

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 28th October, 1919.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE, DROVING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

On motion by Hon. Sir E. H. WIT-
TENOOM, the time for bringing up the re-
port was extended to the 11th November.

SELECT COMMITTEE, FRUIT CASES BILL.

On motion by Hon. A. SANDERSON, the
time for bringing up the report was extended
to the 4th November.

QUESTION—SOLDIER SETTLEMENT, PASTORAL COUNTRY.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY asked the Minister
for Education: 1, Is it a fact that Mr. F.
Pearce has held for a number of years con-
siderably over 100,000 acres of pastoral
country near Mt. Kenneth, south of Mt.
Magnet, which is not stocked as required by
the conditions applicable to the lease? 2,
Is it a fact that pastoral land is unobtain-
able in the neighbourhood for returned sol-
diers? 3, If so, will the Government take
the necessary steps to forfeit the lease
granted to Mr. Pearce, and throw the land
open for returned soldiers?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION re-
plied: 1, No. 2, Yes. 3, Answered by No.
1.

QUESTION—NATIVE RESERVE, MOGUMBER.

Hon. J. MILLS asked the Minister for
Education: 1, What number of full-blooded
natives are there on the native reserve near
Mogumber? 2, What number of half-castes?
3, How many Government employees are en-
gaged on the reserve? 4, What is the total
cost of maintenance of the institution for
the year ended 30th June, 1919? 5, What is
the total cost of buildings and other im-
provements to 30th June, 1919?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION re-
plied: 1, 51. 2, 83 deemed to be aboriginals
within the meaning of Section 3 of "The

Aborigines Act, 1905." 3, Four, normal
staff five. 4, £1,841; includes salaries and
wages, rations and killing sheep, travelling
freight, stock, farm implements, and fodder.
5, £1,976; including wages for skilled labour.

QUESTION—RAILWAY ACCOMMODA- TION, DISABLED SOLDIERS.

Hon. A. H. PANTON asked the Minister
for Education: 1, Are the Government
aware that disabled soldiers visiting the
Base Hospital, Fremantle, suffer consider-
able pain and inconvenience through over-
crowding in second class carriages? 2, That
the soldiers are being prevented by the in-
spectors from travelling first class? 3, Will
the Government provide either (a) first class
tickets, or (b) reserve a second class com-
partment for disabled soldiers?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION re-
plied: 1, No. No complaints have been re-
ceived from soldiers from such a cause. 2,
Yes, when there is sufficient second class
accommodation available. 3, (a) See reply
(b). (b) Yes, second class accommodation
will be reserved when necessary for soldiers
attending base hospital on receipt of advice
when so travelling.

BILL—DOG ACT AMENDMENT.

Substituted Bill.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. C.
F. Baxter—East) [4.36]: As there appears
to be some doubt about this House passing
Clauses 5 and 14 of the Bill as introduced,
which clauses refer to fees to be charged
for the registration of dogs, I desire to
withdraw the present Bill and to substitute
for it another Bill in which those clauses
are printed in italics. To deliver another
second reading speech would be tedious, and
I crave the indulgence of hon. members in
the matter. I move—

That the Bill now before the House be
withdrawn, and that leave be given to
substitute therefor another Bill.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Sub-
urban) [4.37]: It seems to me that the
Honorary Minister's new Bill has been
drawn in the same slipshod fashion as the
Bill first introduced.

The PRESIDENT: It is not usual to de-
bate a question of this kind. The hon. gen-
tleman will have an opportunity of making
what remarks he wishes to make on the Bill,
at a later stage. If he objects to the with-
drawal of the Bill, of course the measure
cannot be withdrawn. If one member dis-
sents, it prevents the leave of the House
from being given. Do I understand that the
hon. member wishes to dissent from the
withdrawal of the measure?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I do not feel dis-
posed to have the new Bill brought in.

The PRESIDENT: I cannot allow the
hon. member to debate the question of with-
drawal, which must be put without debate.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [4.38]: I object to the withdrawal of the Bill, for the reason that another Bill dealing with the same subject cannot, under our Standing Orders, be introduced in the same session.

The PRESIDENT: There is no difficulty in that respect.

Question put and passed.

The PRESIDENT: If the Honorary Minister has the Bill to be substituted ready, the Bill will go on in Committee as if it had never been withdrawn.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The new Bill will now be distributed.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 15th October; Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair, the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 3 (partly considered):

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 5:

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I hope the Committee will not agree to this clause, which seems to have been introduced without proper consideration. The principal Act provides that a person may have a dog in his possession for 21 days without giving notice to the local authority for registration purposes. Under this clause, the 21 days will be cut out entirely, and no time whatever will be allowed between the receipt of a dog and the giving of notice to the local authorities. Suppose a dog is imported from the Eastern States, arriving on a Sunday morning, when notice cannot be given to the local authority. If an officer of the local authority on the Sunday afternoon found that dog on the premises of the person who received it, that person would be liable to prosecution.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: But Sunday is a dies non.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Suppose the dog arrived by steamer on a Saturday afternoon, the position would be the same. The whole Bill is likely to cause annoyance, and this especially applies to Clause 3.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I see no hardship whatever in the clause. The danger lies in the opposite direction to that suggested by Mr. Duffell. In order to establish that a dog ought to have been registered, the local authority would have to prove that the animal had been in the defendant's possession for a period of 21 days. An inspector may go to a person's house on one day and see a dog, and in 21 days may go again, when the dog may have disappeared. Power is given to keep a dog for 21 days without registration. That has made the law unworkable, and it is the reason for existing the provision regarding the 21 days. Local governing bodies do not deal harshly with these matters. The provision here is designed to get at those persons who are inclined to evade the registration of their dogs.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I suggest that progress be reported so that we may see what changes have been made in this Bill.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Clause 5 of the original Act says, "Any person who shall keep a dog for a period exceeding 21 days without causing such dog to be registered." That is the section the Honorary Minister is now going to amend by these words, "Section 5 of the principal Act is hereby amended by the excision of the words 'a period of 21 days.'"

The HONORARY MINISTER: There has been no alteration in the Bill outside of the date of registration.

The CHAIRMAN: I would draw the Honorary Minister's attention to the fact that in the principal Act the words are "a period exceeding 21 days," whereas in the Bill now before the Committee the words to be excised are "a period of 21 days."

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move an amendment—

That the word "of" be struck out and "exceeding" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I do not know that the amendment is a satisfactory one if it does away with the 21 days. It would be more difficult at the end of that period to find out whether a dog was registered or not, and difficult to say when the period of 21 days commenced. I see no objection to the amendment so far as it relates to the country.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Section 5 of the principal Act has worked satisfactorily up to the present. The penalty provided states that any person failing to register shall be subject to a penalty not exceeding 40s. and not less than 10s. These penalties should be quite sufficient.

Clause as amended put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	14
Noes	9

Majority for	5
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AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. Carson	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. C. McKenzie	Hon. J. J. Holmes

(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. R. J. Lynn	Hon. J. Cunningham
Hon. H. Millington	(Teller.)

Clause as amended thus passed.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I would draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that

the clause which we have just passed does not give effect to what is necessary.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot discuss that question now, but may do so if the Bill is recommitted.

Clauses 4 to 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Insertion of section after Section 17:

Hon. J. DUFFELL: In my opinion the metropolitan areas, the goldfields, and Albany should be exempt from the operation of this clause. In the metropolitan area there are many toy dogs and miniature pomeranian dogs that are kept by various people. The charm of the pomeranian is the frill around its neck. If the owner is compelled to put a collar with a disc upon the dog's neck, it will spoil its beauty. Special arrangements are made for leading such dogs into a show ring, which do not interfere with the frill I have described. I move an amendment—

That this clause shall not apply to the metropolitan area, the goldfields, or to Albany.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment does not appear to me to be quite in order.

Hon. H. CARSON: The object the hon. member has in view might be achieved if he were to exempt the miniature dogs, to which he has already referred.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment. It is more important that collars should be worn in the areas mentioned in the amendment than elsewhere and the authorities should have the power to see that the dogs are registered.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: If the principle of the clause is of any importance, it will be impossible to accept the amendment. We might get over the difficulty by accepting the suggestion made by Mr. Carson.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I realise that my amendment does not meet with the approval of the Committee and I will, therefore, ask leave to withdraw it so as to substitute another.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I move an amendment—

That the following proviso be added to the clause:—"Provided that miniature pomeranians, black and tan terriers and poodles shall be exempt from this clause."

Hon. members know what toy pomeranians are like and also that the English terrier dog does not weigh more than 3lbs. The poodle is a well known white curly dog. The suggestion emanates from the Australian Kennel Club, which is affiliated with the English Kennel Club, and their recommendation is worthy of some consideration.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I admit there is some necessity for the exemption in the direction indicated by the hon. member,

but I would like to know how far we are going. How are we to define a black and tan terrier, for instance?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It is not how we are going to define these dogs; it will be how the officers or the police magistrate will define them. All this will add to the cost and will help to bring the measure into ridicule. Personally, I am satisfied with the Bill as it stands.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: I would like to ask my colleague, representing as he does a democratic province, why this invidious distinction between high-class dogs? Why should an English black and tan terrier be exempt from wearing a collar while my Australian silky terrier should have to wear one? I am entirely opposed to the innovation. The owners of dogs should cut their coats according to their cloth, and if a collar interferes with the frills around the dog's neck, well, let them design a collar which will be suitable.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE: I am passionately fond of dogs, but the hon. member apparently does not represent people who own stock. The owners of sheep and cattle also own dogs which are indispensable, and why should they be compelled to pay a license for keeping these valuable animals while owners of the toy dogs should go free? One is an absolute necessity and the other is just a matter of sentiment.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I am opposed to the amendment, for the reason given by Mr. Clarke. Why is it necessary to have any collar or disc at all for a dog? Why not make the penalty for keeping an unregistered dog very much heavier than it is and do away with the collar and disc. I was the owner of a prize cocker spaniel in Perth for over two years. The dog was registered and he wore a collar and disc. The collar and disc, however, were stolen. Last year we registered the dog and did not put on a collar and disc and the dog was stolen. I think, however, we might impose a heavy penalty and do away with the collar and disc.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I am a keeper of miniature pomeranian dogs and I would rather dispose of them than be compelled to put a collar and disc around their necks. It would detract from their beauty.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I oppose the amendment. I have a weakness for the utility dog but, if any vote of mine could eradicate the kind of animal to which Mr. Duffell referred, I would give it. We have exhibitions of the beauty of these dogs in trams and railway trains. I had a like experience to Mr. Dodd. I had a useful dog that was neither beautiful nor picturesque; only in my case someone stole the disc and left me with the dog.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 9, 10—agreed to.

Clause 11—Amendment of Section 31:

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Section 31 places the onus of proof of registration on the owner. I agree with an extension of the period of age from three months to six months, but the period of 21 days' ownership should be retained. People should be given a reasonable time after purchasing a dog to notify the local authorities and register it. In some parts of the country people have to travel long distances to reach the local authority.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The 21 days period is rather long. I intend to move for the recommittal of Clause 3 with a view to making the period seven days, and, if that is adopted, this clause must be brought into conformity with it. I move an amendment—

That in line 4 the words "twenty-one" be struck out with a view to inserting "seven."

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest that the clause be passed in its present form and recommitted for further consideration, as the amendment indicated by the Hon. Mr. Nicholson will necessitate an alteration to other words.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I am prepared to adopt that course.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Committee do not propose to give any time in which to register a dog, and anyone owning a dog without a disc is liable. Unless we take up this attitude we shall never catch the dog owner who evades registration.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The period of 21 days has been found to give opportunities to owners to evade registration. People, honest in their intentions to register their dogs, would not suffer under the clause, but the seven days suggested by Mr. Nicholson would provide opportunities for evasion just as the 21 days period has done. The onus of proof of registration should be on the owner.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE: It appears to me that under the provision the honest dealer will see that the dogs are registered. The purchaser who purchases a dog without a disc should be penalised; otherwise it is putting a premium on the letting of the registration go until the dog can be disposed of. When a man buys a dog he should be required to buy the collar with it.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: I am in favour of the provision in the Bill. It will make the way of the dog stealer a good deal harder; because as soon as he steals a dog he will get rid of the disc, and will then be in possession of an unregistered dog.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I am in favour of a shorter time being allowed. It is a question of administration. Why should a person who has a dog be allowed 21 days? Alternatively, why not allow a man with a buggy or a motor car 21 days in which to license it? After, say, 15 days the dog can be handed to somebody else, when it becomes impossible for the local authorities to trace it. I do not believe

any inspectors will worry owners by taking extreme steps.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 12, 13 and 15—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill reported with amendments.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

(1) Prices Regulation.

(2) Road Districts.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 23rd October; Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Extension of Acts to wheat harvested in 1919-20:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We ought to thank the Minister for having consented to report progress on Thursday and so enabled us to have a clear understanding as to the position of affairs. We are entitled to hear from the Minister an exposition of the attitude the Government take up. Without that I should be prepared to move an amendment providing that the Act shall apply to the harvest of 1919-20 "and no longer." The country is entitled to demand the policy of the Government in regard to the wheat pool, and this is the only clause on which we can discuss it. It was in 1916 that we were first faced with this problem, and if I read a brief extract from "Hansard" it is really to save the time of the Committee. I then took up an attitude which I still consider right. This was a war time measure. Conditions have entirely changed, but the protest which I made then is the protest which I make today. Speaking on 30th November, 1916, I said—

If this question of dealing with the wheat crop of Australia is to be regarded as it should be, and if this Bill can be regarded as a war measure, I think it is very much to be regretted that the whole thing, from start to finish, was not handed over to the Federal Government. If, on the other hand, this is a question of the protection of our farmers, apart altogether from the war, then I say that the trouble created by the procedure is not finished yet, and threatens to lead the country into still further trouble. The Bill is most objectionable to me. It violates every principle that I hold of value in the conduct of public affairs. It is an extravagant Bill, and the liabilities laid on the

shoulders of this country under it are very heavy, and threaten to become more severe than they are even at present. It is a repudiation of contracts. I do not propose dealing so much with that aspect, because I recognise at once the difficulty it places us in. I want to be fair in any criticism I have to offer upon this Bill, but when I come to the question of the procedure which has been adopted, I must be most emphatic in my objection.

The Minister will probably reply to me that the Government cannot definitely decide off hand what is the best thing to be done. But I think "they can give us and the farmers a very clear statement to the effect that the wheat pool in Western Australia shall not continue one month longer than is absolutely necessary. If, on the other hand, the Minister does not give us a satisfactory reply, I will move the "no longer" amendment, in order that we may have some control over this huge liability hanging on our shoulders.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The words "and no longer," which Mr. Sanderson suggests should be added, would be meaningless. The Government will have no authority to handle the 1919-20 harvest until that authority is granted to them by Parliament. But the Government must retain control of the 1918-19 harvest. My only objection to the proposed addition to the clause is that the words are superfluous.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I agree with Mr. Sanderson. The preamble to the original Wheat Marketing Act of 1916 shows plainly that the measure was of an emergency nature, and that it arose out of war conditions, which are now past. If a measure of this kind is to be continued indefinitely, we must consider ways and means of cheapening bread in this State. From a little compendium of Australian statistics which was handed to me the other day I glean that recently the ruling prices of flour, per 25lb. bag, were—in Sydney 44½d., in Melbourne 42¾d., in Brisbane 48¾d., in Adelaide 42¾d., in Perth 40½d., in Hobart 44½d. The next point is the price of bread, which in Sydney, Brisbane, and Perth alike was 4½d. per loaf, notwithstanding the fact that the cost of flour was higher in the other two capital cities. It is plain, therefore, that the present system of handling Western Australian wheat is not conducive to a low price of bread, and therefore should not be extended.

The CHAIRMAN: Has Mr. Sanderson moved an amendment?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I have not moved an amendment, but I wish to get the opinion of the Committee. Under your direction, Sir, I now move an amendment—

That the words "and no longer" be added to the first paragraph of the clause. I asked for a clear statement of the Government's intentions on an important matter from the Honorary Minister. He replies that the words I propose to add to the clause

are meaningless and superfluous. Is the Committee prepared to strike out the clause? The Government know perfectly well the impossible position they put us in year after year. We have no more power to reject this clause than we have power to reject an appropriation Bill coming down in the last hours of the session. The Westralian Farmers Ltd. have decided that they have secured this agency for the current season, and I think they are perfectly right.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not discuss the agreement.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Even I am hardly prepared to reject the clause as it stands. I am not prepared to interfere in what is an administrative act and not a matter of policy. However, it is an entirely different thing to ask for power in regard to the 1919-20 crop. I want to see the wheat pool knocked on the head at the earliest possible opportunity, though probably, at the time, the pool was the best thing that could be done, and in any case it was forced on us by the Federal Government. Mr. Mitchell in 1916 said specifically, "This scheme is forced on us." The responsibility and the burden placed on the people of this country are that the people have been made to back the bill of the wheat pool. I recognise the difficulty, and I recognise that the Honorary Minister, personally, as a member of the Government, and as the spokesman of the Country party, is qualified to make a pronouncement on this subject. But the answer he gave just now is no answer at all. Either the Government have not had time to consider the subject, or they are so divided in their counsels that they have not been able to come to a conclusion. I contend that the words "and no longer" would be neither superfluous nor meaningless. They would be an indication to the Government and to the farmers, and to anyone else interested in the matter, that at the earliest possible opportunity Western Australia will withdraw from partnership in the wheat pool. What position we hold with regard to the Federal Government in this matter, I am unable to say; but the Minister ought to be able to tell us. It may be that we are so far committed that we cannot get out until 1921. But let us now work out a scheme which will enable us to withdraw in 1921. If the words "and no longer" were inserted, the Government would not dare to come down next year with a clause like this, because we should then be justified in rejecting it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: On the second reading of the Bill I said clearly that the Government had considered the question of the control of wheat, and had come to the conclusion—and it is a sensible conclusion—that they must retain the control until they were reasonably free. If they had decided not to acquire the wheat this year, but to throw the business open to the private agencies again, this position would have been created: the Government would have had a lot of old wheat on their hands, and the merchants would have been in a

position to secure freight which the Government would not have been able to secure, and the merchants would have disposed of their new season's wheat while the old wheat would have been left on the hands of the Government, involving loss not only to our farmers but also to our taxpayers.

Hon. J. Duffell: Wheat would have been at a reasonable price.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Had the wheat been left for purchase by private competition, the probabilities are that it would not have been at a good price.

Hon. J. Duffell: What about the inferior wheat?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Inferior wheat is sold on its milling value. Surely no hon. member objects to that.

Hon. J. Duffell: It is only for feed.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Quite so, but it is based on its milling value. That is the basis on which it is sold for poultry and pigs.

Hon. J. Duffell: Robbery.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The words that Mr. Sanderson proposes to insert will be meaningless. At the end of 1920 the Government may have a large quantity of the coming season's wheat on hand. They have made an advance of 5s. a bushel, and Mr. Sanderson desires that they shall have no power, at the end of 1920, to handle it.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You have to reach that stage sooner or later.

The HONORARY MINISTER: When we are reasonably free of wheat, but not before. If Mr. Sanderson wants to move an amendment of this nature, I would suggest that he moves to insert words something like these, "but shall not apply to the harvest of 1920-21."

Hon. A. Sanderson: Will you accept that?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am only throwing this out as a suggestion. There is no harm in such an amendment but the words would still be superfluous. This Bill gives us power to control the 1919-20 harvest, but we have no power to touch a grain of the 1920-21 harvest.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I do not think we intend to tie ourselves down to what is to happen next year. What we want to know is how long this clause will extend in connection with the wheat we are to deal with for the coming harvest. There can be no harm in inserting the words "no longer." The Honorary Minister says that at the end of 1920 he may have a lot of wheat on hand on which 5s. a bushel has been advanced by the Government. If that is so, let him come to the House with another Bill for us to deal with at that time.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: He can deal with it even if the words "no longer" are inserted. It only applies to the wheat harvested during this period.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: We want to know that this Bill does not deal with anything beyond the coming season's wheat. If anything more is wanted, the

Government must ask Parliament to give it. We could not vote against Clause 3, because of the difficulties that would be created if we did so. How long will the Bill apply?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Honorary Minister has not given us the slightest indication as to what the Government wish, whether they wish the pool to be continued or whether they wish it to lapse. The importance of this is seen from the report on the farmers' convention at Ballarat, published in the "Age" of the 10th July last. At that convention the farmers urged for a continuance of the wheat pool. They wanted the elimination of political control. They want us to back the bill and to get the profit themselves. If the farmers want the pool there is no objection to their having it, but let them finance it themselves. The responsibility, however, has been put on the general community of financing the business under this Bill. We have no clear statement from the Honorary Minister with regard to the original intention of the Government as to whether the Bill is to be continued after 1919-20.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: They may not be in office then.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That does not matter. The Country party will, no doubt, remain in office, and both that party and the Labour party are supporting this. The Honorary Minister, if he will look up what he said in 1916, will see that he expressed the wish that the control of the wheat pool should be in the hands of the Government, irrespective of any section of the community. That is quite right, as we have the whole of the responsibility of the pool on our shoulders as far as the finances are concerned. If the Honorary Minister will not give us a clear statement, we are compelled to draw our own conclusions from the facts, namely, that we have no opportunity of stopping this pool for 1919-20. I am indifferent as to the form of the words used to convey an amendment to this clause, but I do want to stop the Government from continuing this pool a month longer than is necessary, and to give to the country by a division a clear indication as to the opinions of hon. members here. If we go on with the wheat pool, it is evident that the Labour party will come in and have the whole thing nationalised.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The clause is absolutely clear and definite. It extends the power conferred on the Government by the Wheat Marketing Act of 1916, as subsequently amended, to the harvest that is about to be reaped. It does nothing more. It gives the Government no power in regard to any subsequent harvest. The 1916 Act was passed because of the extraordinary circumstances which prevailed all over the world, due to the war, one effect being that no shipping was available for Australia. Without this Act, the wheat of the farmers would have been thrown upon its own level as to price and value,

which would have been nothing. The farming community would have been ruined and the country with it. These conditions, which made the passing of the Act in 1916 necessary, prevail to-day, and it is because of that—not because of any action of the Government in delaying the Bill, but because the conditions which made the 1916 Act necessary still prevail—that this House is not prepared to take the responsibility of rejecting the measure. We are still without shipping, and we will have a large accumulation of wheat in Australia. The Government have come to the conclusion that, in order to protect that wheat, it is necessary that they should take over the coming harvest.

Hon. A. Sanderson: The farmers want it as a permanency.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Now Mr. Sanderson wants an assurance as to what the Government are going to do next year. The Government, however, can give no such assurance because they do not know what the circumstances will be next year, or whether there will be a surplus of wheat in Australia to be protected. If next year there is no congestion of shipping, and we can get our wheat away, and the Government come along to Parliament with a Bill like this, this House can reject it without any injury to anyone, and throw the wheat back upon its own resources. There are many things which will not go back to normal; that is to say, to what they were before the war. One cannot unscramble eggs. The conditions that prevail to-day are such that we must take control of the coming harvest and ask the House to agree to this. According to next year's conditions, the Government's policy will be framed and submitted to Parliament. The addition of the words "no longer" will be meaningless, because the clause means the harvest 1919-20 and does not mean anything more. If it is designed to prevent a future Parliament from extending the operations of this measure to another harvest, the words would be out of order and equally futile, because it is impossible to bind any new Parliament in any way.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Neither of the proposed amendments will carry us any further but we should insist upon some definite stand in connection with the Wheat Marketing Bill before us. It will be remembered that the Bill comes up each year and on each occasion the House says that if it occurs again, drastic action will be taken, but we never get any further. Now is the opportunity to deal with the matter. It is rather a puzzle to me why we single out wheat and ask the general taxpayer to back that industry. This to my mind is brought about by a combination of parties. One party aims at nationalising all industries and another party who came into Par-

liament with one object in view, have declared that their end is to further their own particular industry at all seasons. It is by a combination of two such parties that such a thing is possible. All this shows the strength parties have upon politics. During the whole period that the Government have engaged in keeping up the price of wheat, the self same Government have done all in their power to keep down the price of meat. Why? Because the meat producers have not members behind them. We have a Bill before us now sent to us by another Chamber, the object of which is to keep down the price of commodities, and while that Bill is being put on the Notice Paper, we have another one before us to keep up the price of wheat, flour, and bread. I said last year that next time the Wheat Marketing Bill came before us, I would hold it up, and now I am prepared to carry out that threat. I suggest that we have a round robin, submit it to the Premier and tell him straight away that unless we are treated differently next year, it will be of no use putting another Wheat Marketing Bill before us.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I would like to reply to one or two of the remarks made by the hon. member who has just sat down. He said, "Why is wheat the only industry singled out for this assistance, and why have the Government endeavoured to depress the price of meat?" Does the hon. member realise the difference between a commodity like meat of which there is a short supply and for which the public are paying an extraordinary price because it cannot be brought to them, and a commodity like wheat that would be a drug on the market unless some action were taken by the Government to protect it. The hon. member asks why wheat is singled out and why not protect the pastoralists as well? Because the Imperial and the Federal Governments have made an arrangement with the pastoralists very similar to the existing arrangement in connection with wheat, and that arrangement is as good for the pastoralists as the other is for the farmer. Had there been no arrangement between the Imperial and the Federal Government, the pastoralists would never have got a price for their commodity.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I never mentioned wool.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I know the hon. member asked why wheat only was protected. It is not the only article protected. Did not the Government recently give a guarantee in connection with the pearling industry. Why did they do that? Because it was thought that that industry would be in the same position as wheat, namely, unable to reach its market, and that the purchaser would be at the mercy of anyone who was able to hold it and who could come along then and buy it at any price. What we have to look at is this: Was it a wise proceeding for the Govern-

ment to take charge of wheat and prevent it being thrown upon the market and prevent the farmer accepting a price which would not have helped him to carry on? The action that was taken was not only wise, but it was the only thing that could be done. Is it not a wise thing to do, for the Government to extend the provisions of the Act to the harvest about to be reaped? If we say it is not wise all I can reply to that is that I do not agree with it, and that the majority of the people in the country will not agree with it either. It is imperative in the present circumstances that the provisions of the Act shall be extended to the new harvest. The reason the House cannot take the responsibility of rejecting the measure is not because the Government have brought it down late, but because the circumstances compel the extension of the Act to the harvest about to be reaped. The sole purpose of the clause is to extend the provisions of the Act to the new harvest and the only question we have to decide is whether we shall do it or not.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Minister in charge of the scheme told the House that the old wheat on hand had to be protected. We can protect that by a special Act of Parliament if necessary. The Minister for Education just now drifted off that to the price of wool and what was done in that regard. I would like to put him right on that point by quoting an instance which came under my notice in which certain wool was shipped to London and was sold at 2s. 10½d., while the grower here got 1s. 7½d. The grower at the other end of the world gets every penny that wool fetches, but the grower in Australia owing to the wool pool must accept whatever the Imperial Government like to give. During the war period the Government controlled all freight on the North-West coast and they tried to keep down the price of meat by making a purchase in 1917 which cost the country £50,000. This year they controlled the freight on the North-West coast and there was a strike during the only months in which meat could be shipped, and they had not the courage to make the men go to sea. It was not politic to get the boats to sea and the result was that the meat growers in the North were not able to sell their meat.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I am anxious to see the wheat pool come to an end. I am prepared to withdraw my amendment because I understand another hon. member has an amendment to submit which more than covers the ground. I have no desire to criticise what was done during the war, and I admit this readily, that we cannot at once shut down without any reference to what has gone before. Therefore I am anxious to give the Government every opportunity of treating fairly all the parties interested in this important matter. I withdraw the amendment because it is likely that the amendment it is proposed to move will carry out more effectively what I desire.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The leader of the House attempted to justify the action of the Minister in introducing the Bill on the ground that there was not sufficient shipping to carry away the wheat. His argument is not in keeping with the statement in the Press that all the various lines which did business with the State prior to the war are resuming practically their pre-war schedules. The wheat scheme emanated from the Federal Government. The result of their interference with the sugar industry is well known to us. The price of sugar since they took control and regulated the industry and deported the South Sea islanders is £30 15s. a ton at Fremantle, and recently we were offered refined Java sugar at £4 7s. 6d. a ton. How long are the people of the Commonwealth going to suffer this interference with the legitimate laws of supply and demand? If some limitation were inserted in the Bill, it would show that these industries could not expect to continue to be spoon-fed by the Federal or State Government to the detriment of a majority of the people of the State. The people of Western Australia are paying more for certain commodities as a result of State interference.

Hon. H. STEWART: The memories of some members are very short. This Bill came to us from another place and reached us earlier than in other sessions.

Hon. J. Duffell: What has that to do with our memories?

Hon. H. STEWART: Mr. Holmes, in a somewhat emphatic tone, accused the wheatgrowers in conjunction with the Labour party of being responsible for forcing wheat marketing conditions on the country. That is quite wrong. The wheat pool emanated from the actions of the Federal Government.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What about the present Bill?

Hon. H. STEWART: It is a necessary consequence to protect the interests of the State. What financial burden has the State had to carry in connection with these measures? There will be a surplus when the pool is cleaned up and, apart from exercising a paternal influence, the Government have not been incommoded financially in any way.

The CHAIRMAN: We are dealing with Clause 2, and not the Bill as a whole.

Hon. H. STEWART: I was referring to the burden of which Mr. Sanderson spoke when dealing with the same clause. Had a wool pool been in operation a year earlier, the man referred to by Mr. Holmes would have been protected and more money would have come to the Commonwealth.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I am pleased the Government have brought down this measure and I think a majority of the Committee realise that it is necessary, but I take exception to the fact that this House has had no chance to consider the matter until it is too late. We have to accept it now or

have no say in it at all. Last year the Government gave an assurance that no agreement would be entered into before Parliament had had an opportunity to decide whether tenders should be called or what method should be adopted. This measure should have been brought down immediately Parliament met. That is the chief objection to it. We want some provision to compel the Government next year, before they enter into any negotiations whatever with any company or acquiring agents, to give this House an opportunity to express an opinion. For that reason I move an amendment—

That the following proviso be added: "Provided also that no arrangement shall be entered into for extending the Acts to wheat harvested during the season 1920-1921, and no wheat-acquiring agency agreement shall be entered into or negotiated without the previous consent of Parliament."

This will force the Government to come to Parliament before entering into any negotiations next year.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I ask the Committee not to agree to the amendment. We do not know where it will land the Government. To bind the Government in that way might place them in a very difficult position. The complaint that the Bill should have been brought down earlier is reasonable, but the circumstances are such that it could not have been introduced earlier. I was called away to Melbourne and the Bill was introduced in another place before my return. It was before another place for eight weeks and reached us somewhat late. I had a discussion with the Premier during the tea hour and I can say that if such a Bill is necessary next year the Government are prepared to bring it down quite early.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: You gave us that assurance last year.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You have had time to make an agreement but not to introduce the Bill.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If members are going to impose such far-reaching conditions on the Government, it will be impossible to carry on the administration.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I hope the House will not agree to the amendment. I am sorry the Minister has not made out a better case in opposition to it. There is more beneath the amendment than appears on the surface. If the amendment were passed, it would be the death knell of the Bill.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I do not think so.

Hon. J. CORNELL: No doubt it meets with Mr. Sanderson's approval because he is opposed to anything of a collective character. He forgets that no individual can stand alone. No great objection was advanced against the pool during the crisis in which it proved so necessary and a Godsend to the community. The pool is a Commonwealth concern and, when it ceases to be a

Commonwealth concern, it will cease to be successful because there will be no community of control over the trade so essential to the wheat industry, namely the shipping. Having trusted Ministers, irrespective of political creed, during five years of war to operate the Bill, I am content to allow them another chance. If we agree to the amendment we shall place the Government in the invidious position of having to get the sanction of Parliament before they can negotiate with the Commonwealth. If hon. members desire to get rid of the pool or of the acquiring agencies, they should vote against the Bill.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: It is too late to reject it this session.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Hon members want to so hamstring the Government that they will not be able to enter into an agreement next season, which is an unworthy method of killing the pool.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I have not taken exception to the Bill, which provides orderly machinery for dealing with a mistake in which this State is interested. The rejection of the Bill would mean commercial chaos. What I object to is the manner in which this piece of machinery is being manipulated by one firm who each year have entered into a secret agreement with the Government which we are afterwards called upon to validate. The Bill gives the Government just the power they want for negotiating, whereas the amendment would prevent all further negotiation. But if we prevent the Government from openly negotiating, there is so clear an understanding between the Government and the company concerned that nothing can be framed which will prevent them from carrying on the same old game year after year. I am afraid I cannot support the amendment, but I hope some means will be found which will compel the Government to introduce the next annual Bill early enough to allow Parliament to decide upon what lines the negotiations shall proceed. The Bill is designed to cover up sharp practices on the part of the Government.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must withdraw the imputation of sharp practices on the part of the Government.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I will withdraw. I wish I could find Parliamentary language which would express my view of the negotiations of the past. I support the Bill, but I object to the manner in which the Bill has been manipulated in one direction.

The CHAIRMAN: We are dealing with Clause 2 only, and not the whole of the Bill.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: Clause 2 provides for the continuance of the existing Act. It is difficult, therefore, to refrain from discussing the Act.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: In the past the pools have been very useful. I am not opposed to the pool, nor to the measure before us, but I want to hear of some finality. I want to learn that next year we shall have some say in the management of the pool, if it is to be decided to continue

the pool. I do not care who gets the business. The only thing I want to know is whether or not Parliament should have a say in this. Here we have an immense agreement, involving the expenditure of thousands of pounds, yet we have not any say in the matter. The agreement is being worked under to-day.

The Honorary Minister: They have not acquired any of this season's wheat.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: But they are making arrangements to that end. Let the Minister give us an undertaking that next year Parliament shall have a say before the agreement is settled.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I support the amendment because I cannot accept the assurance of the Minister in regard to the policy of the Government. I expected that he would make a clear statement that the Government were opposed to the continuance of the pool, and that at the earliest opportunity the system would be stopped. The Minister cannot have read the report of what was done at the Ballarat meeting of farmers two or three months ago, probably the most important meeting of farmers ever held in Australia. The council of the farmers' convention, as it was called, submitted a scheme to deal with the future handling of Australian wheat harvests. The proposals of the council provided for the compulsory continuance of the pool by legislation, and the elimination of political control by the appointment of three grain commissioners. They proposed many other things, but I do not wish to take up the time of the Committee in recounting them. There was a long discussion on the object. The president, Mr. McRobert, expressed the opinion that Victoria could put up a scheme without conferring with organisations outside the State. Mr. Kendall, the Honorary Minister, spoke, and without further discussion the motion of the executive, with the suggested addition by Mr. Lockhart—which was not of great importance—was carried unanimously. What I want to know from the Government here is, are the farmers of this country anxious to continue the wheat pool? and, if so, how do the farmers wish to do it? In one way it is a perfectly legitimate operation. I am prepared to consider most favourably the matter of the farmers' combining in a wheat pool on their own and with their own cash. But it is preposterous to ask Parliament to arrange everything for them and place the ultimate responsibility on the taxpayers of this country. The farmers cannot have it both ways. I am not surprised at both wings of the Labour party supporting the proposal, because it plays right into their hands. To them it means playing for the cheap loaf. But the farmers, owing to their political shortsightedness and inexperience, do not really understand what they are playing for. Let the wheat pool be established, but let the farmers clearly understand what it is leading to. I appreciate very fully the big financial interests

concerned in this affair. All the different interests—the agent, the banker, the shipper, the farmer—are watching very closely indeed what the various Legislatures are doing in this regard. I support the amendment, and I hope it will be carried, but if hon. members clearly understand what we are voting on and what the effect of the amendment will be, I am compelled to be indifferent whether it is carried or not, for I do not wish to get one single vote under false pretences. The two wings of the Labour party will get the cheap loaf quickly enough. I appeal with confidence to country members, who surely must realise that the remnants of the Liberal party of this State are most anxious to support the intelligent section of the farmers. I appeal to country members who have not signed the Country pledge. With our assistance they may carry the amendment, or at all events point out to the farmers the danger of allowing this pool to continue. The sooner the connection between the Government and the farmers in the wheat pool is severed, the better it will be for the Government and also for the farmers.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I agree with Mr. Sanderson in being indifferent as to the fate of this amendment. I am indifferent because I realise that the Government cannot possibly accept Mr. Miles's amendment. If Parliament meets in July or August and the Government of the day will not be in a position to negotiate for the acquiring of wheat until after the Address-in-reply has been disposed of, it simply means that the Government cannot carry on the affairs of State. On referring to "Hansard" hon. members will find I predicted that Government activities in the acquiring of wheat would result in the creation of a commercial body such as the Westralian Farmers Ltd. The wheat acquiring agency was given to the Westralian Farmers at a time when it was stated that they had not the necessary commercial experience or capacity to handle the matter. I opposed it bitterly, because I recognised that it meant the diverting of trade from the country storekeeper and the merchant who, up to that time, had stood nobly to the farming community. But, the trade having been diverted, and the commercial organisation having been built up, I do not think any member can say but that during the past 12 months the Westralian Farmers have handled the wheat as well as, if not better than, any previous acquiring agent. I realise that, the pooling system, in some form or other, is here to remain. The parent body, through the smaller co-operative concerns in the country, has built around itself a business connection because of community of interests. Assuming even that tenders were to be called, the organisation which the Westralian Farmers have built up in the country would prevent competition in the future.

Hon. J. Cornell: Is that not the best policy for the farmers?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Yes, I did propose to go into the question on the second reading of wiping out the Government control altogether and seeing whether the wheat handling could not be done entirely by the farmers, but I did not think it reasonable to tie the hands of the Government and prevent them from negotiating respecting the terms and conditions under which they proposed to conduct this business. The Government may intend to call for tenders, or deal with the matter by means of a tender board, or by the allocation of districts, but this amendment will prevent them from engaging in any system without consulting Parliament, when it will be too late to do anything.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I can see no objection to the amendment. The Honorary Minister has given us an assurance that the Government will not enter into a further agreement without consulting Parliament. If he is prepared to give that verbal assurance, why is he not prepared to do so in black and white? Mr. Cornell puts the Government before Parliament, but I say that Parliament should be consulted before the Government take any action of this kind. Mr. Millington wants the House protected, but at the end of his argument says he will vote against the amendment. The only solid argument used against it is that put forward by Mr. Lynn. If the wording of the amendment means that it will prevent the Government from calling tenders, there may be some objection to the word "negotiate." I do not think the amendment will prevent the Government from calling tenders for the handling of next year's harvest, so that Parliament may have an opportunity of seeing how this business is to be conducted. It is now too late to do anything, and I hope the Committee will see that Parliament is protected and that we have some say in the handling of the affairs of the country.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I intend to vote for the amendment. It is regrettable that such an amendment is necessary. It indicates that the Government are likely to cede the powers they are asking for. In view of what has been going on for many years past it is necessary that some such amendment should be carried. Governments in the past have been inclined to cede the authority given to them by Parliament. The definite spirit of the clause is that the Wheat Marketing Act should not be extended beyond the season 1919-20. If circumstances should arise when it is necessary to extend the operations of the Act, surely there is nothing to prevent the Government from bringing down a Bill to give them the necessary power. We ought to do something to restore the authority of Parliament in many other directions besides this. The present attitude of the Government is contrary to the spirit of Parliamentary government and of the Constitution. It is deplorable that it is necessary for us to insert such an amendment in the Bill. If the pooling business has come to stay it should not be carried out in this way.

I cannot believe that hon. members who represent the Country party require this Bill to be passed in the belief that it will lead to the nationalisation of the handling of wheat. I am sure they will wish the matter to be carried out in a Constitutional way, through Parliament.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I hope the amendment will not be carried. Unfortunately circumstances arose which made it necessary for the Government to take control of the wheat. It has given us an insight into the system by which the people of the country can control the output of their produce. I am sure the farmers of Australia are desirous that the pooling system should continue, but I think they would prefer to have the handling of it and the financing of it themselves. They realise that the more speedily they can get away from Government control in this matter the better. It will not be necessary, however, to amend the clause in the direction proposed, to put the farmer into that position. He is inclined to take it up already. The taking away of the control from the Government and the exercise by the farmers of that control creates a period of transition which we shall sadly endanger if we pass this amendment. It will injure the interests of the farmers to do so.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I intend to support the amendment. I have yet to learn that the Honorary Minister who is engineering this Bill has the interests of the farmers at heart, notwithstanding that he is leader of the Country party in this Chamber. The report of the Royal Commission on the Wheat Marketing Scheme will be remembered. In this report the chairman refers in one part of the evidence to the manager of the Wheat Scheme, Mr. Keys, who is being held up before this Chamber as a man having more knowledge of the handling of wheat than any other person in the State. He is being extolled by the leader of the Country party.

Hon. J. Cornell: He should be for the position he occupies.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I admit that he is deserving of high compliment when he is bold enough to make the statement he did to the chairman of this commission. The chairman asked him, in question 4505, if he had not stated that he had got out a scheme under which he could do for £10,000 what the Government were paying £25,000 to the Westralian Farmers Ltd. for doing. Mr. Keys replied that he had worked out a statement of what it would cost to handle ten million bushels and, applying the rates which they paid for that year, he calculated they would be paying the Westralian Farmers Ltd. £25,000. The chairman then asked him if that amount was for handling that quantity of wheat, and Mr. Keys replied that it was so and that on the following Tuesday morning he would bring the scheme before the Commission. Until the leader of the Country party can show me that he has solid reasons for permitting an outside company to handle the wheat for

£25,000, on a basis of ten million bushels when his own manager can handle it for £10,000, I have yet to learn that he has the interests of the farmers generally at heart. We intend that they shall not negotiate until Parliament has had a say. This means that instead of calling Parliament together at the end of July or the beginning of August, the Government must call Parliament together earlier to consider what arrangements they will have to make in regard to the handling of next season's harvest. If hon. members have the interests of farmers at heart and if they intend that as much saving shall be brought about by the handling of the harvest as has been stated in the sworn testimony which I have quoted, they can have no objection to meeting Parliament at the beginning of June. They would then have ample time to complete arrangements for giving further support to the handling of the 1920-21 harvest. One of the leading members of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. recently stated that they opened their mouth and the members of the Government tumbled into it. They know that they have the Government behind them and with their own representatives in Parliament to carry the balance of power they will get all they can out of Parliament whether hon. members like it or not.

Hon. H. STEWART: The amendment will introduce difficulties. We are involved with the Commonwealth and the other States. Each Bill stands on its own in regard to administration, but all the selling is done through the central body. We will have the position that the representative of this State will go to the East to deal with matters with his hands tied. That is not a fair position to put the farmer in.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is Parliament to have no say in the matter?

Hon. H. STEWART: The difficulty I have mentioned is one that has to be provided for.

Hon. J. CORNELL: A charge has been laid against Ministers for getting away from the authority of Parliament. In a general sense I will admit that charge and I will gladly welcome any proposal that comes before this Chamber which will in a general sense restore that authority of Parliament which the present Government are charged with fleching. If the position is unsound let us demolish it wholly and not do it piecemeal. I am not going to tie the hands of the Government on a measure which I consider is most democratic and which has the approbation of a greater number of people than has any other concern or agreement which has ever been entered into. At any rate, I would like to see Parliament meet earlier and oftener. That might be an additional reason why we should get extra remuneration for our services. The Labour Government always summoned Parliament before the end of the financial year so as to get supplies in the proper manner.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Several members have spoken in strong terms re-

garding the action of the Government in entering into the arrangements they did last year. Mr. Millington said there had been manipulation on the part of the Government. I repudiate all such remarks. The Government entered into the agreement on the advice of the advisory board and, in addition, we had the recommendation of the general manager. Last year the Government set out to get efficient and cheap handling and they got it. Mr. Duffell made a strong charge against the Government. If the hon. member had done one-sixteenth part of the good for his constituents that I have done for mine, he would have reason to be proud of it.

Hon. J. Cornell: He tried to protect the paddles.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Duffell said the general manager had suggested a scheme whereby several thousands of pounds could be saved to the scheme. The Government considered that proposal and agreed that it could not be carried out by the Government. We had a difficult task up to the time of the appointment of the Royal Commission. Nothing the wheat scheme could do was right and, if we had extended the handling to the country sidings, what turmoil there would have been! The amendment will have the effect of tying the hands of the Government. It is all very well to say Parliament must be consulted before an agreement is entered into, but an agreement of this description involves months of consideration. The amendment would force the Government into the position of having to accept the terms dictated by any company. If the Government have to acquire the wheat during the 1920-21 season, this amendment will prove a fatal mistake.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You have only one firm competing now, and you could not have a worse condition of affairs than that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This country is secured in the matter of advances for its wheat and the farmers had cheaper and better handling than at any time during the history of the scheme or, I believe, before it.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Where is the evidence? What is the objection to letting Parliament know?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The amendment will tie the hands of the Government.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: The hands of the Government ought to be tied, too.

The HONORARY MINISTER: As this is a concern in which the Government stand to lose money, they should have every opportunity to watch the position.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: What say has Parliament? The agreement is already signed by the other party.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If the hands of the Government are tied, it will be fatal to the interests of the State.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I want to make it perfectly clear that I have no objection to the pooling system, and I wish the farmers to be assisted in every possible way,

but I strongly object to the Minister coming to the House with an agreement already signed by the other party and expecting us to ratify it. The amendment is designed to tie the hands of the Government so that they cannot enter into another agreement of this nature without coming to the House and letting us decide how the wheat shall be handled.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	6
Noes	..	..	..	..	16
Majority against ..					10

AYES.

Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. G. W. Miles	(Teller.)
Hon. A. Sanderson	

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. H. Carson	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. R. J. Lynn	Hon. J. Cunningham
Hon. C. McKenzie	(Teller.)
Hon. H. Millington	

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Authority for agency agreement:

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That after "agreement," in line 2 the words "and the distribution of damaged wheat" be inserted.

Some members hold that it is impossible for Parliament to amend such a measure, but we should be able to extend the powers given under such a Bill. The Westralian Farmers Ltd. do all the acquiring and the State takes over the distribution of the f.a.q. wheat to the port of shipment, or to the millers in the State. Unfortunately, there is a certain amount of damaged wheat which the pool has to get rid of. When it comes to the question of damaged wheat, however, another firm does the business. A tirade of abuse has been levelled against the Minister, against the Westralian Farmers Ltd. and against the whole principle, but no word has been said about the distribution of damaged wheat. Nor have I yet seen any schedule of the terms and conditions under which the damaged wheat is distributed. I learn that it is done by another firm altogether, namely Dalgety & Co. A strong case can be made out for the acquiring and distribution of damaged wheat by the firm which acquires the handling of the sound wheat. Under the existing circumstances, the man in the metropolitan area who grows a few chickens has to pay

6s. per bushel for damaged wheat—when he can get it. It is a scandalous position of affairs. I do not believe the farmer himself desires that more should be paid for damaged wheat than the miller pays for prime wheat. Either the Government or the distributing agents are deserving of the strongest censure in this regard. The Committee would be well advised to limit the handling of all wheat to two parties, namely, the Government and the acquiring agents. The passing of the amendment will not mean the loss of the Bill. This is the only opportunity we have for protesting against the garotting of that large section of the public which has a use for damaged wheat.

The CHAIRMAN: All amendments ought to be sent up in time for inclusion on the Notice Paper. I am afraid the amendment moved by the hon. member will not effect what he desires. It does not read correctly into the clause. I suggest that the hon. member withdraw it and have it redrafted for inclusion in the Notice Paper to-morrow.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The existing agency agreement will not terminate until the 31st December and, consequently, the words could not be added to the clause. The hon. member mentioned that poultry growers were sometimes unable to procure inferior wheat. Certainly, for a period, we were short of inferior wheat. It was a happy position to be in, although rather hard on poultry growers.

Hon. J. Cornell: Why not let them have good wheat at the same price?

The HONORARY MINISTER: We instituted inquiries in the Eastern States, but the price there was found to be too high, and consequently we made good wheat available at the same price. The hon. member said that farmers did not desire a higher price for inferior wheat than for good wheat. They do not.

Hon. J. Cornell: Then who gets it?

The HONORARY MINISTER: All wheat is based on its milling value, no matter in what condition it may be. Even to-day I am not paying 5s. 6d. a bushel for inferior wheat. On the other hand, some retailers may charge that much, which is the price that millers pay for wheat for gristing. As far as I know, the highest price paid for inferior wheat has been 4s. 6d. per bushel.

Hon. J. Duffell: Why it brought 4s. 8d. last week at auction!

The HONORARY MINISTER: Very rarely does it go over 4s. 6d. Recently, better class wheat has been liberated on account of the shortage of inferior wheat. The amendment would be out of order, for the agreement does not terminate until the 31st December.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We cannot hope, unfortunately, to make any alteration in the agreement but we can get some information. From the report of the annual meeting of the shareholders in the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., it appears that for 1917 the company

made a profit of £12,757, equal to about 133 per cent. on the paid-up capital. How much commission was paid to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., for collecting wheat?

The Honorary Minister: I regret it is impossible for me to carry such information in my head.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I should have thought the Minister would have had that information at his finger-ends, or else that he would have had available a copy of the Wheat Scheme balance sheet.

The Honorary Minister: I will give the hon. member the information to-morrow.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I also want to know what was paid to the other agent, Dalgety & Co., for the distribution of damaged wheat? I would be inclined to support an amendment handing over to Government officials the distribution of damaged wheat. What is the opinion of the manager of the Wheat Scheme with regard to the collection of sound wheat and the distribution of damaged wheat? In 1918 the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., made a profit of £14,000, and in 1919 a profit of £13,500. These are substantial profits. Further, there is the profit made by Dalgety & Co. on the distribution of damaged wheat. The total of the profits made by the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and by Dalgety & Co. will give some necessary information to the mover of the amendment. The profits in question belong to the Government, and should not be handed over to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. Under this clause, if it is carried, members of Parliament will be in the position of managing directors of the Wheat Scheme. If the result of the pool had been a success for the Treasury of this country, that would be a sound argument in favour of the continuance of the present arrangement. Without the information for which I have asked, it is not easy for me to give an intelligent vote on the amendment. As at present informed, I am unable to support the amendment.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I do not know that the amendment is necessary. The wheat having been acquired, the acquirer of it necessarily has authority to sell it; and that authority has been delegated to Dalgety & Co. The Government, who are very friendly with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., could have given that company the power to distribute the damaged wheat. Why introduce new machinery to give the Government a power which they possess already?

Hon. J. CORNELL: With the object of moving an amendment kindly furnished to me by the Clerk as being more applicable to the clause, I ask leave to withdraw the amendment I have moved.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That in line 2, after the word "agency," the words "and distribution" be inserted. My desire is to have only two parties handling the wheat, the Government on the one side and the acquiring company on the other.

I have no desire to see a third party like Dalgety & Co. interested in the business. I have no charge to make against Dalgety & Co. in connection with the high price of damaged wheat, but I do say that either the Government or Dalgety's are culpable. Can the Honorary Minister tell me that 30 per cent. of the extraneous matter in wheat makes that wheat as good for flour as f.a.q. wheat? Very little f.a.q. wheat can be placed on the general market, and there is no competition between the unscrupulous dealer in damaged wheat and the genuine farmers. There is no supervision either. The Honorary Minister says it would be a bad thing to give to the Westralian Farmers the distribution of damaged wheat, but after that remark I suggest that he should take a lesson in logic. For three years the public have been fleeced and robbed over the price they have had to pay for the by-products of wheat, and they have had no redress. No word has been uttered to show on what basis the farmers' by-products shall be distributed, what the charges are in connection with these by-products, and whether the farmer and the consumer are getting a fair deal. To my mind it is the middleman who is getting the best of the deal. I will not press the amendment if the Honorary Minister will assure me that, on the distribution of damaged wheat in the State, after the termination of this agreement and before the expiration of this Parliament, he will bring down a similar Bill to this and enter into an agreement on these lines. If he is not prepared to give me that assurance he is not worthy of support and this Bill is not worthy of support. The difference in value involved may not be very great, but so far as the principle is concerned there is no difference. If the acquiring party has the distribution of the wheat it will mean a decreased cost to the general public.

The HONORARY MINISTER: After taking over the administration of the scheme two years ago I found that inferior wheat was being sold at far below its value.

Hon. V. Hamersley: They have made up for it since.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member should be pleased that that is so. Through the competition of different people who were handling it, the wheat was being sold at below its value. I, therefore, appointed Dalgety & Co. to control it and immediately increase the price to what was a fair rate, that is the milling value of the wheat, the price being increased by 6d. a bushel all round. Before the next agreement was entered into tenders were called for the handling of inferior wheat, and all the firms concerned tendered, but Dalgety's tender was the cheapest by one half per cent.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Why did you not do that last year with these firms?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The agents had their opportunity then to do the same as they did with the inferior wheat, but they did not take it.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Did you call for tenders?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I had their prices submitted but they were too high. The same thing would apply to the sale of inferior wheat.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Why did you not call for tenders this year?

The HONORARY MINISTER: There was nothing to be gained by doing so. We had a satisfactory price last year. Further, this matter received the consideration of the Wheat Marketing Advisory Board, who sent in a strong recommendation to the Government which was supported by the manager.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: To do it yourself.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, to appoint the Westralian Farmers Ltd. to handle the wheat for the season.

The CHAIRMAN: The Honorary Minister must discuss the amendment.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Cornell said that people were being fleeced and robbed. The people of Western Australia are prepared to pay a reasonable price for their requirements, especially when these come from the farming community.

Hon. J. Duffell: But not an outrageous price.

Hon. J. Cornell: Farmers have no say as to the price.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Dalgety & Co. get their returns on the fair value of the wheat. I do not know what is charged for the wheat after it leaves them, for we have no control over that matter. The dealers may be charging too much. The bakers are charging one halfpenny a loaf too much, but there is no control over them.

The CHAIRMAN: We are discussing damaged wheat and not bread.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I had a consultation with the bakers with the view of getting them to adopt a reasonable price, but they would not make an agreement. If the amendment is carried it will mean that we cannot ask for quotes next year, but will have to give the handling to one firm.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Whilst I welcome any scheme which would give poultry and pig raisers an opportunity of obtaining feed for stock at a reasonable price, I cannot support the amendment. The Honorary Minister stated that Dalgety & Co. are only getting a fair return for the handling of the wheat that is below milling quality. I defy him to justify their actions in limiting the quantity of inferior wheat that may be brought to the State at any one time. This restriction has had the effect of preventing local growers from getting the necessary quantity of wheat to enable them to compete with the growers of bacon in the Eastern States. Even the farmers cannot get wheat for feed purposes. I asked a question last year regarding the acquiring of this wheat by Dalgety & Co., and it was then stated that they had an agreement until December,

1918. What I would like to know is, when did the Honorary Minister get the authority of Parliament to extend that agreement? I am rather inclined to think that he did it on his own authority. Actions like that will shake my faith in the Minister. They will make me look very carefully in the future into all measures which he introduces into this Chamber.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I am opposed to the suggestion by Mr. Cornell that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. should be handed this business. Those in control adopted this method of distributing damaged wheat, and in order to make sure that the poultry raisers would have the advantage of competition, artificial means were resorted to to ensure that the top price was obtained. The services of a reputedly smart business firm were secured to show them how to do it. The Government were not prepared to take the responsibility of raising prices and selling inferior wheat at an exorbitant price. They called for tenders, but one business firm secured the right to distribute that wheat, and they know how to make the price uniform and keep it up to the standard by regulating the supply. Now we find the poultry raisers complaining that they are being robbed. That is true, because the most approved business methods of keeping up the price have been adopted, and probably that would be the case if the thing were handed over to the Westralian Farmers Ltd., because it would be to their interests to see that any wheat that went into the pool fetched the highest price possible. If the State wishes to give a fair deal and not to get an artificial price for damaged wheat, let the State control it and adopt the same methods as are adopted at the present time by the Chamber of Commerce. It is just as well to stop in time and try the old method that has been so much complained about. Let the State take a hand. It has an interest not only in bolstering up the pool but in protecting the general public; and the Westralian Farmers Ltd. have just as much consideration for the general public as Dalgety & Co. They treat their own shareholders well, but as far as the general public are concerned they do as Dalgety & Co. do. I will give Mr. Sanderson my assistance to see that in future, instead of calling in business firms to bolster up the pool, the public shall have an opportunity of getting an article, but not at a fictitious value.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I have listened with considerable interest to several of the speeches, and I must say, giving careful consideration to them, that hon. members seem to have made out a strong case for the Wheat Pool. The Government have been trying to do the best they can for the wheat growers. We find, on the other hand, they guaranteed an advance last year, and this year they are guaranteeing 5s. But further than that we are told that even for the damaged wheat the farmers get the same price as for good wheat. How can we

get anyone to run the pool better? Could anything be conducted in a better manner than that? It seems to me the only trouble is there has not been enough damaged wheat. This statement was borne out by the Minister some time ago when he said they were short of damaged wheat, and had to try to get some in the other States. There are so many people who want damaged wheat that they are prepared to give this high price. All I can gather from the debate is that the Minister and the Government are carrying out their duties in connection with the pool so satisfactorily that complaints are made that they get as high a price for damaged wheat as for good wheat. They ought to be very satisfied with themselves after that.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I suggest that progress be reported to give us an opportunity to catch our trains, or the Minister should undertake to provide motor cars to convey us home.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I would agree with Sir Edward Wittenoom if the farmers or the pool were getting the benefit of the high price. My complaint is that they are not getting it. The Honorary Minister, in his flippant manner, said if the amendment was agreed to, he would be unable to get quotes next year, and Sir Edward Wittenoom pertinently interjected, "Why did you not get quotes this year?" If the Honorary Minister agrees to report progress, I should like him to lay on the Table of the House to-morrow the agreement with Dalgety & Co. relative to the damaged wheat. If he does not do so, I intend to give notice to move for the papers. Then we might have the revelation that the terms under which Dalgety & Co. distribute the wheat is on the basis of the selling price. If so, it would suit Dalgety & Co. to hold up the damaged wheat and demand the highest price possible.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: I think the Government fix the price.

Hon. J. CORNELL: They have a fixed quantity to sell and I do not think it is sufficient for the requirements of the State. There is not enough damaged wheat.

The Honorary Minister: At one period there was not, but since, we have had enough.

Hon. J. CORNELL: There is sufficient wheat for the State's requirements, and poultry raisers would not object to paying 6s. per bushel for good wheat. Such wheat should be released from the pool.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: There is a combine in restraint of trade.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Honorary Minister said there is nothing to control the retailer of damaged wheat; yet Parliament has realised the necessity for controlling what we might call the retailer of f.a.q. wheat. Surely it is reasonable and logical to fix a standard for damaged wheat and handle it in the same manner as the other. Then we should have a proper pool and the farmer

would know what his damaged wheat would realise, the same as his f.a.q. wheat.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is not easy, in discussing the amendment, to keep completely outside the argument regarding the acquirement. In regard to the reporting of progress, I like to leave the business in the hands of the leader of the House and at present I intend to do that. I ask the Honorary Minister, why has he changed his mind in regard to the distribution and control of wheat? In 1916 the Honorary Minister, when a private member, according to "Hansard," page 914, said—

As a matter of fact, I think that the Government should step in and handle the scheme. Why should they not do so? I see no difficulty in the way. We have a general staff to handle the wheat, a staff which is there every year, with scales and weighing appliances and everything ready. We could have the Commissioner of Railways and his men superintending the stacking on the railways.

Apparently the same would apply to the distribution of wheat. Why has he changed his opinion? So far as I can understand the position, no one has any control of this affair. The Government have no control; Parliament has no control. I do not charge the Government with motives. My charge against the Government is that they have no motives; they simply drift about. The only people one can understand in regard to this affair are the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must confine his remarks to the amendment.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Is not the amendment to hand over all wheat to the Westralian Farmers Ltd.? That is the amendment as I understand it. I shall agree to this on one condition. We shall have the great advantage of putting the whole position in the hands of the Government instead of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. The country will then save not only the distribution but the collection, and everything else. It will all be handed over to the Minister, which is the policy the Minister himself supported when a private member. I will add the observation, that the Minister must be highly entertained and amused with the decisions of the Committee. He has brought down this measure; we have discussed one amendment and got rid of it. Now we are on this amendment, and as far as I can understand from the drift of the discussion, nothing is to be done. The Government are to get the Bill through, monstrous as it is, just as it stands, and they will fool us to the top of our bent. If the amendment is passed and the thing is handed over to the Westralian Farmers Ltd., it will be simply one more step in the direction of disaster for Western Australia. The discussion is of no practical value, except that it elicits from the Minister certain interesting information and gives us an opportunity of protesting against the position of affairs. Parliament is to blame for permitting control to be

taken out of its hands. The Minister gets the Bill through and goes home and laughs with his Kellerberrin rusties.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.34 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 28th October, 1919.

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

QUESTION—FODDER SUPPLIES AND PRICES.

Mr. MALEY asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that speculators are already purchasing standing crops, or hay in stook or stack, or chaff for forward delivery? 2, Will he ascertain from the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, and publish the information gained, for the protection of local producers—(a) a forecast of the harvest prospects in those States; (b) the estimated deficiency below normal requirements of hay likely to be produced in those States; (c) the true market values from time to time? 3, Will he issue instructions for an immediate compilation of hay production in this State to enable an estimate to be formed of the quantity likely to be available for export above local requirements? 4, What is the approximate shipping freight per ton from Fremantle to Eastern States ports likely to prevail until March next? 5, Will a check be kept on any rise in the price of bran and pollard in this State, owing to drought conditions in the Eastern States?

The PREMIER replied: 1, I know that hay is being purchased in stook. 2, Yes. 3, Yes. 4, This information is not available. 5, Yes.

BILLS (3)—RECOMMENDED BY MESSAGE.

Messages from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation in connection with the following Bills:—

- 1, Perth Mint Act Amendment.
- 2, Government Railways Act Amendment.
- 3, Prices Regulation.

OBITUARY—HON. H. J. SAUNDERS.

Letter in Reply.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the following letter:—

To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Dear Sir,—I and my family wish to tender our sincerest thanks to the members of the Legislative Assembly for the resolution passed expressing their deepest sympathy to us in our recent bereavement. Yours faithfully, Julia Saunders. 24th Oct., 1919.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Prices Regulation.
- 2, Road Districts.

Transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1919-20.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from 23rd October; Mr. Piesse in the Chair.

Department of Lands and Surveys; Hon. J. Mitchell, Minister.

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £49,722.

Mr. HARRISON rose to speak.

Hon. P. Collier: Is the member for Avon in charge of these Estimates?

The PREMIER and MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [4.40]: Do I understand the leader of the Opposition objects to this vote?

Hon. P. Collier: We should have an explanation of it, I think.

The PREMIER: I thought the hon. member was prepared to pass the vote without discussion.

Hon. P. Collier: Give us some information.

The PREMIER: I gave considerable information when I introduced the Budget. If the leader of the Opposition wishes to know why we have increased the vote by £5,000, I may tell him that a great deal of work is being done. Some time ago, a Bill was passed ordering the re-assessment of pastoral leases. In view of that, we have to classify 230 million acres of land, and that work will involve considerable expense. We have two parties out on this work of reclassification, and propose to increase the number if we are able to get suitable men.

Hon. P. Collier: Only two parties in the North-West?

The PREMIER: We had one party and have split it into two, but I wish to carry