There are some members who are not attached to the Government but who made certain pledges to their electors, saying they would enter the House untrammelled and with the one desire to do the best they could in the interests of the State. There are thousands of people watching to see what these independent members will do when it comes to a matter of paramount importance such as the food supplies of the people. As the member for South Fremantle has already pointed out, we who are sitting in opposition are in the same position as we have always been. We desire to see cheap food supplies for the people and we hope to be backed up by those who can decide the fate of the consuming public for the next 12 months. I trust they will not shrink, owing to cowardice, or a slavish desire to support the Government, from carrying out their pledges.

Mr. Mann: Did you cause your leader to change his amendment?

Mr. LAMBERT: The Leader of the Opposition is not so easily influenced as the hon. member would suggest.

Col. Denton: What happened, then?

Mr. LAMBERT: I hope the amendment will be carried. If it is, we will have an opportunity of showing the consuming public that while we have due regard for the requirements of the farmers, we have some regard for the interests of the consumer. That can only be done by fixing the maximum price of wheat for home consumption. I trust that the farmers' friends, or, I should say, the representatives of the farmers—

Mr. Pickering: The terms are synonymous.

Mr. LAMBERT: There is a very big difference, for to-day the friends of the farmers are sitting on the Opposition side of the House. Had it not been for the base and deadly ingratitude of those we endeavoured to assist, we would now be on the Ministerial side of the House. We are not concerned with that point, however, but we are concerned with fixing the price the consumers will have to pay for their wheat. A generous concession has been made to the wheat farmers of Western Australia as well as of other States, because to-day the consumers are paying London parity for wheat which otherwise they would probably be able to get for 50 per cent. less. London is feeling the effect of the financial and industrial stagnation in England.

Mr. Mann: You would not like to see—

Mr. LAMBERT: If the member for Perth will cease gabbling like a cockatoo on his perch, and ask a proper question, I will answer him.

Member: You are knocked off your perch, at any rate.

The CHAIRMAN: I will have to deal with some hon. members if they do not keep order.

Mr. LAMBERT: Let me impress upon those members who are not attached to the Government, like the members of the Country Party, that they should hold the scales of justice evenly as between the farmers and the consumers. If they do so, we will not see such inflated and fictitious prices for wheat for home consumption as we have witnessed during the past two years. Those who can clearly and logically survey the position in Western Australia, and compare it with the conditions in England, will agree that we should at least see that wheat is made available for home consumption at a price which represents a fair average profit on production. We should not sanction more than that. I hope, for the good name of the farmer, that they will not make an unfair demand upon the House, a demand which would not be sanctioned outside.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I hope the Committee will not accept the very pernicious principle involved in the amendment. At present we have the Prices Regulation Commission in operation.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Not for wheat.

Mr. JOHNSTON: No, but for everything else.

Mr. Underwood: We will abolish the Commission.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am not in the confidence of the Government but it may be that the Commission will be abolished. Even if the Government, or this House, desired to retain the Commission, it may be that the Upper House will not consent to the Commission continuing.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is more likely that they will not agree to this Bill.

Mr. JOHNSTON: If the amendment is carried, we will have the anomalous position created whereby a maximum price is imposed for wheat, whereas the farmers and the rest of the producers will continue to be exploited regarding everything they purchase. Surely that is not the wish of the Leader of the Opposition. I submit to members who are opposed to price fixing as a principle, that they cannot accept the amendment, which will put the producers of Western Australia at a disadvantage compared with everyone else in the State. It is quite likely that the Prices Regulation Commission may be abolished, and in such circumstances it would be wrong to fix a maximum price for wheat. The wheat farmer has had to pay inflated prices for everything he uses, compared with pre-war

rates. Machinery has gone up from 100 to 300 per cent.; railway freights have been increased three or four times; and the price of twine, oil, and other necessities has increased too, ranging from 50 to 300 per cent. We are asked to say that, no matter how much prices have increased, the price of wheat shall be fixed for the ensuing 12 months. There are other things produced in Australia which a farmer must use. He must have boots and clothing. No proposal has been brought forward to fix the maximum price for those articles. On the other hand, the Federal Parliament has increased the price of the farmers' boots and clothing by means of the heavy tariff.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Whose fault is that?

Mr. JOHNSTON: It is the fault of the representatives of the congested city areas of Australia, drawn from all parties, who are combined together to increase the tariff.

Mr. O'Loghlen: The Federal Government could not survive 24 hours if the farmers' representatives were not with them.

Mr. JOHNSTON: But on this point there is no unanimity of opinion.

Mr. Munsie: The farmers' party supported the high tariff. It could not have been got through without them.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Yes, it could have been, just as the hon. member may succeed in getting this amendment through. When the interests of the people in the cities are affected, we find an unholy alliance between both sides of the House to exploit the farmer. The city representatives are anxious that the farmer should not get more than 7s. per bushel for his wheat, no matter what may be the cost of his production.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What leads you to that conclusion? Only one city representative has spoken.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Various interjections have led me to fear the customary alliance.

Hon. T. Walker: Do you think that, in point of fact, the price will ever again reach 7s.?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I do not know, but I do know that however much the price of wheat may appreciate, it is proposed that the farmer shall receive no benefit from that appreciation beyond 7s. per bushel for local consumption.

Mr. Munsie: Local consumption, representing about one bag from each farmer in the State!

Mr. JOHNSTON: If the amendment be carried, the tendency to a congestion of population in the cities will be accentuated. I remind the representatives of the consumers that when the price of wheat is high, prosperity is general throughout the wheat-growing States. There has been no attempt in New South Wales and Queensland to reduce the present price of 9s. The Labour Governments of those two States have a proper appreciation of the importance of giving the farmer a fair deal.

Mr. O'Loghlen: You know why the price of 9s. per bushel was fixed in New South Wales?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Yes, there was a Government guarantee. It is to the credit of the Labour Governments of those two States that no attempt has been made to depart from the honourable agreement entered into. In this State the agitation, of which the amendment is a symptom, has been going on for some time. I cannot dissociate the amendment from the continued attempt made in this Chamber to reduce the price of wheat. In view of the possibility of price-fixing being abolished next year, I hope the Committee will think seriously before accepting an amendment which, if carried, will fix the maximum price for wheat for local consumption while there will be no other fixed price in the State.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The hon. member declared that the price of wheat was reflected in the general prosperity of the State. So far from that being the case, in my opinion much of the existing industrial depression is ascribable to the fact that the prices of wheat, bran, and pollard are virtually prohibitive. History shows that on the price of wheat depend the prices of other things throughout the world, that when wheat is high everything else is high, and the cost of living correspondingly great. It has been suggested that but for the wheat growers there would be no community at all in Western Australia. However, it is clear that we had a considerable population before the first wheat was grown in Western Australia.

Mr. Underwood: Of late years we would have had a pretty hard time had there been no wheat.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Still, we should not become obsessed with the idea that the prosperity of the State is entirely contingent on the wheat yield. There are other industries which, while perhaps not as important as wheatgrowing, yet are prime factors in the general prosperity of the State. Personally, I attach but little importance to the amendment, because I do not think the world's parity for wheat will again reach anything like 7s. It is as idle to suggest that the agricultural industry has not been assisted by the people of the State as it would be to contend that in the event of a total failure of the wheat crop it would not be right for the people to come to the rescue of the wheatgrowers once more. By the same token, if catastrophe were to fall upon the wheat yield in other parts of the world, the consumers in this State should not be asked to pay prohibitive prices on that score alone, as occurred in America during the early stages of the war before that country was embroiled in hostilities.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: The exportation of wheat from India was prohibited.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But why should the wheat consumers in this State be made to suffer because of a catastrophe in some other part of the world?

Mr. Johnston: The price of machinery would be affected.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Still we, as local consumers, should not be made to suffer, since the local consumption amounts to but a small percentage of the total yield. If the whole of the wheat harvest of this State were consumed locally it would be different, and probably we would be prepared to pay a higher price for our wheat. I will vote for the amendment, since it will preclude a repetition of what occurred last year.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The wheatgrowers can do reasonably well on a price of 7s. per bushel. In my opinion the growing of wheat in this State is essential to the very life of the State. Representing the people, the Government have spent an enormous sum of money on the development of wheat growing. But it must be remembered that the money was spent, not only in the interests of the wheatgrower, but on behalf of the rest of the community also. If, instead of growing wheat, we had had to import it, we would have been in a vastly different position.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That applies everywhere.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Quite so. It is a sound proposition from the community point of view, leaving out the point of view of the farmer, that we should endeavour to grow wheat.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If someone did not grow it, we would starve.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: We would possibly go to some country which did grow wheat. The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) referred to the price paid for wheat this year. We are paying more than we should have to pay. The wheat board made a very bad mistake and imposed upon the consumers of Australia, but in previous years, when wheat was 9s. 4d. in America, we were paying only 5s. for our wheat. During all those years from 1915 onwards, we in Australia were paying only about one-half of the price which was being paid by the people of America.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why is it then that we did not get more for the wheat we exported?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: There are a good many reasons which are probably known to the hon. member as well as to myself. America was an exporting country, and yet the American consumer was paying almost twice the price which ruled in Australia.

Hon. P. Collier: And the consumer in England was paying for American wheat twice the price which he was paying for Australian wheat.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: He was in a bad place, because he was not growing wheat. In addition to fixing a maximum price, we fix a minimum price. Our farmers can grow wheat and do well at 7s. a bushel or less. I agree with the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) that a shortage of wheat in Russia, Canada or America should not be made a reason for charging an ex-

sive price in Australia. The only time when we should pay an excessive price is when we have a shortage. To give effect to the minimum price, we would require an Australian pool. If we in Western Australia fixed a minimum price of 5s., the world's parity might go down to 3s. 6d., and wheat would then be sent here from South Australia.

Mr. Lambert: And flour too.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes, and all wheat products. I would like to see an Australian pool. Without it I do not know that we shall be successful. I want to see wheat growing encouraged in Australia, and I want the grower to get a fair living. On the other hand, not being a city man but representing people far removed from the city, there are industries other than wheat growing which deserve and require consideration. The miners, the pastoralists, the fishermen and the pearlers all desire and are entitled to consideration. It has been said that when the price of wheat is high, everything else is high in price. That is not correct. The price of wheat to-day is higher than it has ever been during my recollection in Australia, but the prices of almost all the base metals are lower than they have been for many years.

Mr. Willcock: They are not being produced.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: And the reason is that the cost of wheat and living generally is too high to enable them to be produced at the prices ruling in the world's market. The price of wheat is high; the price of wool is not too high. Chilled meat is to an extent unsaleable.

Mr. Pickering: Do not you think that wool has its own troubles?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes, but members in using these figures of speech seem to forget that we can do without tin and lead and wool for a while or possibly for ever, but that we cannot live without wheat, which is the staple food of all civilised people. Therefore, in dealing with its price, we should endeavour to make it as reasonable as possible to the consumer while giving to the grower a reasonable living for his labour.

Mr. LATHAM: I oppose the amendment because I represent a wheat-growing electorate. I am not so much opposed to the fixing of the price of 7s., because that is a fair and reasonable price, but I must protest against fixing the price at all. Our commodities should be controlled by the law of supply and demand. There cannot be anything unreasonable about that. Last year, when a certain ballot was taken throughout the State, it was found that there were fewer than 7,000 wheat growers in Western Australia. Yet some speakers would have us believe that they would impose upon those 7,000 wheat growers the penalty of contributing something to the State which would place them at a great disadvantage.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, we want to see that they do not impose upon the consumer.

Mr. LATHAM: In the year before last, the price of wheat was 7s. 8d. a bushel, which was below overseas parity.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It was not so.

Mr. LATHAM: The world's parity was 7s. 8d.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, it was 7s. 6d. in 1920. I have Mr. Hughes's statement.

Mr. LATHAM: The price of 7s. 8d. was fixed during a portion of the year and it caused a tremendous lot of dissatisfaction among the farmers. Last year the price fixed was slightly above world's parity and it caused a good deal of dissatisfaction among consumers. The Leader of the Opposition should remember that it is our duty to control the business of the State for the welfare of the community. We have no right to set one section against another. The amendment, however, will provide a means of control against a higher price.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: If you got the world's parity, would you be prepared to pay for the actual cost of railings super to the country districts?

Mr. LATHAM: I am not much concerned about the cost of super. The farming community have a very small margin of profit. The Industries Assistance Board have a considerable number of farmers on their books, and the fact that these men have been under the board for five or six years shows that wheat growing is not such a very profitable business. The way to kill the wheat industry is to control it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Then you will vote against the pool?

Mr. LATHAM: No.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: By the pool you will be controlling it.

Mr. LATHAM: I wish to get away from control as soon as possible, but at the present time it is essential to the welfare of the State that every penny possible should be obtained for our wheat.

Hon. T. Walker: You mean from without.

Mr. LATHAM: If we were to throw our wheat upon the open market, the farming community of the State would lose a considerable amount of money.

Mr. Marshall: That would represent the operation of the law of supply and demand.

Mr. LATHAM: Perhaps so. If agents were operating here, they would not pay farmers on the basis of the highest price likely to be obtained during the year. Their basis would be on the lowest price likely to be obtained during the year.

Hon. T. Walker: That is the law of supply and demand.

Mr. LATHAM: The law of supply and demand as I know it is a fair and reasonable one as set out in the Bill—world's parity from month to month.

Hon. T. Walker: That is regulation, not freedom of contract. That is the prevention of freedom of contract.

Mr. LATHAM: I know very well what it is.

Hon. T. Walker: It is State socialism applied to the farmers.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not agreeable to a wheat pool unless it is necessary; but it is in the interests of the State that a pool should be established this year. It would not be in the interests of the State to fix a price when the actual price might prove to be either higher or lower.

Hon. T. Walker: It could be altered every month.

Mr. LATHAM: Provision is made for altering it every month, but it would not be fair to the farmers to fix a maximum price, and I would not be doing my duty to the farmers I represent if I did not protest against the proposal. I do not suppose there is any worker in the State who is a more genuine worker than the farmer.

Mr. O'Loghlen: And he enjoys the freest and healthiest life.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, but I would like to take the member for Forrest to some places in the wheat areas—

Mr. O'Loghlen: I have seen them all.

Mr. LATHAM: Then the hon. member should champion them. All the farmers do not subscribe to the political organisation to which I belong. If something could be done to put these men on a sound financial footing and encourage people in the city to go out and produce wheat, we have the market for the produce.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is the reason why you cannot sell the two million bushels you have here.

Mr. LATHAM: We could sell it at a price. There are contracts in existence under which we are supplying wheat at a higher price than it is being sold at here to-day. I must strongly oppose the amendment.

Hon. T. WALKER: We ought to rejoice that it is proposed to fix a maximum price. If our wheat averages 7s. per bushel for the next harvest the whole country may well rejoice. The possibilities are, however, that wheat will come down considerably.

The Premier: I do not think so.

Hon. T. WALKER: I think the farmers will be lucky if they get 5s. 6d. a bushel. The wheat contributed by Australia will make very little difference to the price of that commodity elsewhere in the world. London cannot be supplied altogether from Australia, and will, therefore, be supplied by the other big wheat producing countries of the world. We are joined to the commercial movement of the rest of the world. We cannot escape from that wonderful organisation run by the banks of the civilised community. To talk about fixing in advance a high or a low price in relation to the rest of the world is sheer absurdity. Although we are bound to the rest of the globe as to our surplus wheat, there is a large degree of wisdom in trying to fix the price of wheat for our own people. In con-

nection with the pool we take into account the requirements of our own people. We say we want so much for ourselves and so much for seed for the next harvest. The remainder of our output we have to find a market for. The contention of the Leader of the Opposition is that we should make as cheap as possible the wheat consumed by our own people.

Mr. Latham: At the expense of one section of the community.

Hon. T. WALKER: At the expense of none. Suppose we exported no wheat, but stacked it in heaps within the State!

Mr. Latham: Then we would not grow any.

Hon. T. WALKER: But we are sending our surplus away. It is that surplus which must remunerate the farmers, not that which is intended for our own people. The hon. member has spoken of the law of supply and demand. Let me read what an eminent authority said—

Of all physical agents by which the increase of the labouring classes is affected that of food is the most active and universal. If two countries equal in all other respects differ solely in this, that in one the national food is cheap and abundant, and in the other scarce and dear, the population of the former country will inevitably increase more rapidly than the population of the latter.

Mr. Latham: That argument does not affect me at all.

Hon. T. WALKER: The hon. member is too bucolic. Our population is only attained by making our food supplies and our means of livelihood cheap. It pays a country to have cheap food.

Mr. Pickering: And have other things dear.

Hon. T. WALKER: The dear things come back to us as payment for our surplus wheat and other things that we send away. It appears to me that it is the farmers' party that is suffering from lack of logic. A wheat pool means compulsion, restriction, and control.

Mr. Pickering: You do not object to the pool?

Hon. T. WALKER: No, but where is the law of supply and demand? The Government have stepped in and said "To hades with the law of supply and demand!" They are now arranging for the handling and the marketing of the wheat.

Mr. Pickering: It is cheapening the form of marketing.

Hon. T. WALKER: Of course it is. It is judgment applied to distribution. It is the State that is doing the distribution. It is socialism. It is intelligent control of the distribution of our great commodities. If we have control in the delivery and the distribution of our wheat, what lack of logic is there in having a control of the price? We are told that we must regulate the price

of wheat but leave everything else unregulated.

Mr. Latham: Everything else is unregulated.

Hon. T. WALKER: The hon. member wants this principle established in regard to wheat, but when I ask him to apply that principle in other directions, he will not do it. When I ask him to join with me in urging a like distribution of all commodities and all products he stops, and will not have it. He shudders at it. To him, in one direction the law of supply and demand is all right; but in other directions, no! Let me inform the hon. member that profiteering represents the law of supply and demand. But he cries out against profiteering. I want the wheat collectively controlled, but I also want collective control of the commodities and materials required on my farm. By-and-by the advantages which the farmers now have, and which they so much fear to lose, will be applied to other sections of the community.

Mr. Latham: The farmers cannot afford to lose those advantages.

Hon. T. WALKER: We all of us cannot afford to lose them. If we hang together in that important element, our food supply, let us see that our own people—our own producers and our own consumers within the geographical boundaries of this island continent—are fed and provided for first of all.

Mr. Latham: Chiefly by the farmers.

Hon. T. WALKER: Does not the farmer live for himself? Were it not for other members of the community, the farmer would be running about clad in a goat skin; or, if he could not get that, he would be satisfied to wrap a kangaroo's tail about his loins and go to work in the hot sun. Every man in this community is working for the farmer. The gold producer outback, who has as many privations to endure as ever the farmer has, works for the farmer, creating a standard value for the wheat and the other products of the farm. If every citizen of the metropolitan area emigrated from these shores, there would soon be an exodus of farmers; the farmers would very quickly follow the other members of the community. It is only the presence of the multitude, all working for each other, that enables all to exist. Hon. members sneer at the word "socialism," but socialism exists. The farmers are now recognising its value. Every member of the community who works at all, works for more than himself; he works for the whole community. Even the journalist works for the whole community. Everyone knows how much the farmer's life is brightened by the newspapers; they stimulate thought. The world advances with the increase of thought; thought is, after all, the chief producer, the primary producer. The Diogenes of the past is gone, with his tub; we live amongst men, and work for men. The savage conceit of thinking that because one is a farmer one is everybody, is evidence that one still stands in need of some civilisation.

Mr. Pickering: The farmers are the most modest men in the world.

Hon. T. WALKER: The most modest? And is Sussex an example of them? If that is so, save me from being of the class! However, we see now that the farmers are in favour of the wheat pool, and in favour of regulations for the pool. I am convinced there is no chance of wheat going beyond 7s. per bushel for the next harvest. Therefore the farmer cannot suffer from the carrying of the amendment. Let that figure of 7s. stand as the price of a bushel. The producers of wheat will always know that they have that price of 7s. as a standard. Let me ask hon. members opposite what object is to be gained by setting the farmer against the consumer, the country against the town? To foster such a feeling is the worst disservice that can possibly be done the farming community. We do not want political troubles of that kind. There is no work more national, no work more free from party, than the farmer's work, which should not be associated with any political creed or any political organisation. It is the common property of us all to cultivate the earth; that is our first duty to our fellow men. Therefore, I advise my friends on the cross benches not to create bitterness on this question. We on this side have helped the farmer at every step; we came to his assistance in the hour of his weakness; we extended the facilities for obtaining help through the Agricultural Bank; we promoted the farmer's interests by reducing railway freights, by furnishing him with water supplies. In assisting the farmer, we assisted the country; and through the country we assisted every other worker. We of this party have no feeling against the farmer. Hon. members opposite fancy we are against the farmer, and under that misapprehension they are adopting a course which must result in the farmer's ruin. Remembering that it is the surplus wheat we have to flourish on, let us fix the price of the wheat our people require at 7s. per bushel. That price, in view of the market prospects, is a very big price indeed.

Capt. CARTER: I support the amendment, and I wonder at the opposition to it. The principle of the clause is a price to be fixed by the Minister on the first of each month, based on the equivalent of London parity. We have heard nothing urged against that principle. Then, why should it not obtain straight away? London parity at present is 6s. 8d., and we are offering the farmer 7s.

Mr. Johnston: You are not offering 7s.

Capt. CARTER: We are offering a maximum of 7s. To give that price is to give 4d. per bushel above London parity, and therefore the farmer will not be losing his bargain. The member for Williams-Narrogin said that city members, representing city interests, were opposing the Bill.

Hon. P. Collier: That is just electioneering stuff.

Capt. CARTER: It has been clearly proved to the Committee that the question should be one of equity, and not of favour. If any favour has been given so far, in my humble opinion, it has gone to the farmers.

Mr. Latham: We do not want any favours.

Hon. P. Collier: In that case, go on your own.

Capt. CARTER: If the hon. member does not want a favour, he should be logical and accept equity. We are offering equity in what the farmers can get for their wheat overseas or the equivalent in the city of Perth. All the arguments in support of the amendment on that principle have been sound. It is not necessary for me to go over the ground I covered earlier in the debate, for the arguments advanced this evening speak for themselves. The member for Williams-Narrogin, however, said that when the price of wheat is high, there is prosperity in the city. He delivered that as an axiom new from the gods. I give it the lie direct and will produce figures in support of my contention. In 1915 there were 100,000 head of poultry in the Belmont district alone and at that time the price of wheat was 5s. per bushel. In 1921 there are not 500 head and the price of wheat is 9s. per bushel.

Mr. Latham: They shifted into the country.

Capt. CARTER: Those figures directly contradict the statement by the member for Williams-Narrogin and they indicate the distress and stagnation of the city dweller.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That does not only apply to Belmont.

Capt. CARTER: There are many other such cases. The member for South Fremantle can give further instances, and I can give further instances at Osborne Park. The poultry, pig raising and dairying industries are stagnating, and there is a retrograde movement all round because of the high price of wheat.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Several men who were put there by the Repatriation Department were established with Government funds.

Capt. CARTER: I do not want to go extensively into that aspect, but there are men living on their holdings at present through the good graces of the Repatriation Department alone. They are living on their pensions and are not making anything out of the poultry industry.

The Minister for Agriculture: What did price fixing do for them?

Capt. CARTER: Absolutely settled them. In 1920 when the local price was less than the world's parity, they were not considered local consumers. To-day because the world's parity is greater, they are considered local consumers. That was the Minister's ruling. Instead of getting wheat in 1920 at 7s. 8d. per bushel, they paid 11s., and I can produce the documents to prove that statement. To-day, with wheat at 6s. 8d., they are paying 9s. per bushel. That is the answer to the contention that with a high price for wheat,

there is prosperity in the city. On the contrary, I believe that in the allied industries—and I think my opinion will prove to be correct—we will find the best avenue for our wheat. At the present time we do not realize that our 3 per cent. of the world's supplies does not control the world's market. We are by no means the deciding factor. We must find an avenue for our wheat when the world's trade is against us, and we will find that the best market will be in the bacon, poultry and kindred industries, which will absorb the by-products and the wheat itself. Another contention by the member for Williams-Narrogin was that this attempt—and he spoke in tones of distress and anguish—to decrease the price of wheat below 9s., was unjustifiable. Why should the price not be decreased below 9s. seeing that to-day London parity is at 6s. 8d. per bushel? At the same time, we sold wheat to Germany and France and other European countries at 7s. 7d. per bushel.

Mr. McCallum: They charged France 12s.

Capt. CARTER: Yet they sold to Germany at 7s. 7d. Have we not the right to the same consideration for our own industries? The member for York opposed the amendment because, he said—and I do not think I have heard anything more parochial or so insular—he represented a wheat growing district. I claim to represent the mass of the people, not merely the poultry farmers, the dairy men or the pig raisers, although there are plenty of them in the metropolitan area. I believe this is a matter which should be dealt with from the standpoint of equity in the interests of the great majority of the people in the State. Statements were also made from which we would regard the farmer as a man hardly dealt with, and as a man who has a very small margin of profit. That argument was used to bolster up the case in opposition to the amendment. I have had some experience in Western Australia and I have been all over the wheat growing areas where I met farmers who were boys at school with me. These men are now in possession of farms worth anything between £5,000 or £6,000.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Some started with nothing.

Capt. CARTER: Nothing beyond brawn and energy. I give them every credit for the position they are in to-day. We find men in similar positions in various parts of the State. It leads us to believe that the farmer has been able to attain a pretty fair financial position in Western Australia. I believe in effect that the price of wheat should be reduced to provide a market or lay a basis for a market which will be of value to Western Australia, a market which will be of value in establishing kindred industries, and by so doing we will pave the way to the establishment of one of the finest assets for the State.

Mr. DURACK: I oppose the amendment.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Naturally.

Mr. DURACK: Not because I am a wheat grower, nor yet because my electorate is a wheatgrowing district.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You belong politically to the Primary Producers' Association.

Mr. DURACK: I am opposed to price fixing on principle.

Hon. P. Collier: Especially for wool, during the war.

The Minister for Agriculture: The member for Kimberley is not a wool grower.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Why is he in favour of a pool?

Mr. DURACK: It does not serve the purposes the member for Kanowna mentioned. We want to encourage an abundance of wheat growing. We will not encourage it by fixing the price of wheat.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Why not pool it?

Mr. DURACK: That is a unionistic co-operative principle.

Hon. P. Collier: I thought so. There we have it.

Mr. DURACK: Considerable reference has been made to how the consumer will suffer as a consequence of these high prices. I would like to see how the consumer will suffer. I apply the position to my own household. The member for Kanowna says we must consider the needs and necessities of our own household. My household consists of 10; sometimes there are one or two more, and sometimes one or two below that number. The cost of bread for my household represents a certain sum of money per day based on 9s. per bushel.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Do you eat the same amount of bread as Prowse?

Mr. DURACK: If the price of wheat were fixed at 7s. it would represent 40 or 50 per cent. less in the cost of the loaf. On that basis I would be paying only 1s. per week more for my bread at the higher figure.

Mr. McCallum: Is bread the only thing it affects?

Mr. DURACK: No, but I was simply referring to the bread position. Is there any member here who denies that the farmers are entitled to a subsidy, if he likes to regard it as such. For my part, I am prepared to pay a subsidy to the men who have to suffer the hardships of life on the land, to the extent of 1s. a week.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Would you give that subsidy to every other industry?

Mr. DURACK: I am not speaking as one interested in the wheat industry.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Of course, you are.

Mr. DURACK: The member for Pilbara says that agriculture is necessary if we desire to carry on the affairs of this State. The last census showed that the trend of population has been towards the city. Our population during the last 10 years has increased by something over 46,000, while that of the metropolitan area has increased by 49,611.

Hon. P. Collier: That may be due to some large portion of the country being held by one man.

Mr. DURACK: That may be so.

Hon. T. Walker: And that may apply to the North-West and Esperance districts as well as the North.

Mr. DURACK: I am showing that our objective should be to encourage people to go out into the country areas.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Have you encouraged people to go upon your holding?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The member for Kimberley says it is no good.

Mr. O'Loughlen: How many men are there on your holding to the square mile?

Mr. DURACK: I am not discussing that at present.

Hon. P. Collier: There are too many for you to remember.

Hon. T. Walker: I am told that we could sink Great Britain in the hon. member's holding.

Mr. DURACK: We are not discussing that.

Hon. P. Collier: Then you talk about encouraging population.

Mr. O'Loughlen: At any rate, the hon. member saw it first.

Hon. T. Walker: Would the hon. member like to see a thriving white population on his run?

Mr. DURACK: We should encourage people to go to the country areas and anything that can be done in that direction should be done. I want to pursue a policy that will get the people back to the country to develop it.

Hon. T. Walker: Upon your run, for instance?

Mr. MANN: I intend to support the amendment. I had purposed moving a further amendment in keeping with the amendment suggested by the Leader of the Opposition a week ago. On second thoughts, however, I realised that we must consider that South Australia, the State adjoining our own, will be a free trader. If we fixed a minimum price for wheat at 5s. a bushel, we would reach a position where South Australia would be able to land wheat in our mills or to land flour at a figure below our local prices. In these circumstances, it would be useless for us to fix a minimum price while our neighbouring State is a free trader. Throughout my election I stated it was my desire to see a cheaper loaf. I am speaking also as a wheatgrower. In the latter capacity I would be quite satisfied to get 7s. per bushel for my wheat.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You would like it if you could get it this year.

Mr. MANN: I would be satisfied if I knew I could always get 5s. per bushel. I have to consider those whom I am representing, namely, the consumers, and those who are dependent upon the secondary industries.

Without continuing the debate, therefore, I support the amendment.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I intend to support the amendment. The crux of the position was touched upon by the member for York (Mr. Latham) when he said that without the wheat pool the farmers would suffer considerable loss. We are endeavouring to assist the farmers by the establishment of the wheat pool. The estimated harvest is 13 million bushels. Of that quantity, some two million bushels will be required for local consumption. Let us see what we propose to give the farmers through the establishment of the wheat pool, and to ask of them by the fixing of a maximum of 7s. on wheat for local consumption. As against the price they would get in open market, they will be gaining say, 1s. per bushel extra through the pool. On 11 million bushels for export that shilling represents £550,000. Supposing the world's parity to be 9s., in fixing the maximum for local consumption at 7s. we shall be taking from the farmer 2s. per bushel on two million bushels, or £200,000, which, subtracted from the £550,000 extra gained through the wheat pool, leaves the farmer advantaged to the extent of £350,000 by our establishment of the wheat pool. My calculation assumes that world's parity will remain at 9s.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It will not be anything like that.

Mr. RICHARDSON: No, but I am attempting to show what we shall be putting into the farmers' pockets by the establishment of the wheat pool, even allowing for the fixing at 7s. of the maximum price for wheat for local consumption. Without the aid of Parliament the wheat growers of Western Australia would be in a very awkward position next year. Certain primary industries are dependent exclusively on wheat growing. It would almost appear that the farmers are trying to create a monopoly in such industries as pig and poultry raising and dairying, for their efforts to maintain a prohibitive price for wheat, if successful, must result in crushing the people engaged in those industries in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Latham: Why don't those people produce wheat for themselves? No attempt is made to fix a maximum for their products.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They are not asking for the establishment of a pool.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Bran and pollard are being sent over from South Australia at a lower price than the millers here can compete with. If our millers are compelled to reduce the price of their by-products in consequence of that competition from the Eastern States, up will go the price of flour and, consequently, of bread. I agree with the member for Perth (Mr. Mann) that it would be a mistake to fix a minimum price for wheat, because of that very difficulty in respect of the prices of offal. Something has been said of the extortionate prices charged for farming machinery. But that is not a

recurring annual charge. With care a good harvester will last for many years, whereas the sales of wheat recur every year. I hope that in the interests of the whole community, including both consumers and growers, the amendment will be carried.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I see no use for the amendment. Many members are positive that wheat will not realise anything like 7s. a bushel. Why, then, fix the maximum price at 7s.? In 1894 we sold wheat at 1s. 5d. per bushel.

Mr. Latham: I wonder what eggs were that year?

Mr. HICKMOTT: As a rule the farmer has to take what he can get for his wheat. No reasonable argument has been adduced in favour of fixing the maximum price at 7s. After all, how many pigs are raised in the metropolitan area?

Mr. O'Loughlen: Nobody can afford to raise them now.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Poultry experts say that wheat is not a good food for fowls, that there is nothing better than oats. Oats are being sold to-day at 3s. 4d. per bushel. Foggitt Jones & Co., experts in bacon, tell us that crushed oats are just as good as wheat for the raising of pigs. What about feeding pigs on oats at 3s. 4d. per bushel? But no, pig raisers prefer to pay even 10s. or 12s. for wheat from an agent, instead of buying it at 9s. direct from the pool.

Hon. P. Collier: They cannot buy it from the pool. You ought to know that.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Yes, they have only to buy a truckload. Eggs have been selling at 4s. a dozen.

Hon. P. Collier: Cause and effect.

Mr. HICKMOTT: And a friend of mine told me that last year he got over 2s. a lb. for his butter.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He was putting up a tale.

Mr. HICKMOTT: It is a fact, not a tale. However, there is no occasion for the amendment, because we are assured that wheat, instead of going up, will have a rapid fall; that the world is getting back to normal and that Australia's little parcel of wheat will not make any difference to the world's price.

Mr. SAMPSON: When this matter came before the House a week ago the Leader of the Opposition, in what appeared to be a very logical speech, pointed out that he was prepared to support such a price to the farmers as would secure to them a reasonable return. I recall my first night in this House; the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) by way of interjection said I was rather inexperienced. To-night I feel inclined to agree with him, because when the Leader of the Opposition made those statements I felt that in the best interests of the farmers it would be wise to fix a maximum and a minimum price. I then said that I heartily endorsed his statements. To-night I find that all my admiration—

Hon. P. Collier: You will still be safe in sticking to me.

Mr. SAMPSON: When I heard the hon. member move his amendment I was amazed that it was possible in so short a period to produce so great a change. I have not yet heard any sufficient reason why the amendment should have been submitted. To-night we have heard a long and excellent speech—excellent in that it contained many words and arguments—regarding the farmer and the desirability in the interests of all concerned that there should be a maximum but not a minimum price.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He is one of the biggest wheat growers in the State.

Mr. SAMPSON: Is that to be a sufficient answer for all his sins? Because the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) is a wheat grower, that is no justification for him going back on his fellow wheat farmers. If it is his desire to advance the State as a whole, he should take steps to insure to the man on the land such a reasonable return as will make life on the land attractive. The time has come when our words should be real mirrors of our meaning. That remark is not nearly so involved as the volte face which the Leader of the Opposition has performed. We must give to the man on the land a reasonable opportunity to make a fair living. It would be unfair to adopt a provision fixing a maximum price and, on the other hand, by not fixing a minimum, suggesting that when an opportunity occurs the unfortunate wheat-grower will be tied down to the last farthing.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: What is the estimated cost of raising a bushel of wheat?

Mr. SAMPSON: Experts estimate the cost in the region of 5s. a bushel.

Hon. T. Walker: About 4s. 6d. a bushel on an average of 12 bushels to the acre.

Mr. A. Thomson: The average for the State is less than 9 bushels.

Mr. SAMPSON: I had hoped that there would be a really sympathetic and honest regard displayed towards the backbone of the country. I oppose the amendment because it is wrong in principle in that a maximum is mentioned but no minimum, and this I regard as being discreditable to the party from which it emanated.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is no surprise to me that the member for Swan is disappointed, because he happens to be a member of a political society and as such, in many instances, has to do as he is told.

Mr. Pickering: You are in a similar sort of society.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No I am not. The hon. member is also connected with a political body which does not hesitate to step over his head and get works carried out in his district, because of the weight exerted by that body with the Minister. The other day, Mr. Chairman, a gentleman in your district during your absence referred to the district of Swan and remarked that in some centres there were progress associations and fruit-growers' associations, but that it was preferable to have a branch of the Primary Pro-

ducers' Association. He stated that at Wooroloo they had a progress association and for two and a half years had been trying to get improvements at the railway station for the handling of fruit. They came to him—the organiser—and he told them he could do nothing for them until they formed a branch of the association. This they did and within six weeks an engineer was measuring the platform. This was due to the efforts of the association. "You write to us in Perth," he added, "and we go to the Minister, and as the representatives of your association, we have more weight."

The Minister for Works: They do not come to me, anyhow.

Mr. Sampson: It is time somebody did something.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, when members do not do much on their own behalf. If the Minister for Works has had the same experience of you, Mr. Chairman, as I have had, there is no need for the Primary Producers' Association to see that necessary work is carried out in your district, though there may be at Wooroloo and in the district represented by the member for Swan. The hon. member has forgotten that when the Leader of the Opposition dealt with this question previously, he pointed out that last session he had endeavoured to have the price of wheat for local consumption based on certain conditions, but that the House on two occasions rejected his proposals.

Mr. Sampson: I referred to what occurred only a week or two ago.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Quite so, and the hon. member's party refused to support him. Seeing that support was refused, there was only one other course to adopt. It is useless to come here week after week holding up the business on one and the same question when one knows that he is sure to be defeated. Therefore a compromise must be accepted. What is asked by the amendment is that the wheat board shall not have power to increase the price of wheat above the equivalent of London parity during next year as they have done during the last 12 months. We have been paying more than the equivalent of London parity for wheat during the last 12 months. The people of this State have been robbed.

Mr. Sampson: You made an agreement.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the Premier has an agreement, I ask him to lay it on the Table of the House. I guarantee that he cannot produce any agreement. How is it that South Australia can to-day sell wheat and send the offal to Western Australia if there is an agreement?

Hon. P. Collier: And Tasmania the same.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes; there is no such thing as an agreement. Several statements have been made to-night with regard to Mr. Hughes. I want to point out that the f.o.b. price of wheat per bushel in 1916 was 5s. 4.6d.; in 1917 4s. 6.5d. though we were paying 4s. 9d.; in 1918 5s. 0.7d.; in 1919 5s.

8.1d.; and in 1920 7s. 6.1d., when we were paying 7s. 8d. or an average for the five years of 5s. 8.6d. f.o.b. These figures were quoted by Mr. Hughes just prior to his departure for England, and I take it that they are correct. What is the position this year? We are anticipating to return to the farmers 7s. 8d. a bushel, but that is based on the price for 25,000,000 bushels of wheat which has yet to be sold. Is it possible that the board can maintain the average price of 9s. a bushel when they are selling at the present time to millers for local consumption at 9s. and for flour for shipment to South Africa, East Pacific Islands, and New Zealand for September and November at 6s. 9d.? There have been three reductions of 3d. a bushel for wheat for flour to be shipped overseas. Is it fair that this price of 9s. should be continued?

Mr. Latham: We do not want it to continue.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If I believed what the hon. member believes, that there should be no control whatever, I should oppose every clause of the Bill. The hon. member dare not do it. He believes in trade being free from control, and yet he votes for control under this Bill.

Mr. Latham: Only for this year.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Let us see if he will vote on the third reading of the Bill according to his principles. In Chicago, during the months of June and July of this year, deliveries of wheat were quoted at 5s. 7d. a bushel, and for September delivery at 5s. 2½d.

Mr. A. Thomson: What about the difference in exchange?

[Mr. Angelo took the Chair.]

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Perhaps the hon. member is of the same opinion as a member of the farmers' party in the House of Representatives, who said that the parity price of wheat in Australia should be the cost of sending it to London and bringing it back again.

Mr. A. Thomson: I do not say that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If Messrs. Monger and Company told the hon. member to vote for that, he would do so. I find from the "Primary Producer" of the 30th September last a lengthy reference to the visit to Wagin of Agent Johnson. I do not know if he is a relation of the member for Williams-Narrogin, but he pitches as good a tale as the hon. member. This agent of the farmers' party said that the Land Act Amendment Act meant £215,000 reduction in land values throughout the State, that during the Fremantle strike the Railway Department had claimed demurrage on the wool in course of transit, but that their president (Mr. A. J. Monger) had pointed out that they could not charge this sum, thus saving the growers £4,000. Mr. Johnson also said that the reduction on poison lands had saved the farmers a stupendous

amount; that the water charges along the Coolgardie line had been reduced from 6s. per 1,000 gallons to 2s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons, thus enabling the farmers to keep stock. The article in question was headed, "What P.A.A. branches are doing," "Organiser Johnson visits Wagin." When a representative of this organisation goes about the country belittling the Government in the way I have shown, and indicating that the Government have to do what they are told, it is time someone took serious action. It is even time that members of the Chamber amalgamated and stood behind the Government, and told that party to go to hell. That is the proper place for them. More time is occupied by this Chamber on the wheat question than upon anything else. There are members opposite who represent almost all branches of primary production, and yet their sole interests appear to be applied to the wheat question. If wheat can be grown and sold in the United States for 5s. 2½d., the same thing can be done here. There are also members opposite who do not grow any wheat at all, and yet they are opposed to a fair proposition that fixes the maximum at 7s. In reality, 6s. would be enough. I am doubtful whether it is right to impose a minimum price for wheat, because that will become the price upon which the Government will give their guarantee.

The Minister for Mines: Why do you want to fix the maximum at 7s.?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Almost throughout the year we have been paying a higher rate than the London parity; fully 1s. 6d. per bushel more.

The Minister for Mines: If you are satisfied with 6s. a bushel why do you want to fix the maximum at 7s., based on the London parity? You have nothing to fear by leaving the position as it is set forth in the Bill.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We have had our experience in the past to guide us. The Bill passed last year said the price was to be fixed on the London parity, but it has been higher than that. What we want to do is to prevent similar action from being taken again. We want to see that the price does not exceed 7s., upon which the Government would guarantee about 3s. 10d.

Mr. Latham: We are satisfied.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Then the hon. member is satisfied with the amendment.

Mr. Latham: I do not say that it is necessary. The price of wheat will not reach 7s.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If possible, we are going to prevent the wheat board from placing a value upon wheat above the London parity.

Mr. Latham: I hope we shall get the 7s.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I shall vote for the amendment.

Mr. PICKERING: I come from an electorate which, unfortunately, is not troubled by maximum prices, but is concerned with minimum prices.

Hon. P. Collier: What do you grow in the South-West?

Mr. PICKERING: On every occasion when I have spoken the Leader of the Opposition has cast cheap sneers, endeavouring to belittle my knowledge of farming. I have had 15 or 16 years' practical farming experience in this State.

Hon. P. Collier: I have never denied it.

Mr. PICKERING: I resent the imputations which the Leader of the Opposition is constantly casting on me.

Hon. P. Collier: I have never done anything of the kind.

Mr. PICKERING: The interest of the Opposition in a maximum price for the farmer's wheat is something deserving of notice. When butter was being sold at prices ranging nearly to 3s. per lb., there was a howl from the Opposition; but to-day, when butter is down to 1s. 3d. per lb.—

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: How much?

Mr. PICKERING: One shilling and threepence.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We have to pay 2s. for it.

Mr. PICKERING: When the price of butter is down to 1s. 3d., one hears no cry from the Opposition for the regulation of the price. I heard no clamour from the Opposition that assistance should be granted to the potato grower when, last year, potatoes were down to £3 per ton—a price which did not pay for the digging. When fruit was down to starvation prices during the war, there was no agitation from the Opposition for fixing the price of fruit.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Your association should have seen to that.

Mr. PICKERING: The truth hurts hon. members opposite. I do not trust the arguments of the Opposition in support of this amendment. The price of wheat may fall below 3s. 6d., and then the farmer will have to bear the loss.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No fear; the State.

Mr. PICKERING: We hear nothing in this Chamber about the iniquitous sugar steal.

Hon. P. Collier: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member has been discussing fruit and potatoes, and now he is on the question of sugar; and I submit that those matters have nothing whatever to do with the question of the price of wheat.

The CHAIRMAN: I will ask the member for Sussex to confine his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. PICKERING: The question is whether we shall fix a maximum price and a minimum price for wheat for local consumption. The amendment of the Leader of the Opposition originally referred to a maximum price not exceeding 7s., and a minimum price of not less than 5s. per bushel. For some reason which he has not stated, the hon. gentleman has cut out the minimum. I am trying to show the inconsistency of the Opposition, who do not care

what the community has to pay for sugar, or how the jam industry is ruined by the high price of sugar.

The CHAIRMAN This Parliament has no control over sugar.

[Mr. Stubbs resumed the Chair.]

Mr. PICKERING: The question of the influence of protection has been largely dealt with by other members, and perhaps I may refer to it. We know the effects of the iniquitous imposts which this country has to bear owing to the excessive tariff we struggle against.

Hon. P. Collier: I rise to a point of order. I submit that in this Chamber we have no power to deal with matters of the tariff, which are solely within the province of the Commonwealth Parliament.

The CHAIRMAN: I support the point of order, and I ask the member for Sussex to confine his remarks to the subject before the Chair.

Mr. PICKERING: During the previous part of the debate considerable reference was made to the bearing of the tariff on this question.

Hon. T. Walker: I submit that the hon. member is disputing your ruling, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Sussex will kindly confine himself to the amendment.

Mr. PICKERING: It is obvious that the member for Kanowna does not want me to express my views on the tariff.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the member for Sussex be so kind as to obey the Chair? I have asked him to confine himself to the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. PICKERING: One of the phases dealt with at considerable length by the member for Leederville was the cost of wheat to the poultry farmer. In my opinion, the success of poultry farming is not so largely dependent upon the price of wheat as that hon. member desired to convey. Quite irrespective of the price of wheat, there have been more failures in connection with poultry farming than in connection with any other phase of farming in this State, failures due to ignorance of, and lack of attention to, the poultry farmer's business. If poultry farmers liked to grow Indian corn, sunflowers, and so forth, they could largely supply the feed their stock require. One can understand the attitude of the member for North Perth in desiring to have the price of wheat for local consumption fixed at 7s.

Hon. P. Collier: The member for North Perth did not speak.

Mr. PICKERING: No; but he made several interjections. He encourages pig clubs, and I suppose he is anxious that the pigs of the club members should be fed cheaply at the expense of the farmers. When eggs were at a price of 4s. per dozen, I never heard any suggestion from the poultry

farmers that the price of eggs should be regulated. I trust the Committee will not allow themselves to be misled by the "mis-representatives" of the poultry farming industry.

The CHAIRMAN: Let us confine ourselves to the question before the Chair.

Mr. PICKERING: I oppose the amendment because I have no faith in the motives underlying it. I am not prepared to trust people who, while they are ready to fix a maximum, are not ready to fix a minimum, for the needy farmers of the South-West. Since 1914 the wheatgrowers have had a good spell; but, as sure as night follows day, droughts will come again in Australia. Our farmers want all the advantage they can get in good times to tide them over the inevitable times of difficulty. Not a single farmer wants to be placed again in such a position that he can be charged with receiving charity from the State through the I.A.B.—charity of which he had to pay back every penny, with interest added.

Mr. Johnston: Seven per cent. interest.

Mr. PICKERING: We have heard very much about what the State has done for the farmers. They do not want to be placed in the position of having to come to the Government again. They want to have the opportunity during the years of good prices and good seasons to place themselves in such a position that they will be independent of State assistance in the future.

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

Ayes	..	..	26
Noes	..	..	10
Majority for	..	..	16

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Carter	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munzie
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Collier	Mr. Simons
Mr. Corboy	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Davies	Mr. Troy
Mr. Gibson	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Heron	Mr. Walker
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Mann	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Marshall	Mr. O'Loughlen

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. H. K. Maley
Mr. Broun	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Durack	Mr. Pickering
Mr. George	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Latham	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. C. C. Maley	Mr. Denton

(Teller.)

Pair:

Aye, Mr. Boyland; No, Mr. Harrison.

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Clause 13 provides that "for the purposes of this section, the Minister may make a condition of the sale of wheat to millers, for gristing that such products as may be sold for consumption in the State, shall be sold at prices approved by him." Subclause 2 deals with the same question, and refers to the fixation of the price charged for bread and the products of wheat on sales for local consumption in the State. Therein it is set out that the Minister may fix the price. I am not sure whether the House should not replace the "may" by the mandatory "shall."

The Premier: The clause gives us the right to interfere.

Hon. P. COLLIER: So long as the millers and others are dealing fairly with the general public regarding the sale of flour and the products of wheat, the Government will not consider it their duty to interfere. If the millers adopt a profiteering attitude and take advantage of the position to charge a high price for flour and the products of wheat, it will be time for the Government to step in.

The Premier: That is the position.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The only question which arises in the event of the House allowing "may" to remain in the clause, is: Shall we trust the Government to do the right thing.

Mr. Underwood: That is not altogether the position.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is really the position. The question is whether we would be justified at this stage in trusting the Government so far as the price of wheat is concerned. As to the members of the Government themselves, I would be quite willing to leave it at that, but we must not overlook those who are sitting behind the Government.

Mr. McCallum: The unseen hand again.

The Minister for Mines: I think the Leader of the Opposition is afraid of a change in the Government.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The only thing that will bring about a change will be the attitude of the Government in relation to the representatives of the farmers sitting behind them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If they don't tone down that party, there will be a change.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There may be the necessity to protect the public against the profiteer. It will be admitted it would be an easy matter for those dealing in flour and the by-products of wheat, unless the Government take a firm stand, to put up the prices, because it is generally understood that the Prices Regulation Act will not be renewed this year, in which case the millers bakers, and everyone else concerned, will have a free hand.

The Minister for Mines: This clause gives us the power to step in under such circumstances.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. I do not feel disposed to move an amendment to substitute "shall" for "may," because I

think at such a time discretionary power should be left in the hands of the Government. I should like an assurance from the Government that no profiteering will be allowed in the direction I have indicated.

The Premier: You can have that assurance.

Clauses, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 14 to 17—agreed to.

Schedule:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

• That in line 2 of paragraph 3 the words "except with the written consent of the Minister" be struck out.

This provision was not included in the last agreement. I do not know why it is put in. The Westralian Farmers Ltd. have a monopoly in the handling of wheat, and if we agree to the inclusion of the words, they will to a large extent have a monopoly in the sale of wheat.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The inference to be drawn from the remarks of the hon. member is that it is incomprehensible how these words have crept into the Bill. Hon. members will remember a leading article appearing in the "West Australian" of the 19th September, in the course of which, referring to the Wheat Marketing Bill, it was stated—

In another detail the Bill will be amended. No one seems to know how the provision in the third clause of the proposed agreement with the Westralian Farmers Ltd., giving them the right, with the written permission of the Minister for Agriculture, to deal in wheat on their own account, crept into the schedule. Its presence, after being commented upon in these columns, excited quick protests from commercial men; and the Leader of the Opposition on Thursday announced that he would in Committee endeavour to have the obnoxious principle eliminated. Mr. Collier will not encounter much difficulty in effecting his purpose. It is regrettable that the measure should be marred by a defect of this kind, which concentrates attention upon certain activities of the Farmers Co-operative Society, and gives a handle to those who contend that it is a mischievous influence in politics. Then the Bill is improved by affording protection to the local consumer, and by depriving the agents of a right to traffic in wheat, all the troubles of marketing will not vanish. Indeed, they will then commence.

Any stick is good enough with which to beat a dog so far as the "West Australian" is concerned regarding certain Ministers in Cabinet. No inference has been too cheap to draw. The inference here is that influence has been brought to bear upon me as Minister for Agriculture to include something at the last moment which should not have been placed in the Bill. This same provision has existed ever since a Wheat Marketing Bill

has been brought before this House. This Chamber passed similar legislation last year.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Where is it?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I will give the hon. member the whole of the facts. In the 1917-18 Bill the Westralian Farmers, as agents, undertook and agreed during the continuance of the agency, not to buy, sell, trade in, hold, store or otherwise deal with any wheat (except seed wheat, poultry and pig wheat, provided the handlings of such wheat were in accordance with the Wheat Marketing Act, 1916), on their own account or on behalf of any other person except the Government, without the authority of the Minister first obtained. In the 1918-19 and 1919-20 pools the Westralian Farmers Ltd. were the sole acquiring agents, and the same undertaking was given. In the 1920-21 pool the Westralian Farmers were the sole acquiring agents, and Clause 3 of the Bill provided that they should not sell, trade or deal in wheat without the authority of the Minister first obtained. In another place the words "without the authority of the Minister first obtained" were struck out. In this schedule the words have been included solely with a view to the distribution of seed wheat. During the last 12 months we have distributed a large quantity of seed wheat through the Agricultural Department and the Agricultural Bank, and we wish to encourage the maintenance of proper standards of seed wheat. On that score alone will permission be given to the Westralian Farmers Ltd. to deal in wheat of any description. That is the sole purpose of the provision.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Nobody respects the Minister more than do I, but he requires to see to his own protection. I know how Mr. Baxter, the late Minister, was treated when he had to fight the Westralian Farmers Ltd. on any point. It was hell on earth for him. Whenever the Minister comes into conflict with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. his life will not be worth living. In his own interests, the provision should come out. He will have every member of the Country Party on to him.

Mr. Latham: Rats!

The Minister for Mines: That is pure assumption on your part. Personally I do not care a tuppenny dump for the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They are lowering the dignity of the Ministers of the Crown in going about the country making the statements they are indulging in.

Mr. Piesse: What are the statements?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have previously quoted the "Primary Producer."

Hon. P. Collier: They said they would make Ministers do what they wanted done.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I know of pressure having been brought to bear on Ministers. When Mr. Baxter came into conflict with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. his life was made unbearable, and eventually he was kicked out of the Government. In the interests of the Minister himself, these words should come

out. Backed up as they are by a political organisation, the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are a monopolistic trading concern endeavouring to crush everybody else. If the thing be left to the Minister, his position will be most unenviable. Even now it is anything but rosy, for if he sells wheat too cheaply there will be a row, and if he does not sell it at all still there will be a row. It is our duty to protect the Minister. I have not read the newspaper article quoted by the Minister to-night. My sole reason for moving the amendment is the protection of the Minister.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Did the knocking out last year of this permissive power proposed to be given to the Minister occasion any inconvenience in the administration of the pool? If not I should say, for the reasons given by the member for North-East Fremantle, the provision is better out, in order that the Minister might be relieved of any pressure likely to be brought to bear upon him.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The distribution of seed wheat through the Agricultural Department and the Agricultural Bank last year was not as satisfactory as it might have been, and we decided to improve it this year by utilising the organisation of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. Personally, having voiced my protest, I am prepared to leave it to the judgment of the Committee. We have at Fremantle a large reconditioning plant to dispose of which is particularly suitable to the contemplated work, and for which the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are prospective buyers conditionally on our endeavouring to promote the seed wheat distribution. It is on this ground and on this ground alone that permission will be granted to the Westralian Farmers Ltd. I can see no harm whatever in retaining the words and I apprehend no persecution from the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Mr. Maun: Limit it to seed wheat.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Very well, I will give an undertaking that it will be limited to seed wheat.

Mr. Lambert: Hit it out.

The Minister for Mines: The Minister has given an undertaking that it will be limited as requested.

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

Ayes	..	..	16
Noes	..	..	23
Majority against			7

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munzie
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. Simons
Mr. Collier	Mr. Troy
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Walker
Mr. Heron	Mr. Willenck
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Marshall	Mr. O'Loghlen

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. H. K. Maley
Mr. Broun	Mr. Mann
Mr. Carter	Sir James Mitchell
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Davies	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Denton	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Durack	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Gibson	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Latham	Mr. Mullany
Mr. C. C. Maley	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. McCALLUM: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to paragraph 4:—"The agent undertakes and agrees with the Minister that all wages paid for work done by its employees, or by the employees of any sub-agent or of any contractor under the agent or any sub-agent relating to this agency, shall be at the ruling rate of wages for the same kind of work in the district in which the work is performed. The agent shall be responsible for the payment of all wages due to the employees of its sub-agents and of contractors under the agent and its sub-agents earned in work relating to this agency; and in default of payment the Minister may pay any such wages and recover the amount so paid by him from the agent as money paid for the agent at its request."

I hope that, after the protestations from members on the other side of the House that they favour paying the ruling rate and doing a fair thing by the employee, my proposal to attain this object will be accepted.

The Minister for Mines: It is an oversight that it was not included.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have spoken to the acquiring agents and they have no objection to the amendment, although it may appear to some of us to be a matter for the Arbitration Court.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

That in paragraph 19 the words "one-eighth of a penny" be struck out and "one farthing" be inserted in lieu.

In most of the agreements each agent has had to put up a security of £20,000. In 1919 this was altered to £10,000, when the Westralian Farmers Ltd. came in. In the 1919 agreement the limitation of liability was one farthing per bushel which about equalised the £10,000 security. What is the use of making the security £10,000 when the farthing is turned into an eighth of a penny, equal to only about £5,000?

The Colonial Secretary: One-eighth of a penny on 12 million bushels would be £6,200.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The limitation of liability to one-eighth of a penny is very low.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I see no necessity for the amendment. There is not the element of doubt in regard to the liability for damage and out-turn that there was in the initial stages of the pool. The rate and the bond proposed constitute a fair basis, when one considers the rapid and efficient manner in which our wheat has been handled in the past.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Paragraphs 18 and 19 are contradictory. The former provides for a bond of £10,000, and the latter for a liability of one-eighth of a penny per bushel, which is equal to only about £5,000.

The Minister for Mines: That is not unusual.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Anything may happen next year which did not happen last year, and a serious loss may ensue.

Mr. A. Thomson: It was one-eighth of a penny last year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think it should be a farthing this year.

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

Ayes	18
Noes	21

Majority against .. 3

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Carter	Mr. Munzie
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Simons
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. Troy
Mr. Collier	Mr. Walker
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Gibson	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Heron	Mr. O'Loghlen
Mr. Lambert	(Teller.)
Mr. Marshall	

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Mann
Mr. Broun	Sir James Mitchell
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Davies	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Denton	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Durack	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Johnston	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. Latham	Mr. Underwood
Mr. C. C. Maley	Mr. Mullany
Mr. H. K. Maley	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Schedule, as previously amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—
PRESENTATION.

Mr. SPEAKER [11.4]: I have to inform hon. members that I presented the Address—

in-reply to His Excellency the Governor, and that I have received the following reply from His Excellency:—

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly: I thank you for your Address-in-reply to my Speech with which I opened Parliament, and for your expressions of loyalty to Our Most Gracious Sovereign. Signed, F. A. Newdegate, Governor.

House adjourned at 11.6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 5th October, 1921.

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

PRIVILEGE—GRATUITY BONDS, DISPOSALS.

Special Report of Select Committee.

Mr. WILSON (Collie) [4.30]: On a matter of privilege, I wish to bring up a special report of the select committee appointed to inquire into transactions relating to war gratuity bonds.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may proceed.

Mr. WILSON: The special report of the committee is as follows:—

We have the honour to report that, in obedience to a resolution of this House passed 21st September last, we commenced, as a select committee of the House, an investigation of the methods adopted by financial agents and others regarding profiteering in the buying of war gratuity bonds from returned soldiers of the A.I.F.,

and other matters contained in the said resolution. We summoned Mr. R. G. Friel, Commonwealth Sub-Treasurer, to give evidence at 11 o'clock this morning, and to produce certain papers and documents. Your committee had taken the precaution, as far back as Thursday last, 29th September, to wire the Prime Minister requesting him to give Mr. Friel the necessary permission to supply the committee with the required information, but regret to say no answer to that wire has been received. Mr. Friel attended this morning, and informed the committee that he had wired the Commonwealth Treasurer the day following the appointment of this committee, and inquired as to his position. He was instructed to take no action pending further advice. He had since sent further wires to which no replies had been received, and in view of his instructions he declined to give evidence, or produce any papers or documents. Your committee are of opinion that the evidence of Mr. Friel is essential to their work, and in accordance with Section 7 of the Parliamentary Privileges Act, 54 Victoria, No 4, report the matter to the House and recommend that action be taken in accordance with that section.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [4.32]: I move—

That Mr. R. G. Friel, Commonwealth Sub-Treasurer in Western Australia, be ordered to give the evidence and produce the documents required by the committee in the terms of the summons at such time and place as the committee may desire.

Question put and passed.

Mr. WILSON: I move—

That the Premier be requested to telegraph the foregoing resolution to the Prime Minister.

Question put and passed.

QUESTION—CATTLE IMPORTATIONS, EMBARGO.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is the embargo against the importation of cattle from South Australia still in force? 2, Is he aware that the cattle that are being imported come from a locality hundreds of miles from where pleuro was discovered? 3, Is it a fact that only eight train-loads of stock have come from South Australia, while eighteen train-loads went from Western Australia during the past twelve months? 4, Are the cattle now held at Kalgoorlie clean? 5, In the interests of consumers, does he intend to lift the embargo?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, Yes, 2, No. 3, No. The correct figures are 20 inward and four outward. 4, All these cattle have now been slaughtered. 5, Yes, when it is considered safe to do so.