

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 10th December, 1914.

	Page.
Papers presented	180
Questions: Railway Excursion fares	180
Explosives Magazine, Woodman's Point	180
Railway free passes	180
Hospital for Insane, Claremont	180
Prospecting on pastoral leasehold	181
Jetty for Beadon Point	181
Police Department, illicit sale of liquor	181
prosecution	181
Electoral Census	181
Electoral Department, an explanation	181
Bill: Grain and Foodstuff, 1R., 2R.	186
Papers, Question of Procedure	217

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: 1, State Steamship Service, balance-sheet and profit and loss account for the year ended 30th June, 1914. 2, Government Savings Bank, balance-sheet, report, and returns for the year ended 30th June, 1914.

By the Minister for Education: Education Department, amendment of regulations.

QUESTION — RAILWAY EXCURSION FARES.

Farmers attending the University.

Hon. J. MITCHELL asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it a fact that farmers attending the special farmers' classes at the University are denied the excursion fares granted to other University students? 2, If so, will he take steps to render these cheap fares available to those attending the farmers' classes in future?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Yes. 2, Considerable concessions are already granted for the assistance of education, and it is not proposed to add to them at the present time. In view of the advantages to be gained from these classes, it is hardly likely that the farmer will neglect this opportunity simply because the fares are not specially reduced.

QUESTION — EXPLOSIVES MAGAZINE, WOODMAN'S POINT.

Mr. BOLTON asked the Minister for Mines:—1, What quantity of explosives was held in Strelitz Bros.' magazine at Woodman's Point at the time of declaration of war between Great Britain and Germany? 2, Were Strelitz Bros. the duly accredited agents for the firm of Nobel, Hamburg? 3, What quantity of explosives has been removed from Strelitz Bros.' magazine since the declaration of war between Great Britain and Germany? 4, What quantity of explosives is at present in Strelitz Bros.' magazine?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Approximately 150 tons. 2, Yes; but all licenses for storage are in the name of Strelitz Bros., as the department have always insisted upon having local responsibility. 3, Approximately 147 tons. 4, Three tons. (There have been no consignments received since the outbreak of the war.)

QUESTION — RAILWAY FREE PASSES TO LARGE FREIGHTERS.

Mr. MUNSIE asked the Minister for Railways: Seeing that 19 persons held free railway passes on December 19th, 1911, in consideration of the payment of large freights, can he inform me at what date those passes were discontinued?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: The free passes referred to expired on the 31st December, 1911. Passes were issued for 1912, but the regulations were amended as from the 1st January, 1913, and since then no free passes have been issued.

QUESTION — HOSPITAL FOR INSANE, CLAREMONT, OVERCROWDING.

Mr. VERYARD asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that the Hospital for the Insane at Claremont is over-crowded with patients, and that considerable space is being used which was not allocated for patients? 2, If so, is it the intention of

the Government to place on the Estimates a sum to provide further accommodation?

The PREMIER replied: 1, The Inspector General has reported such to be the case. 2, The matter is under consideration.

QUESTION — PROSPECTING ON PASTORAL LEASEHOLD.

Mr. J. P. GARDINER asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Is he aware that a pastoral lessee in the Pilbara district is unduly harassing prospectors on his lease? 2, If so, will he declare a mining reserve on this lease, and thus create employment for a large number of men?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, It has been so reported, and inquiries are being made. 2, I cannot say until reports have been received and considered.

QUESTION—JETTY FOR BEADON POINT.

Mr. J. P. GARDINER asked the Minister for Works: When will a definite survey be made at Beadon Point for a jetty as promised by the ex-Minister for Works?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The question as to when the survey will be commenced is now under consideration.

QUESTION — POLICE DEPARTMENT.

Illicit Sale of Liquor Prosecution.

Mr. J. P. GARDINER asked the Premier: 1, Is it a fact that on 5th October last an officer of the Police Department approached the wife of a storekeeper at Claremont, representing that he was in physical distress, and prevailed upon her, much against her will, to commit a breach of the Licensing Act? 2, Does he approve of the adoption of such methods with regard to holders of gallon licenses? 3, If not, will he take steps to have this officer removed from the force?

The PREMIER replied: 1, 2, and 3, The methods attributed to the police in this

particular case are now being investigated by the Commissioner of Police with a view to any further action deemed necessary.

QUESTION—ELECTORAL CENSUS.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY asked the Attorney General: 1, Did the Chief Electoral Officer furnish an estimate prior to the general election for an electoral census for the whole of the State? 2, What was the amount of such estimate? 3, Did the Chief Electoral Officer give an estimate for the four Perth electorates? 4, If so, what was the amount of this estimate?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1, Yes. 2, In framing the annual estimates, at a period when the police were available to do the bulk of the work, the Chief Electoral Officer asked for £4,000 for the canvass alone. 3, No. 4, See answer No. 3.

ELECTORAL DEPARTMENT—AN EXPLANATION.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. Walker—Kanowna) [4.40]: Perhaps I may be permitted to make a statement in reply to the charge of inactivity on the part of the Electoral Department. Last night it was stated—I was out of the Chamber at the time, or I would have made the correction then—that there were on the roll for the Perth electoral district the names of some 3,500 people who were not entitled to vote, and that there had been at least 100, probably nearly 200, of those people challenged by the Liberal scrutineers upon going to the poll. It was stated that although this information had been forwarded to the Chief Electoral Officer no action had been taken by the Electoral Department. I now desire to inform the House that the hon. member referred to did take to the Electoral Office a roll, upon which there were pencillings-out of some 2,000 odd names. To be exact, 2,449 names had been ruled off. Further, the statement was made that these names ruled off were

chiefly names of persons who were not resident in the district, who had been ascertained not to be resident in the district. On the 1st December last the Chief Electoral Officer asked the hon. member to give such information as would enable the department to make clear and definite inquiries with respect to the charges which the hon. member had made. The Chief Electoral Officer on that date wrote as follows:—

Sir.—With reference to the copy of the Perth district roll, which you submitted to me after the recent Assembly election, and upon which a large number of names were ruled off, I understood you to say that such names represented electors who had been ascertained, from your exhaustive canvass of the district, neither to live at the address for which they appear on the printed roll, nor at any other address in the Perth electoral district. To enable me to formulate the necessary inquiries, and to decide upon the extent to which such inquiries should be carried out, I shall be glad to know whether I have correctly understood the statement you made to me. Thanking you in anticipation for a reply by return of mail, I have the honour, etc., etc.

Now, that was on the 1st December. It was not until the 7th December that a reply was received, although, in order to expedite matters, a reply was requested by return of mail. On the 7th December the hon. member wrote to the Chief Electoral Officer as follows:—

Dear Sir,—In answer to your letter of the 1st inst., as I thought I had already explained to you, the marked roll for the Perth district was attained in the first instance, prior to the issue of the writ of the election, by my friends in making an entire house to house canvass, and ascertaining the occupants of each house, and if they were not on the roll requesting them to sign a claim card. Then, during the election, the roll was dissected street by street, and the occupants of each house, so far as they appeared on the roll, were listed.

Then each house was visited, and careful inquiries were made as to whether these people still occupied the address given on the electoral roll; if not, were they known to be resident in any other part of the electorate. It was then, on this information, that the names were ruled off as you find them on the roll. I might add, however, for your information that, among the thousands whom I ruled off on the roll, there are a great many ruled off for the reason that, in the peculiar compilation of the roll, some persons' names appeared twice and even three times, and sometimes, as you will observe, these names were side by side. The erasures, therefore, include the duplicated names of these persons. I do not know that I can give you any further information. I thought I had already made this clear to you.

Now, as a matter of fact, from the very day that the hon. member called at the Electoral Department, the department was at work. The reason why the Chief Electoral Officer sent that letter to the hon. member was that the department might be sure as to the particulars which could be furnished to aid in the inquiry.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Have you the Chief Electoral Officer's answer to that last letter of mine, the answer that I received to-day? Read it if you have.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, I think that was on the 9th. Here it is—

I beg to acknowledge, with many thanks, the receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, contents of which I have carefully noted. I was under the impression that I had correctly understood your verbal statement to me with reference to the roll you submitted, but at the same time, realising that it is always better to have these things in writing, I thought it advisable to trouble you to confirm your statement. I am now glad I did so, as it appears that, in addition to what you verbally told me, there were other reasons why some names were ruled off on the roll, viz., on account of duplications, etc. This will be duly

taken into account when the investigations are being tabulated, so as to avoid recognising such "struck offs" as for "non-residence." I am making a thorough investigation of this matter.

Hon. J. D. Connolly : Yes, "I am making"; he had not made.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL : The hon. member stated that at the time nothing had been done. But the Chief Electoral Officer writes, "I am making a thorough investigation," meaning, "I have commenced, am making and will continue to make it."

Hon. J. D. Connolly : I received that this morning, as a matter of fact.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL : The letter continues—

I am making a thorough investigation of this matter, but on account of the number of cases which have to be followed up, it will naturally take some time before inquiries can be completed. Again thanking you for your communication above referred to, I have the honour to be, etc.

Now this is a statement the Chief Electoral Officer made to me this morning—

With reference to the statement made last night in the Legislative Assembly by the Hon. J. D. Connolly, as reported in this morning's *West Australian* (cutting attached hereto), I beg to report for your information that Mr. Connolly left a Perth district roll with me upon which 2,439 names had been ruled off, and informed me that these names represented persons who had been proved, by the comprehensive canvass he had caused to be made prior to the election, not to reside in the Perth electoral district, neither at the address for which they appeared on the roll nor at any other Perth address. On the 23rd November I applied to the Commissioner of Police for assistance to have inquiries made into 389 cases, which represented the number of electors marked by Mr. Connolly who had recorded their

votes, according to the polling place rolls. The Commissioner of Police advised me that it would not be practicable to undertake this work by his officers, and the file reached me on the 27th November. I then decided to undertake the inquiries by the aid of temporary officers of this department, and such inquiry was commenced on the 30th November, and the first preliminary outside inquiry completed on the 7th December. As the first day's inquiry, however, revealed that a number of electors were found still to reside at the addresses for which they appeared on the printed roll, I wrote a letter to Mr. Connolly, dated 1st December (copy attached), in order to ascertain that I had not misunderstood the verbal statement he made to me, and in order that I might decide how far inquiries would have to be made. To this letter I did not receive a reply until the 7th instant. Copy of such letter and my acknowledgment of same are attached hereto; as is also the instructions issued to the officers who made the inquiry. As regards the statement made by Mr. Connolly, I attach hereto a memo. (marked A), which sets out the result of the inquiry as far as time has admitted of it being completed. The further inquiry required with regard to those electors who have not as yet been found in the Perth electoral district is being proceeded with, but as it entails finding people outside Perth, it will, no doubt, not be complete for some time, as it will be necessary to obtain the assistance of the police in many cases. I desire to draw attention to the fact that the names ruled off on Mr. Connolly's roll included persons who were still living at the addresses for which they appeared duly enrolled, and in one case the elector had lived in the house for 20 years, and in another case 10 years. Mr. Connolly is reported by the *West Australian* as having stated that "though the information was forwarded to the Chief Electoral Officer, no action had yet been taken." With re-

ference to this, I can only refer to my statement above, which shows that the greater part of the inquiry has already been completed.

I have the names of those residents who are referred to as having lived at their present addresses for 20 and 10 years respectively, but I do not know that I ought to disclose them. This is the statement the Chief Electoral Officer refers to.

(1.) Total number of names ruled off the roll, 2,439. (2.) Total number of names of electors who voted and whose names were ruled off the roll, 389. Of the 389 who voted, 156 were found by the officers who conducted the inquiry to reside at the addresses for which they appeared on the roll; 70 were found to reside at other addresses within the Perth electoral district; 60 were found to have left the Perth electoral district within three months of polling day; 103 have not yet been found in the Perth electoral district (inquiries proceeding).

I think the House ought to be in possession of these facts in view of the statement made last night by the hon. member.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Will I be in order, Mr. Speaker, in making a personal explanation?

Mr. SPEAKER: No. I cannot allow the hon. member to make a personal explanation.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Well, the Attorney General has said what is not strictly in accord with facts, and I wish to put him right.

The Premier. It was the statement of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I submit, it would be in accord with the wishes of the House if you could see your way clear to allow the hon. member to make a personal explanation in reply to the explanation of the Attorney General. The hon. member evidently thinks that some of the statements made are not in accord with the facts as he knows them, and it would be only fair if he were al-

lowed to make a personal explanation.

The Attorney General: I have no objection to his doing so.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I thought not.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Perth desires to make a personal explanation. My difficulty is that his personal explanation must necessarily be a discussion of the statement made by the Attorney General. Let me read a passage in *May* with regard to the situation, so that hon. members may know how they stand—

In regard to the explanation of personal matters, the House is usually indulgent; and will permit a statement of that character to be made without any question being before the House; but no debate should ensue thereon. General arguments or observations beyond the fair bounds of explanation, or too distinct a reference to previous debates, are out of order; though a member has been permitted by the Speaker to make, upon a subsequent sitting, an explanation regarding alleged misrepresentation in debate. The indulgence of a personal explanation should be granted with caution; for, unless discreetly used, it is apt to lead to irregular debates.

I do not wish to be harsh. If the hon. member desires to make a personal explanation I feel I may be allowing him to do something a little irregular, but if he does not pursue the discussion initiated by the Attorney General I am willing to allow him that privilege.

Mr. TAYLOR: There is scarcely any necessity to quote *May*, because Standing Order 116 covers the position. Under that Standing Order, with the indulgence of the House a member may make a personal explanation. I think any hon. member is in order under that section in making a personal explanation with the indulgence of the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have not forgotten the Standing Order referred to, and I know its intention. By the indulgence of the House a member may explain matters of a personal nature, but such

matters may not be debated. The Attorney General has already made a reference to a matter which is not personal, but public.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The Attorney General has read correspondence between the member for Perth and the Chief Electoral Officer, and has put his own construction on it.

The Attorney General: I made no comment whatever.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I think the hon. member is entitled to make his personal explanation.

Mr. SPEAKER: The subject matter of the Attorney General's remarks is entirely one of a public, and not of a personal nature. It is in connection with the conduct and operation and administration of a public department. The Attorney General did not debate it. I watched him closely in that regard. He read a file—which I can hardly say was a personal explanation either.

Mr. Taylor: He got it in all the same.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Did he not make a personal reflection on me?

Mr. SPEAKER: I did not hear it. He read portions of a file, and I watched him closely to see that he entered on no discussion.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: He did more than read a file.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have said that, although it is a little irregular, I am going to allow the hon. member to make a personal explanation, provided he does not enter into any discussion.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I will be careful not to enter into a discussion. I only wish to repeat what has been said by way of interjection, namely, that the Attorney General read the correspondence and made his own comment on it.

The Attorney General: I made no comment whatever.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: He put his own construction on my remarks. Now what is this I am charged with?

Mr. Bolton: Nothing; it is you who have made the charge.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I am charged with the serious offence of saying something not true in regard to the Chief Electoral Officer. I have said nothing not true about that officer. This is borne out in his own correspondence, in the letter which I had yesterday. I do not think it needs explanation. The correspondence, as far as read by the Attorney General, speaks for itself. The letters clearly show that the statement I made yesterday, with the exception of one clerical error, was correct. The personal explanation is this: I am accused of saying that the Attorney General took no action. I say he was justified in that by his letters and on the correspondence which the hon. member has read, where it says action was not taken until 30th November. He speaks of the 2,500 or 3,500 names being investigated. If the Chief Electoral Officer or his officers had exercised ordinary common sense—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is now debating the matter.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I did not intend to do so, but I want to say that if the Chief Electoral Officer had looked at those names he would have seen that a number were duplications. I am not surprised to hear that when he visited the addresses of some of the people he found the people there.

The Attorney General: These are not duplications.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I am fair in assuming that they were duplications. No doubt he would have met the addressees at the addresses, and I want to say therefore that the Chief Electoral Officer did an unnecessary amount of work in visiting certain houses.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Heitmann: Chair; you are not in the Legislative Council now.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope no member will abuse the privileges given him by the House.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I did not intend to do so. I have said all that is necessary.

BILL—GRAIN AND FOODSTUFF.

Standing Orders Suspension.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [5.2]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the passing of a Bill through all stages on this day.

Hon. members know already the object of the motion. It is for the purpose of passing a measure through all its stages at this sitting if it is thought necessary. I may explain that when hon. members are in possession of the facts and particulars which make it necessary to pass this Bill I am prepared to leave it to them to say if it should be passed through all its stages at this sitting or not. This is a matter of urgency, and I am undertaking the responsibility by suspending the Standing Orders, but if members think that the measure is of such a nature that they will not pass it to-day because there should be some further discussion, then I am prepared to let it go. It is entirely a non-party measure. It is an urgent matter, and the measure can be passed through all its stages at this sitting if we so desire.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [5.4]: I do not think any member will object to the suspension of the Standing Orders at the request of the Premier when he states that it is necessary to introduce special emergency legislation, as I anticipated last night when discussing whether it was desirable to suspend the Standing Orders. We have already had some conversation with regard to this proposed legislation, and whilst we are not in possession yet of the full particulars of what is suggested to be placed before the Chamber, we are quite prepared, I take it all of us, that the Standing Orders shall be suspended in case it may be desirable to pass this legislation through all its stages to-day. Without being offensive at all, I hope I may point out that when members of the Opposition wanted the suspension of the Standing Orders last night, in order that this action should be taken, it was rejected at the instance of the Premier. The hon.

member might just as well have agreed to the suspension of the Standing Orders then as to-day.

Mr. SPEAKER: The suspension of the Standing Orders without notice requires a statutory majority, that is, a majority of the whole House. I have counted the House, and I find there is a majority present.

Question put and passed.

Bill introduced.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [5.6]: I move—

For leave to introduce a Bill for "An Act to make provision for insuring and distributing supplies of grain and foodstuffs and for purposes incidental thereto and consequent thereon."

Question put and passed.

Bill introduced, and read a first time.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending the Bill.

Second reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [5.7] in moving the second reading said: The Bill that is now before members has had to be drafted and submitted in a few hours and perhaps without that careful consideration that is so essential for such an important measure. But we are fortunate in having at our hand an Act of a similar nature which is already in operation and has been so for some time in the neighbouring State of South Australia, which enabled us to draft the Bill in a way which will be satisfactory to members. The title, I think, itself explains pretty fully the object of the Bill, but I suppose it is necessary that I should inform members, as far as in my power, the reason why it is necessary to bring in the measure. After all it is one that has far-reaching effects, and is one of a nature that it is not very often heard of in any part of the British Dominions, or in any part of the world, and is only necessary to meet abnormal conditions, and in Western Australia, unfortunately

as in the other parts of Australia, in most of the other States, we are doubtful as to the harvest—as to whether we shall have sufficient for our own requirements, and when I say our own requirements I mean sufficient for the purposes of gristing into flour, bran, and pollard, and for the purpose of providing seed for this year and perhaps a portion to carry over to the following harvest as well. I know there is a difference of opinion on this point. The Foodstuffs Commission appointed under an Act of Parliament passed last session, have informed me that they are of opinion after careful inquiry that we shall have sufficient. They have not pledged themselves to say more than that, while Mr. Sutton, the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, who is also a member of the Commission, has made inquiries in that direction and in other directions, and has had later particulars than those supplied to the Commission. It is just possible there may be an actual shortage, even if we obtain every bushel of wheat and ounce of flour we have in Western Australia, and which we are likely to obtain from the harvest. Unfortunately, some of the districts are rendering less than was anticipated only a month since. The crops are not turning out as well as was anticipated in those districts, although in one or two districts the returns are exceeding expectations. Taking it all round, I think we shall find the harvest will about come up to the anticipations of a month since. There will be none for export, and, under those circumstances, it is necessary that we should endeavour to conserve our food supplies for our people first; in considering that also to reserve sufficient for seed in order to put in a larger area next year when we may have a normal season. I do not want to make complaints on this occasion against any merchants or individuals because after all we recognise that trade is trade, but, at the same time, this fact remains that one or two States are now certain to have a shortage. They will not be able from this harvest to obtain sufficient wheat for purposes of gristing in their own State to meet the

local demands for flour. Having been able to foresee that they have repealed the proclamations that were in operation a few weeks since, and have allowed the merchants including the millers and buyers and sellers to fix their own prices and do business as they choose, with the result that to-day flour is selling at £14 per ton and wheat is being sold at 6s. 9d. per bushel in Melbourne. In Sydney old wheat is being sold at 4s. 6d. There is no quote yet for new. In Adelaide wheat is being sold at 5s. 7d. for farmers. In Sydney the price of flour is quoted at £11 17s. 6d. per ton, bran and pollard £7. Bran and pollard vary in different States. I think the price of bran and pollard in South Australia and Western Australia are the same, £10 for bran and £10 16s. 8d. for pollard. In Melbourne bran is quoted at £9 5s. and pollard £9 10s. In Sydney bran is quoted at £7 and pollard at £7. Then again I have had placed in my hands just before I came into the House a cable received by a merchant in Perth who is endeavouring to obtain a quote for flour or wheat in New Zealand, and the reply he got was "regret cannot quote." They are not quoting at all in New Zealand at the present time.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is that application made to an individual merchant or the Government?

The PREMIER: It is made by an individual merchant to a merchant in Auckland. There is a point that I want particularly to draw members' attention to, and that is the fact that the price has risen in the other States. In the Melbourne market flour can command £14 10s. a ton. We have here an Act under which the Commission which is now operating could fix the maximum price for the articles within the State of Western Australia, and this immediately causes millers to look around to see where they could find a better market elsewhere than in Western Australia. If they can do so you cannot object to such a business proposition, or if they sell their product somewhere else for a higher price. In view of the fact that they have to my own knowledge sold flour in Western Australia at £11 10s.

a ton, f.o.b. Fremantle, for delivery in Melbourne, it will be seen what is likely to occur unless we take some action. We decided during the last session to appoint a Commission for the purpose of controlling foodstuffs in Western Australia. Having decided that, as we did, we must now take further action for the purpose of conserving our interests. We should fix a price not on a basis that would be detrimental to the State or one that would compel the producers to send their product elsewhere in order that they may get higher profits upon it. If we have a surplus in the State, of course I should not object to the disposal of it, if we did not require this for home consumption. If, however, we require the whole of the product for home consumption, I would object at once to allowing it to go out of the State, as a result of which we might be compelled later on to bring it back again to the State at a very much higher price than that at which it went out. That £11 10s., f.o.b. Fremantle, would be tantamount to £13 or £13 10s. per ton in Melbourne, and to get it back again into Western Australia there would have to be added another £2 at least. I am not trying to argue that it would be the same flour or it would be at the same price, but if we had to get it back from Melbourne it would send the cost up to at least £15 a ton, and perhaps more, in order to meet our own requirements here. It must not be supposed that the Commission and the Government have done anything to prevent flour millers from keeping faith with contracts, for we permitted them during the last month, even before we knew for certain that there would be a shortage or that there would be likely to be one, or that there would be sufficient to meet our own requirements, to export a quantity of flour to different parts in order that they might keep faith in certain contracts which they had made. Now, however, we are faced with the position that we shall not have more than sufficient, even if we have sufficient, for our own requirements, and I say we can no longer consider these contracts but that we must first consider the contracts of our citizens to maintain

our own supplies here. Another point which ought to be kept in mind is the fact that under the Federal Constitution or the constitution affecting the Federal Parliament and the States of Australia generally, there must be free trade between the States. When we say free trade between the States we do not mean that there shall not be duty levied between the States, but we mean that there shall be no interference in regard to trade between the States, and that they may carry this trade on between the States, without any interference and without any restriction being placed upon it. When we found these difficulties arising, before asking Parliament to take the action which we propose to ask it to take, we communicated with the Federal Prime Minister and asked him whether there was any power given to the Federal Government to conserve the interests of the various parts of Australia, while at the same time conserving the interests of the whole by preventing the removal of foodstuffs from one State to another, which would only mean an increase in the cost of living without any benefit to the people of Australia as a whole. I regret the nature of the reply which the Prime Minister was obliged to send. I am quite satisfied, however, that he could not reply in any other terms. Mr. Fisher stated that the Federal Constitution would not permit the Federal Government to interfere with the free intercourse of trade between the States or any other part of Australia. But we are fortunate in this respect, that so far as the trade and commerce within our borders, the borders of this State, are concerned, this Parliament is paramount and can take complete control of trade and commerce within its own borders. When the Food Commission commenced operations under the Act of the last Parliament we compelled exporters to obtain the consent of the Treasurer after a recommendation was received from the Commission, before they could export any article from Western Australia that was embraced in the schedule or was proclaimed. We were able to do that so far as it meant exporting beyond the borders of Australia, but if it meant exporting

to any other State our powers were nil. That is the position, we now are up against, and that is what is going to happen unless we get some other power. The powers that we are asking for are that we should be able to appoint a board, or rather give the Governor-in-Council power to appoint a board. There are ordinary powers given in the Bill, but the principle is in regard to the appointment of the board. That board is designed to have the power to purchase or seize any commodity that will come under this particular Bill, and the commodities mentioned are grain and foodstuffs. Hon. members will see in the interpretation that "foodstuff" means flour or other products of grain, and includes hay, chaff, and any other commodity used for feeding live stock. To that extent, however, we keep in line with the Act which is in operation in South Australia, but we go further and provide that the term may also be extended by Order in Council to include any commodity which is a necessary of life within the meaning of the Control of Trade in War Time Act. If we find that there are other commodities which we require to retain in Western Australia, but cannot retain by any other means than by the powers given under the Act, we may by Order-in-Council include them as foodstuff and give the Board power to seize it and thus keep it within the borders of the State.

Mr. George: Do you refer to live stock?

The PREMIER: Yes, anything that comes within the meaning of the Control of Trade in War Time Act. That being the case, I want to explain to hon. members the principle upon which the Board can acquire any quantity of grain or foodstuffs now or hereafter within the State of Western Australia. The Board is to have that power; it is certainly an extreme power, and will have to be exercised with moderation. I am hopeful that we shall be able to get a board which will be satisfactory from that point of view in particular. At the same time extreme powers are necessary at times, and the present time is one of that nature. The method of exercising this power on the

part of the board is that the board itself, or any member of the board by the authority of the board—so that the board itself acts and not any individual member of the board—may purchase any grain or foodstuff. They can come along and if they find that certain foodstuffs require to be retained within the State they can arrange with the owners to purchase it. If they are unable to purchase them, they may take possession of the article or articles with or without the consent of the owner or any other person. That is an absolute power they have of obtaining possession with or without the consent of the owner or any other person. If the board is unable to obtain immediate possession they can give notice in writing that it is the intention of the board to acquire such grain or foodstuffs as they may think necessary. By giving that notice they thus become the owners at once of that particular foodstuff.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Without paying?

The PREMIER: They must purchase afterwards.

Hon. J. Mitchell: How long afterwards?

The PREMIER: At once. There is provision made for this, but I will explain that later. The act of giving notice is tantamount to the act of purchase.

Mr. George: But they take the responsibility for the safekeeping of the foodstuff.

[*The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.*]

The PREMIER: Yes; it is vested absolutely in the board as soon as they give notice. Hon. members will appreciate the necessity for a provision of that kind. The board can immediately lodge a notice that they propose to acquire, and it immediately vests the foodstuff in the board. The Bill then provides how the payment is to be made for such foodstuff or grain. They shall pay such price as may be agreed upon between the board and the owner, or if they fail to come to an agreement within fourteen days as to a price which will be satisfactory to both sides the question shall be submitted by either one party or the other to the present Commission which is appointed to control trade under the Control of Trade in War Time Act. It is proposed that

this board shall be separate entirely from the present Commission appointed under the Act I have just mentioned. In the event of a dispute arising in regard to a price between the owner and the board it may be submitted to the Commission which is already appointed, as I have said, and the personnel of which is well known to hon. members and to the public; and that Commission will then fix the price, and the owner must accept the price, and the board must pay the price fixed. We are providing, over and above that price which is fixed by the Commission, that there may be an additional payment in certain cases where the board is satisfied that the grain which is purchased or acquired is specially suitable for the purpose of seed; and that being the case the board may pay a higher price than that which has been fixed by the Commission. We hope by having an expert on the board, because a fair quantity of seed wheat will probably be acquired for the purpose of production within the State, that the board will be able to deal fairly with the grower of that seed, if he has grown wheat which is suitable for seed and it is true to name, and that the board will be able to give a price commensurate with the value of that grain for seed purposes. We also provide that in the event of the board not taking immediate possession or immediately making payment they shall pay the owner of the product that is taken five per cent. interest from the time that they have taken possession by notice, and as I have explained until such time as they have made payment for the article. That is, I think, a fair proposition. If we do not pay promptly we must pay interest on the capital. I would like to point out to hon. members that in ordinary transactions of business thirty days is considered to be a prompt payment. We recognise at the same time that there will be other obligations which should be met, and if we are keeping the owner out of his money for any period we should pay five per cent. for having done so.

Hon. Frank Wilson: He might be paying seven per cent. per annum.

The PREMIER: That is true.

Mr. James Gardiner: And then there is the question of storage.

The PREMIER: Yes, and it is also provided that if the wheat or foodstuff is stored the board shall endeavour to arrange with the owner for payment for the storage upon an amicable basis. If they are unable to agree, and the board considers it is not possible to arrange for the shifting of that grain or foodstuff at once, and the owner has to provide storage for a period, which he will probably have to do, and they cannot arrange a satisfactory price, then again the Foodstuffs Commission is called in for the purpose of fixing the charges and settling other matters in connection with the storage.

Mr. Wansbrough: Does the Premier refer to the present Commission?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. Wansbrough: As it is constituted?

The PREMIER: As it is constituted at the present time. Then the Bill provides to whom payment shall be made. Here we follow the South Australian Act, in fact we follow it generally all through, except in one or two slight instances, and in order that this Act may be made to suit local conditions and to apply more readily to Western Australia. We provide that the payment shall be made to the person who appears to the board to be the owner of the grain or foodstuff which is acquired. If there is any doubt arising as to the ownership, in order to avoid litigation which might affect the board's finances afterwards, which means the Government after all, and if any doubt should arise between the person whom the board thought was the owner and somebody else who claimed to be the owner, to avoid this they can pay the money into the Supreme Court and the two persons who are claiming that the foodstuff is theirs and that they should have the payment made for it can go into the court in the same way as anybody else in ordinary litigation. That will get over the difficulty of wrong payment being made.

Mr. James Gardiner: You left out of the Bill the appeal which is provided for in the South Australian Act.

The PREMIER: We provide in the first instance that the board will endeavour to mutually agree, and if they can-

not agree they may call in any party to decide between them.

Mr. James Gardiner: I am referring to the appeal from penalties.

The PREMIER: I do not know any particular reason why that was omitted; there may be a reason for it, but it was not submitted to me. I asked the Parliamentary Draftsman not to put in anything that was not essential to the purpose of the measure, and probably he thought this was not. The court may, in its wisdom, decide to hear a dispute on a question as to who is the owner of the property, and this may be heard either in chambers or in open court. We also give power to the board to make searches, although they may appoint an individual, in the person of an inspector, who may be approved by the Minister to act on the board's behalf. We also provide for regulations and hon. members will appreciate this fact that notwithstanding what we consider a principle, for the purposes of this Bill we have agreed that the regulations may be disallowed by either House. We have made the usual provision for offences, for obstructing officers or persons appointed by the board, and penalties are provided.

Mr. James Gardiner: What about the effect of acquisition by the board on contracts to deliver, provided for in Clause 19?

The PREMIER: When notice has been given a person whom the board considers is the owner of grain or food stuffs which they propose to acquire, he might be the rightful owner, or he might be acting as agent for the owner. The board can stay their hand until such time as they are satisfied as to who is the rightful owner, and no action can be taken against the agent; he is relieved of all responsibility.

Mr. James Gardiner: It relieves him of the obligation of delivery, but not of the monetary contract between him and the man who owns the wheat.

The PREMIER: If he is the owner he will receive payment from the board without further question. We have no desire to make anyone lose by the measure; the only object is to retain what we know is required for our own use, and

we have to take this precaution to protect ourselves when we do acquire. Under that clause it might happen that the person in possession at the moment may not be the owner, and when called upon to deliver to the board he is then relieved of further obligation by his having disposed of it, perhaps wrongfully, or anything of that kind.

Mr. Taylor: He stands in the same place as the owner.

The PREMIER: Yes, and unless he was the real owner at the time he would not obtain payment on the price being fixed. The financial clauses simply provide that the Treasurer may make advances out of any fund at his disposal to the Minister, and to the board, for carrying out the purposes of the measure. This is really giving the Treasurer power to take from public account which embraces all our funds—loan, revenue and trust funds, the sum total of our funds are called general account—and I may take from that account funds to finance the board to enable it to carry out the provisions of the measure, and we provide that, so far as practicable, such advances shall be repaid, and the other expenses of administering the measure shall be defrayed out of the moneys paid to the board for grain and food stuffs disposed of by it, and any deficiency which may arise shall be made good out of moneys provided by Parliament for that purpose. It is merely in the nature of a temporary advance. Funds must be found for the purpose of assisting the Minister, and they cannot be found better than from the public account. We do not want to draw from Loan Fund and then find some difficulty in recouping that fund afterwards. Our object, therefore, is to provide this money in the nature of a temporary advance, and, as far as practicable, it shall be repaid into general account. Should there be any deficiency then it will be met by Parliament. The measure will continue in force until the 31st December, 1915, and no longer.

Mr. James Gardiner: The South Australian Act will continue in force until the end of September.

The PREMIER: The question may arise as to whether the end of December is more suitable than the end of September. Personally I favour the end of September because we must meet Parliament before then. By the 30th September we should be in a position to know whether it will be necessary to retain the measure for a longer period.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Before next harvest.

The PREMIER: That is before next harvest. We must fix some definite date, and the 31st December and no longer appears in the Bill. I think I have explained as fully as possible the purport of the measure and the reason why it has been found necessary to introduce it, and I ask that it might be passed through Parliament as quickly as possible. I have consulted the leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Country party as to the necessity for the Bill. I am not wedded to the provisions contained in it; all that I am desirous of seeing is that we shall retain in the State what is necessary for our own people.

Mr. George: Do I understand that you have evidence of transactions of this sort?

The PREMIER: Yes, and they have been cited by the hon. member's leader. I trust hon. members will allow this measure to be placed on the statute book so as to give us the power which we consider is necessary. I would suggest that we suspend the sitting until 7.30 p.m. and then we can go on with the debate. It is hardly fair to discuss a Bill of this nature immediately. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: In deference to the desire of hon. members I will suspend the sitting until 7.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended from 5.40 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [7.38]: This is an emergency Bill similar to those which the Government found it necessary to introduce during the last Parliament. It will be remembered that on every occasion when an emergency Bill was introduced it was treated absolutely as a non-party question, hon. members

agreeing with the Government to accept such measures entirely on their merits. I admit at once that I look upon legislation of this description with some degree of concern as to what the effects may possibly be upon the commerce of our country. Hon. members have had only a few minutes in which to examine the measure which the Premier introduced before we adjourned, to take a cursory glance at the different clauses and discuss, perhaps, some of the main features of the Bill. However, it behoves us to be all the more cautious how we deal with it. We have in the first place to consider the principles of the Bill. On the second reading it is unnecessary to go into the details of the different clauses. What we have to do is to make up our minds as to whether the principles embodied in the Bill will justify us in accepting it on the second reading. The circumstances are exceptional. Owing to the drought more especially, we find ourselves in the unfortunate position—as indeed some and most of our sister States of the Commonwealth find themselves also—that our crops are to a great extent a failure, and there is some likelihood of there being a shortage of foodstuffs right through Australia. The Federal Government have already taken necessary action to prohibit the exportation of wheat and flour from the Commonwealth. The next thing then that concerns us is, how far we can conserve the wheat and flour we have in Western Australia to-day and which, as a result of the harvest, we are likely to have, for the requirements of our own people during the next 12 months. The Premier tells us that he is advised by the experts that we shall have barely sufficient to see us through the next 12 months and provide for seeding purposes in regard to wheat, and also to furnish sufficient to grist into flour for the consumption of our people. Unfortunately we note from the figures which the Premier has quoted that prices differ very considerably in the different States of the Commonwealth. He has given us a return showing that the price of wheat in Melbourne to-day is 6s. 9d., while flour is £14 a ton, bran £9 5s., and pollard £9 10s. In New South Wales the quote for old wheat is 4s. 6d.,

for flour £11 17s. 6d., and for bran and pollard £7. There is a very considerable difference in the values of these commodities in adjoining States with merely an imaginary line drawn between those States; thus we find the prices varying greatly between districts within a few miles of each other. In South Australia wheat is quoted at 5s. 7d., flour at £12 15s., bran £10, and pollard £10 16s. 8d. I have been inquiring into our own prices and find that to-day wheat was quoted from 6s. to 6s. 3d., and there were no quotations for flour.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot take those quotations as actual. Wheat to-day is 5s. 6d.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: These are the prices.

The Minister for Lands: That is for an odd truck.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Of course it all depends on the quality.

The Minister for Lands: No, on the quantity. It is not fair that the prices should be published in the Press; it is dangerous to use such figures, because it is an indication that Parliament recognises them as the prices. We cannot do that.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If wheat has been sold at that price farmers will of course recognise it as the price.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The Government will not.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I do not think anyone can dispute that fact, but I admit it all depends on the quality.

Mr. Wansbrough: The equivalent is being offered in the country to-day.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: These are simply the figures; there is a great discrepancy between the States. Whereas in New South Wales flour can be purchased and sold at £11 17s. 6d. per ton, in Victoria it is bringing £14 a ton.

The Premier: That is easily understood; one is an exporting State and the other an importing State.

Mr. James Gardiner: One will have a wheat surplus and the other will not.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Exactly, and if there were no obstacle to the free intercourse of trade between the States

there would not be a variation of £2 odd in the prices of flour in Melbourne and Sydney, because the natural trend of commerce would bring the surplus of New South Wales to assist the deficiency in Victoria, and so the prices would be gradually equalised. New South Wales has evidently some legislation which has permitted the authorities to take steps to interfere with the free drift of trade between the two States. I understand they have acquired the crops of farmers and the stocks of merchants. They have laid a restraining hand on them, and in order that we in Western Australia may not find ourselves sooner or later in the unfortunate position of being short and having to import from the Eastern States or elsewhere what is necessary for our own consumption, it is the Government's desire that Parliament should pass this legislation to restrain our people from exporting from Western Australia the stocks of flour and wheat which we possess.

The Premier: This Bill will give us power to acquire all or any part.

Mr. James Gardiner: That is an incidental object, though.

The Premier: If we found that wheat was being sold at such a price and that we could not get seed we would commandeer it and distribute it. If we found that one mill was taking all the wheat we could commandeer it and distribute it among the other mills.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: But the main object is to prevent the stocks we have and which we are likely to have as a result of our depleted harvest from leaving our State.

The Premier: That is the incidental object.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That is the main object, and I am in accord with it if we can pass legislation in such a form that full justice will be done to the individuals—the producers more especially—who own the stocks. While we adopt the principle that we are right in keeping within our borders the supplies we have for the use of our own people, we must be very careful to see that the producer

who, as it is admitted on all sides, has a very depleted stock owing to the bad season, gets the full market value for his produce. The Bill in itself, as the Premier admitted, is a very far-reaching measure. It strikes at once at the recognised liberty of the individual to own and do what he likes with what he possesses, and, although on all other occasions, without very just cause, I should oppose any interference with the liberty of the subject to deal with his own produce as he thought fit and send it to any market he liked, in the unfortunate circumstances now confronting us I think we would be justified in accepting the principle of the Bill and passing the second reading. Then in Committee we could consider it in detail to see that all concerned were duly protected. It will be noticed that in the definition of foodstuff, while it sets forth that it means flour and other products of grain, and hay and chaff and other commodities used for feeding live stock, the term may be extended, by Order-in-Council, to include any commodity which is termed a necessary of life within the meaning of the Control of Trade in War Time Act which we passed a few months ago. The meaning of necessities of life under that Act is very wide, and it is as well that hon. members should know the power proposed to be conferred by this Bill. Necessaries of life cover practically everything under the Control of Trade in War Time Act, such products, goods, chattels and things as the Governor may, by proclamation, declare to be necessities of life for the purposes of the Act. So, practically, if we pass this measure, we give power to the Government through the board to acquire anything they may declare to be required under this measure and under the conditions laid down. It ought to be noted that, in fixing the price that the board shall pay for any of the products to be acquired, the board shall confer with the owner and endeavour to come to an amicable understanding as to the value of the products seized practically by the board on behalf of the Government, and if they cannot agree on a price provision is made for an appeal, and the appeal as

provided in the measure is to the existing Commission appointed under the Control of Trade in War Time Act. Exception has already been taken to some of the actions of the Commission. I do not think any body of men forming a Commission of this sort could act with the tremendous powers conferred on them without giving offence to someone, and whilst I recognise that perhaps there are good grounds for complaint in instances, I have a strong objection to any individual of a Royal Commission being saddled with the responsibility for those complaints. The Commission act as a whole, and there is no individual member of a Commission who exercises authority except by the will of his colleagues, and therefore if a wrong has been done in any instance, the responsibility rests with the Commission, and not with the individual members thereof. Further, the Government act on the advice of the Commission; the Commission have no power in themselves: they recommend the Government, and the Governor-in-Council acts on the advice. Whether the Commission ought to constitute the appeal court so far as prices are concerned, is a question for members to carefully consider. In conversation, I am free to admit, some have suggested that there should be one individual instead of a Commission. The Premier, I think, has some idea of the kind in mind, but these are points which we can discuss fully in Committee. There are several matters which I think ought to be very carefully weighed by the House, even at this juncture when we are considering the second reading of the measure. If the board seize certain supplies on behalf of the Government and those supplies have already been sold elsewhere, the Bill provides that delivery shall not follow—in other words, the previous sale will be voided. But possibly there will be many claims under such a condition of affairs, and we ought to be careful to provide some method of indemnification against actions on account of sales made prior to the passing of the measure. If bona fide contracts and sales have been

entered into, if, for instance, a large quantity of flour has been contracted for shipment to Victoria, and the Government, if the Bill is passed, seize that flour, there is a liability attached to the non-delivery by the vendor. It is true that under this measure he will be relieved from the responsibility to deliver in Western Australia. The obligation would be discharged, but I do not think that this will relieve him from an action in the sister State for damages for breach of contract.

The Premier: You will appreciate the fact that no Act of Parliament in Western Australia can relieve a man who has contracted to supply a man in a sister State.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It is a point on which we should be careful to protect the vendor.

The Premier: Under those conditions you cannot.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, he can be protected.

The Premier: The only way would be that the Government should undertake to compensate him.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Government must indemnify him against any claim for damages.

The Premier: There will be a nice little bill to meet.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, there will be claims if they are legal and can be enforced. If I possess 1,000 tons of flour, am I to be prevented from carrying out a contract to deliver it to a purchaser in Victoria at £14 a ton for the benefit of the State if it were commandeered at £9 10s. or £10 a ton, and in addition to losing the difference I might have made on my bargain to be subject to an action at law by the purchaser in Victoria for breach of contract? If the State is going to take from the citizen—and it is right under exceptional circumstances to do so—the State must see that the citizen does not suffer in the direction I have indicated. This is a principle which I am outlining; the details can be thrashed out later on. We must protect our own people.

The Premier: I do not think that would apply. This would relieve him of his obligation under the contract.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It does not seem to me that it would. It would relieve him of the obligation to deliver, but would not relieve him from a claim for damages in consequence.

The Premier: Yes; the same action of the Commonwealth in preventing the export of commodities from Australia relieved our people from contracts with foreign countries, Egypt for instance.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I think the action would be very different in these circumstances. I do not think there is any analogy between the two cases. The High Court of Australia would control—

The Attorney General: If they sued for damages they would have to sue in our court.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: A contract may be made with Victoria.

The Premier: Where would you sue to enforce delivery, and what court would you use?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Action would be taken in Victoria to recover damages for breach of contract.

The Attorney General: You take possession and enforce delivery here.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It is up to the Attorney General to make that clear to the House. I admit at once that my experience will not permit me to be absolutely definite. I am simply pointing out the danger of the position. We must be perfectly sure of safeguarding it.

Mr. James Gardiner: Would the Federal law have any effect on that?

The Attorney General: Presumably the Federal law would take precedence.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I presume that under the Federal law a claim could be enforced in the Victorian court for breach of contract. I am advised that there is a method of judgment in the Victorian court being made automatically a judgment of our own court.

The Premier: No, that is not so.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: There we are; there is no body of men which differs more than lawyers do.

The Premier. That is how they live.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: You can always get opinions from both sides on any legal question. At any rate, I take it that it is necessary that hon. members should carefully see and be assured that no hardship would be inflicted, so as to safeguard any possibility of bankruptcy. There is another point which appeals to me, which emphasises the point which I have made, namely, that our farmers especially should get the full market value for their products.

The Premier: You would have to determine what the market value would be.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It is in the South Australian Act. Unfortunately it has not been included in this Bill. I do not quite see why, but I should like to see it there.

The Premier: The market value in South Australia is fixed on a basis which it is not desirable to fix here.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: We are only discussing the legislation and not the administration of the Act. Clause 13 of the South Australian Bill, as the Premier will note in his copy, in Subclause 3, says the price fixed shall be what the Commission consider to be the market value of such grain and fodder at the time, and in the place, where it is required.

The Premier: In South Australia they have a Commission which fixes the price. The only point which arises here is where they take possession.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Commission have to fix a price to be paid for the wheat.

Mr. James Gardiner: That is under the Prices Regulation Act.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Commission have to fix the price for the wheat to be taken over under the Act. But what is the price to be? The price fixed shall be what the Commission consider to be the market value of such grain or fodder at the place and time when and where it is required. There is an instruction. The Commission have to find out

what the market value is at a certain place. What about if it can be shown that it is a price which is not the market value at the place and at the time?

The Premier: What Commission does it refer to?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It does not matter what Commission it refers to.

The Premier: It does not refer to the Commission appointed under that Act, but to another Act.

Mr. James Gardiner: In South Australia all the prices are fixed as at the Port Adelaide or Port Pirie price, less the cost of carriage. It is determined there practically automatically.

The Premier: Yes, the market price is determined.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That is a wrong interpretation. It does not matter where you fix your price. The price may be fixed at the port for convenience sake. You may say that all the settlers who are away from the port shall be given that price less the cost of carriage to the port. That is a fair arrangement. The fixing of a price is done by fixing the rate at the port.

The Premier: That is right, if the market price has been fixed by the Commission under another Act at 4s. 6d. at Port Adelaide. The only difference between the price fixed at a later stage at Port Pirie would be the difference between getting the product to Port Adelaide.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The original fixing of a price is on the market value. If the hon. member will look through the South Australian legislation he will find a similar clause, instructing how the prices have to be fixed. You cannot get away from that. There would not be a subsection under the section, unless the same thing appertained under previous legislation. It is evidently a system in South Australia that their producers shall have the market value for the time being for their produce. I see no sense, rhyme or reason, and no justice in asking our farmers to accept 4s. 6d. per bushel for their wheat, and demanding that they should part with it at that

price when the real market price is evidently nearer 6s.

Mr. Heitmann: How do you arrive at the market price?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If I am an exporting State I would arrive at the market value at the world's centre, namely, the London price, less the cost of getting there. If I am an importing State I would arrive at the value by adding the cost of landing the wheat at Fremantle.

The Premier: You are barring yourself from being made a member of the Commission.

Mr. Heitmann: The hon. member does not want the Act at all. The market price in Fremantle is £11 now.

The Premier: The market value in West Australia would be sufficient to keep the product from being sent away by our millers. It is a price higher than they could get by sending it to Victoria.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Is there any justification for making the farmers sell at 4s. 6d.

The Premier: Victoria is merely paying a higher price because they must get wheat from somewhere.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The necessity is not to get something cheaper from your own people than you are entitled to, but to prevent the produce from going out of the State, and your having to bring it back at a higher price when you require it. That is the necessity. There cannot be any justice in asking our own people to take less than the real value for their own product.

Mr. James Gardiner: Quite right, if that is the full intention of the Bill, but I do not think it is.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Is the intention of the Bill to take something from the producer at a cheaper rate? If so, I am opposed to the Bill.

Mr. James Gardiner: To give them a fair price.

The Premier: Which has to be determined.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Is not a fair price the average price, the market price?

Mr. Heitmann: What is the market price?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The world's market price.

The Premier: This is a Bill to prevent the inflation of market prices.

Mr. James Gardiner: The parity in London price works out at 51s. a quarter.

The Premier: They are selling Australian produce in London to-day cheaper than they are selling it in Australia. This is according to the latest quotations.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I cannot see how they are selling Australian produce in London for less than they are selling it here when we have prohibited the export. How could they be selling flour in London when we are not sending it there.

The Premier: We have not prohibited the exportation of Australian products, which is what I am speaking of.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Commonwealth Government have prohibited the exportation of wheat and flour.

The Premier: I said products. I said they were selling Australian products at a less price in London than they were selling the same products in Australia.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I do not think they are selling wheat and flour.

The Premier: I did not say so; I said products.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I want to pin down the Premier to the specific items that we are discussing, namely, Australian wheat and flour, which I maintain to-day are not being sold cheaper there than they are being sold here.

The Premier: On London parity it is.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No; it may be the world's price, but I do not know. To-day we are forcing our producers to accept less than the London parity price for anything. If you can get London prices to-day, at any rate on the hon. member's own showing, they would be getting over 5s. a bushel, and yet you are taking their wheat for 4s. 6d. There is something wrong there.

Mr. Wansbrough: We should be losing 1s. 3d. a bushel if we accepted a price on the London parity to-day.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It therefore seems that we are losing 1s. 3d. a bushel on the London prices to-day on our price of 4s. 6d.

Mr. James Gardiner: Under the hon. member's suggestion we would be losing that.

The Premier: We should get 5s. 4d., f.o.b. Fremantle.

Mr. James Gardiner: It costs over 1s. a bushel to land in London.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I find other people than lawyers disagree among themselves. Apparently we cannot get any agreement of opinion at all. If 5s. 4d. is the market value on parity with London, why are our producers not getting 5s. 4d. here?

The Premier: They are getting more; they are getting 5s. 6d.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Then why is the Commission fixing the price at 4s. 6d.?

The Premier: That is for old season's wheat.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Old season's wheat is as dear as new season's wheat. I know that when I was in the milling trade myself some years ago I always paid more for old season's wheat than for new season's wheat unless there was a dearth of wheat. I want to see something introduced into the measure that will safeguard the producers to the extent that they will be getting a fair value for their produce. I do not care how it is fixed up. The South Australian clause appears to be one that is an instruction to the board or commission, whichever it may be, to give the market value, whatever that is.

The Minister for Lands: If the Bill is not to protect the consumer you do not want it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Let the consumer get what he can. You protect the consumer if you keep the goods in the State. It shows the fallacy of hon. members indulging in the opinion that they can legislate and restrict these things by Act of Parliament. You cannot fix prices or costs, or profits by law.

The Premier: But we have done it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I know that hon. members opposite think so. Once they tangle themselves up in the meshes of their own ignorance in respect to a matter that you begin to put before them, the position becomes hopeless.

Mr. Heitmann: The law of supply and demand comes in into this.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Supply and demand controls all markets. It is only because of an emergency that you ask the House to consider legislation of this sort. The emergency to my mind is not so much to see that the prices get down below the value of the produce, as to see that we keep our own products in our own State to feed our own people at the market value.

The Attorney General: That is interfering with the law of supply and demand.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: We know that if we allow the small supplies that we have of our staple foodstuffs, such as wheat and flour, to leave our shores to-day, we will probably find in six months' time that we shall have to buy back again produce to feed the community of this State. That is the reason for this legislation, not to make the farmer take a shilling a bushel less for his wheat than he is entitled to receive. I am not going to endorse any legislation which has such an object in view. There is another point which ought not to be overlooked in connection with this matter. Here is a board which has power to go to any individual and commandeer his produce, whatever it may be. The board says to the individual, "We will pay so much for your produce." He says, "I cannot accept that price; it is not a fair price." Then he has to go to the Commission or to a Commissioner, or, indeed he has not to go to the Commission or to a Commissioner, because the Commission or Commissioner can settle the price without the man's appearing before the Commission or Commissioner or having the right to go before it or him. I think we ought to give the individual the right to appear. The Commission has absolute power to say the price is to be so much and that the

man must accept it—power to say that without ever looking into the question or taking evidence or listening to the individual's side of the question. We ought to be very careful to see in connection with transactions under legislation of this nature that the individual has a full claim to ventilate his own aspect of the question.

The Attorney General: There is provision for appeal.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No; I think there is no provision for it. Then, here is another point with regard to which we must be most careful. This Bill, as it appears to me, gives to the board full power to take all that a man may have, all his stocks of wheat and flour and hay. The board, under this Bill, may commandeer the whole lot. Surely there ought to be some provision for the individual's retaining sufficient for his own requirements. Many of the farmers will need all the hay they have got or can hope to get this season for their stock. It ought not to be in the power of the board to commandeer that man's hay. The owner's legitimate requirements ought to be protected.

The Minister for Lands: Nobody would take the produce from one man to give it to another.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Unfortunately that, I understand, was the board's action just recently. I understood that from the papers. One farmer's wheat was taken by force to be given to another farmer.

The Minister for Lands: Some of it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Act under which that action was taken provides that the farmer may retain for his own use for seed purposes, but this measure does not contain a like provision. The Bill gives to the board the power to take everything a man has in the shape of produce. Then the Bill has another weakness. The Premier explained that payment for wheat or flour—I use these as an illustration because they are the two main products which will be affected, at any rate for the present—may be suspended. The measure provides that five per cent. interest shall be allowed from

the date on which the produce is acquired by the board, to the date of payment. It seems to me that there ought to be some limitation to that period. No man ought to have his belongings taken from him for the benefit of the community as a whole, and then be kept waiting for his money over any undue length of time. There is another point regarding which I am not quite sure. I observe the Bill contains a provision that the board may sue or be sued in the courts of law. Under the circumstances, it is just possible that a writ might lie against the board for payment of its debts. I should be glad to have enlightenment on that aspect of the measure. However, I certainly think we ought to see that if a man's produce is taken from him by the Government, prompt payment should be made to him by the Government.

The Minister for Mines: There may be circumstances in which delay would necessarily occur. For instance, in some cases it might take weeks to determine who is the real owner. In such a case the owner would be paid when his identity was determined.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That is all right; the law would settle that. If there was a dispute of that kind as to ownership, the board would pay into Court. But the fact remains that the Bill contains no provision for the making of payment according to the usual custom of the trade, for example. Produce is, of course, thirty days payment, as the Premier has mentioned. I think that rule ought to be recognised in this measure. I do not think we ought to finance upon the individuals whose produce we take.

The Premier: That would be hardly fair, because perhaps the first movement may have already taken place, and, if we provide the thirty days custom under this Bill, then in such circumstances it would mean sixty days.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: You are only dealing with the original owner. If I own wheat, and the Board comes down on it and commandeers it, it is the board's wheat from that time.

The Premier: Supposing that I had sold you wheat at thirty days, and that

when the board took it from you twenty nine days had expired, then, if the thirty days provision were inserted in this Bill, it would be 59 days before payment was made.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Not necessarily, because the Premier would have his recourse against me. If I buy wheat from the hon. gentleman, he makes me pay in thirty days, whether I have sold or not.

The Premier: That is so; and you will have to pay interest on the money. Why should not we recoup you that?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am not objecting to that. Indeed, I consider that the man should be paid the bank rate or the current rate, and not five per cent. He might be paying seven per cent. or six and a half per cent. for his accommodation at the bank. The rate ought to be the ruling rate. Again, there ought not to be such latitude that the Government may seize a man's stock and then hold over payment indefinitely, perhaps for five or six months, which is possible under this measure. It ought to be laid down that payment must be made in accordance with the usual custom of the trade. Time of delivery also should be limited. We should not expect a man to hold stocks for twelve months, or even six months. There ought to be a limitation of time. Surely three months would be sufficient. At all events some reasonable time limit should be specified in order that there may be a limitation to the term, an outside date when the compulsory seller can get his barns cleared and be relieved in order that he may carry on his occupation.

Mr. George: Storage charges would not recoup him.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No; not if he wanted the space. A reasonable time limit is provided in connection with every transaction of this nature. Then there is the very vital question of the issue of purchase certificates, so that the supplier or vendor under this measure may have something to show that he has actually had his produce commandeered by the Government, and that he is to receive a certain amount of money from

the Government within a certain time. The object is, of course, to give him something of a negotiable character.

The Premier: He has the usual recourse. When we take delivery of his product, he can sue for recovery; and that is all he can do with anybody.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I consider that when we are taking exceptional powers to interfere with the private property of individual citizens, we ought to lay down, as nearly as we can, the terms and conditions under which we are going to acquire that property. I think those terms and conditions ought to be laid down in this measure. I am merely throwing out the suggestion to hon. members, and they must consider it for themselves. However, I maintain that we cannot protect the individual citizen too carefully when we are enacting what is admittedly legislation of an exceptionally drastic nature. I do not propose to detain the House at greater length. I recognise the exceptional circumstances. I recognise that some measure of this kind, some power of this sort, has to be placed in the hands of the Government. As in the case of the other half-dozen emergency Bills which have already been placed on our statute book, I wish to give the present Government the same powers as we on this side would ourselves ask if we held the position of Ministers. At the same time, I think it behoves every member to weigh carefully clause by clause, how this measure will affect the producer in the first place and the trader in the next—the trader who may be holding stocks. We must see that both classes are fairly and legitimately protected in the different aspects that I have mentioned.

The Minister for Works: What about the consumer?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: This action is being taken in the interests of the consumer. The Government do not want to take my flour at £5 a ton when its value is £10 a ton so that they can get their bread a halfpenny a loaf cheaper. Or is that what the hon. gentleman means by protecting the consumer?

The Premier: Do not forget that the farmer is going to be one of the principal consumers, because of his seed wheat requirements.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I know that, but, still, the farmer is the man from whom the hon. gentleman is going to get the wheat. He cannot get it from anybody else.

The Premier: I do not want it myself.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I do not accuse the hon. gentleman of wanting it himself, although of course I do not know whether he intends to get a crop in on that big estate of his around Eucla. I do not propose to offer any objection to the second reading of the measure, but I hope it will be given the most careful consideration by hon. members, and more especially by those whom I see around me on this side of the House, because they are more particularly and more directly interested in a Bill of this description.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER (Irwin) [8.28]: I shall ask the courtesy of the House to bear with me in probably a rather rambling criticism of this Bill. I generally pride myself on having connected thoughts and using connected arguments; but as there has not been much time to consider this Bill, and it contains a number of very debatable points, I will just try to deal with these as they occur, trusting to gain enlightenment upon them when we go into Committee. I think the whole House will regret the necessity for legislation of this nature. The Bill is one that almost makes a man's heart sore to see introduced at all, and I think we should recognise the position, and be prepared to make those sacrifices in the avocations of peace that others are making in the avocation of war. Now, at the present juncture I do not think any man ought to expect absolutely his full pound of flesh for anything that he has to sell if that course is going to prevent the people of this State from benefiting. I think, too, that we have to recognise the position, and that we do recognise it. Consequently, a measure of this description should be debated as

the Premier has asked; that is to say, the collective wisdom of this House should be applied, on non-party lines, to see whether we cannot, with clear understanding, help the farmers in their present difficulties, and help this State in its present difficulties. I think the clear intention of this Bill as it appears to my mind is this: it is to take possession of all those things characterised as foodstuffs and grain in the interests of all the people of the State, in order that collectively they might be apportioned as the Government require to apportion them, not only to keep the millers but the farmers going. The position here is particularly serious, especially if export is permitted. There is an impression amongst some members that the Bill was merely brought in to prevent the export of flour. That was only incidental to the Bill. It is practically the only way we can prevent the export of flour and the reason we want to prevent that is very obvious. Every ton of flour that goes out represents 50 bushels of wheat, so that 1,000 tons of flour represent 50,000 bushels of wheat. When the apportionment of all this grain takes place, the Government will still have to apportion sufficient wheat for the flour consumption of this State, and consequently it would lessen the amount they would have for seed. In regard to the estimates, there is a material difference. Some good folk think that we are going to have enough grain produced to meet the requirements of the miller, seeding, and of the industry that the member for Canning (Mr. Robinson) takes a great interest in—poultry farming—and the small poultry farmers are large consumers. It looks at the present juncture as if we shall require something like 2,900,000 bushels of wheat to meet our obligations. The general impression is that it will take us all our time to garner that amount of grain. Then, in addition, we have the question of charter, which is a material one. In the Eastern States the prices of grain are—Victoria 6s. 9d., New South Wales 4s. 6d., and South Australia 5s. 7d., while in West Australia today it is 6s. 3d. The reason is obvious why it is higher in Victoria than any-

where else. First of all that State will have a shortage of something like $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions, and then the export of flour at £14 per ton enables millers to buy small parcels probably at 6s. 9d. I do not think you would get 6s. 9d. for half a million bushels. In New South Wales the Government fixed the price of wheat, and if they are going to have a surplus there it is possible that that may be a legitimate market price in that State. If we have a surplus here, and we are prevented by the Commonwealth from exporting, the probabilities are that our surplus would be anywhere near 4s. 6d. here. In South Australia the price is 5s. 7d. I saw in the Press the other day that the Commission there seized, I think, something like 300,000 bushels, and they fixed the price at 5s. 6d. The price in South Australia is lower than that in Victoria, for the simple reason that South Australia anticipates having from half a million to one million bushels over her requirements. When we come to our own State I want the people who have wheat to sell, to recognise two things. We would be justified, in ordinary circumstances, in fixing the price at London parity. The last quotation I saw was 51s., say 6s. $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. With the war rates from Fremantle it would probably cost 1s. 3d. per bushel to send that to London, so that if you were fixing the market rate upon London parity you would be getting practically 5s. 1d. That is one phase. Then secondly, what makes the wheat 6s. here is this: I venture to say that were it not for the action of the Government in assisting the farmers, that from 60 to 75 per cent. would not be able to buy a bushel of wheat. It is the action of the Government themselves in the interest of the farmers that is putting up the price to 6s., we will say for odd lots, because if such were not the case they would only have to provide for that necessary to produce flour, and for 25 per cent. that the other people could buy, and then they would have the surplus to distribute over the 75 per cent. Consequently the Government are making more than an average market. The price would otherwise have to be fixed here ac-

cording to what it was in South Australia or in Victoria. It is the very action of the Government in assisting the farmers and that the Government have come into the market to practically buy nearly the whole of the product of the farmers this year that is making the price higher than probably is justified on every other ground. I want people who have wheat to sell to recognise the position that the price is fair, and what might be expected at the present juncture. We believe it would be a wise thing to fix the price in the Bill itself so far as wheat is concerned, giving it a value at its nearest port. Then we have the question of chaff. There is going to be a scarcity in the production of chaff. Again the Government will be the biggest purchasers, and unless the Government were heavy purchasers the probabilities are that those who could purchase would get their chaff cheaper. I want all these circumstances to be realised in all fairness, and I want the people to realise that the Government are trying their level best to help this industry in every possible way. When a similar measure was before the South Australian Parliament there was practically little or no discussion on it. Members appeared to realise that it was a Bill that had to be brought in. But South Australia's position was somewhat different from that of Western Australia. There the wheat was held principally by the farmers themselves. Seventy per cent. of the farmers held the wheat that was floating at that particular time. Here we find it very difficult indeed to express our views as to what would be best under the circumstances, and it is on that account that I am talking rather than debating this measure. Then we come to the question of the board to be appointed. As it is known there has been a little trouble over some of the actions of the existing Food Commission, and the feeling would be better if it were known that the board under this Bill was going to be appointed by the Government in consultation with the leader of the Opposition and myself. I think the Premier will say that is only fair, because then the people would get rid of the idea that the Commission could

take your product. This board is a governing factor; it fixes the price, and if it cannot agree, the matter will go before a Commission. When the Bill is in Committee I may submit an amendment to the effect that the price shall be put in, and that any appeal shall be to Mr. Sutton, the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, for whom every farmer in this State has the greatest respect, and I am certain they would be satisfied to take his decision as final. There are one or two things which, as the leader of the Opposition has said, will require to be made clear. I would not want to interfere with agreements between farmers themselves. If a farmer had sold his wheat to his neighbour for seed purposes, no reasonable person would want to interfere even if that neighbour paid a higher price than that which had been fixed. That was the position they took up in South Australia, where they said, "We do not wish to interfere with anything existing between the farmers themselves." We require to say the same thing in regard to chaff. I assume there would never be any desire on the part of the board to take from a man that which is only sufficient for his own needs. When it comes to the fixing of the price I do not think there is anything objectionable in the provision contained in the South Australian Act, which the leader of the Opposition desires to see embodied in this measure; because it merely says that the price to be fixed shall be that which the Commission considers to be the market value of grain or fodder in that place at the time when and where it was required. The Minister said it was only left out because it was not thought to be necessary. However, to insert it would satisfy the leader of the Opposition and perhaps a good many others. When it comes to the payment, I think it would be wise to give a certificate on taking a man's wheat, and to give it a terminal date. The fact that on a fixed date he could go to the Treasury and demand cash for his certificate would enable him to get an advance from his banker, and, in addition, it would give some terminal time for the whole transaction. I assume that in giving any effect

to this measure notice will at once be given, so that people will not go on effecting sales and putting men into difficulties. That leads to the question, at whose risk is the wheat to lie after it is bought. If the Government are satisfied to say "Store it here," are then to take the risk, or is the risk to be taken by the man from whom the wheat has been purchased?

The Premier: The clause distinctly provides that the risk is the owner's, and in the circumstances you describe the owners will be the board.

Mr. George: Is the seller to be responsible for the delivery after they have taken his wheat?

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: Do not let us injure the principles of the Bill for the sake of little details, the necessary amendment of which will be suggested by commonsense.

The Premier: Subclause 2 of Clause 12 provides that it vests immediately in the board.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: Then you make provision for the storage.

The Premier: Yes, it shall vest in the board.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: It is merely a point which was raised as to the weights. If you are going to leave it there would you buy it there? On the other hand, if you send it to the siding the weights may be taken there.

The Premier: As soon as we take delivery it vests in the board, and the responsibility is on the board.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I wish to stress that point of giving a terminal certificate. The certificate would become a marketable security. The probabilities are he will lose something on the interest, but I do not think it would be very much, because, after all, there will be only two or three months between the time you buy the wheat and the time when it is put in the ground. I hope the Attorney General will make Clause 19 clearer. As I read it it provides that if a man has contracted to deliver wheat, and the Government come along and take that wheat, it absolves him only

from liability with regard to its delivery, and does not affect him or the man who had previously purchased it from him in regard to the financial liability. I would also like to be clear as to any effect the Federal Act may have on this measure. With regard to dealings between the farmers, the Commissioner of Crown Lands in South Australia said, "We want to interfere as little as possible in the dealings between farmers." If the Premier has not seen these debates which I have been looking through, I do not mind letting him have them. I am satisfied with the Bill, because South Australia already has it in operation and, as the leader of the Opposition has said, as far as we agree with the principle we will try to think out the details so as to correct anything that appears to us wrong, and make it clear to the country why this is being done. It is being done in the best interests of the people of the State, that each may receive fair play. It is being done because the Government realise that there are thousands of farmers to-day who, without it, cannot go on with agriculture. Anything done in the spirit of the general good of the whole people is going to have some effect, and we can afford to make some sacrifice. Next year's prospects depend upon this year's wisdom. Every one of us is up against this problem. I have it for breakfast, dinner, and tea. I sleep with it and wake with it, and the more I look into it the more knotty it becomes, and the more difficult to arrive at a clear solution that will do that justice to everybody which will satisfy everybody. If we are going to give an extravagant price for wheat we will penalise the man who is having a struggle to get along. I am satisfied that whoever has to administer the Bill will have much the same difficult position to fill as Mr. Sutton and Mr. Paterson have to-day. We want all to realise that it is up to them to help in every possible way. Do not let us labour little things which may personally affect us. Let us rather say, "These are big issues requiring the whole patriotism of the House and a good deal of the patriotism of the country to help any Government to carry them to a successful issue."

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [8.56]: There is a necessity for the Bill, a necessity caused by the fact that there is not sufficient foodstuff in the State, or only sufficient to supply our own requirements. In regard to foodstuffs, we all desire that the people of the State shall not be placed at the mercy of the speculator, who is looking only for profits and does not care a twopenny hang for the suffering people. There are many details in the Bill which will require to be thoroughly discussed in Committee. I believe the Government invite that discussion. At the same time there is one thing we may as well think over before reaching Committee, namely, that we have not only to see what measures are necessary for the protection of our foodstuffs, and necessary to be fair to the producer, but we have to see also what will be fair and equitable in regard to the liabilities incurred in connection with the trade. It is a difficult problem, one in which any business man will see numberless difficulties. We have to do the best we can. If we cannot get a perfect measure, we require at least to have it based on equity for all concerned. I heard from the Premier that there was a large quantity of flour prepared to be exported from the State. It would be well if we could be thoroughly satisfied in regard to that, because I was talking to one of the largest millers yesterday, and from him I understood that there was no intention, and hardly any probability, of an export of this sort being carried out.

The Minister for Mines: We have undoubted proof of it.

Mr. GEORGE: I mention it so that it may go out with all the weight the Government can give it that we are legislating to prevent our people being penalised both in regard to their food and the seed they may require. A Bill of this sort affords boundless opportunity for a long speech, but I think the leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Country party have pretty well expressed my views, and I only wish to repeat what I said last evening, namely, that in point of equity we must remember all those concerned in these transactions.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [9.0]. I wish to say a few words in connection with this Bill. It we prevent the export of wheat I think we shall be doing all that is necessary. If the wheat remains in the State it will be available to the people, and if flour is wanted we will be able to get it, and if seed wheat is wanted that, too, will be obtainable. I can understand the anxiety of the Government that there should be no shortage of seed and flour. I have a copy of the preliminary crop forecast, which shows that it is expected 3,200,000 bushels of wheat will be produced this year. We must remember that at the end of September last we had about 20,000 tons of flour in hand, and that we can shorten this year by cutting off a month, so that it is more than likely we shall have enough wheat and flour to supply our needs. It is quite obvious that the price of wheat, if we were an exporting country, would be the parity of London value, and if we were an importing country the price would be that at which we could import wheat. It is always well to remember when discussing wheat to be milled into flour that it takes 1s. a bushel to influence the price of a 2lb. loaf of bread by a halfpenny. The difference between wheat at 3s. and 4s. or 4s. and 5s. a bushel does not make much difference to the price of the bread the people eat, but it means a considerable difference to the man who has the grain. The forecast says that we shall have a 2.5 bushel average, and that we shall reap about one-half of the crop that was sown. One-half of the area put under wheat will be stripped, so that the average expected is about 5 bushels. If members calculate the cost of producing five bushels they will realise that the present price of 4s. 6d. a bushel fixed for wheat is altogether inadequate.

The Minister for Lands: The 4s. 6d. was not for this year's wheat. It was for an 11 or 12 bushel crop.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I know it is not intended by the Commission to be the price, but to-day the price fixed by the Government for any wheat, whether old or new, is 4s. 6d.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I assure the Minister that the Commission have fixed and the Government have approved, of the price of 4s. 6d.

The Minister for Lands: For old wheat. The Attorney General: For milling wheat.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The price refers to wheat.

The Attorney General: A distinction is made.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is not worth wasting time, because I do not think the Government will do an injustice by allowing the price of 4s. 6d. to remain a day longer. If a farmer has 300 or 400 bags of wheat stripped in his field, any one can come along and claim it at 4s. 6d. a bushel.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is perfectly true that any one can. The Attorney General has to be approached before a prosecution can be undertaken, and if the Minister for Lands wants further information on the subject, I would refer him to my legal friend, the member for Canning.

The Minister for Lands: I have all the legal advice I want on this side of the House, and am well satisfied with it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am quite willing to bow to the superior knowledge of any person sitting on the Government side, but the Attorney General has not had the experience in this connection which the member for Canning has had.

The Premier: Did I understand you to say 4s. 6d. included new wheat?

The Attorney General: Yes, and he is appealing to the member for Canning.

The Premier: It is absolutely incorrect.

The Minister for Works: Time does not always make the best tradesman, you know.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I assure the Minister for Lands that to-day the price for wheat is 4s. 6d.

The Premier: It is not.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is impossible to say whether it is for old or for new wheat. I know the Government will not

allow that price to remain, but will alter it.

The Attorney General: It has never been so.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Attorney General did not allow a prosecution to be proceeded with—

The Attorney General: Because of the very reason we state.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That the House may have some experience of what is going on, let me mention the experience of a man—not Mr. Marwick—who had 1,000 bags of wheat. It was claimed by a miller at 4s. 6d., and he was told that he must deliver. In the meantime Mr. Sutton offered 5s. 4d. for it, but the owner—a Beverley farmer—became scared on learning that the Act provided for a fine of £1,000, and he asked Mr. Sutton to let him off because the miller might prosecute. Mr. Sutton replied, "Let me have the wheat, and you will be quite safe." But the farmer would not take Mr. Sutton's word and persuaded him to be allowed to sell to the miller at 4s. 6d., and since then Mr. Sutton has procured the wheat from the mill for seed. That is the position, and it is no use denying that 4s. 6d. was the price in Mr. Marwick's case. While 4s. 6d. is the price to-day—

The Premier: It is not; your own leader said it was 6s. 9d.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is the price the Government have fixed.

The Premier: We did not fix that at all.

The Attorney General: You said our officers were offering to buy it at 5s. 4d.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Government cannot get away from the fact that they have approved of 4s. 6d. as the price for wheat.

The Premier: For old wheat.

The Minister for Lands: And we are buying it for 5s. 3d.

The Premier: You know that 4s. 6d. is for f.a.q. milling wheat and at Perth parity.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Then 4s. 6d. has been fixed.

The Premier: That is for old wheat.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: After all the denials, we now get an admission from the Government that the price is 4s. 6d. at Perth parity. That is to say, if a man at Albany had 100 bushels he would get 4s. 6d. per bushel at Albany less the freight to Fremantle, and if the freight was 6d. a bushel it would mean 4s. to him. We are asked to trust the Government entirely under this measure—the Government who, under another Act, have done the things I have mentioned. We have had some experience of the Government under the Control of Trade in War Time Act. I will not refer to the Premier's promise to me when this measure was being discussed. In New South Wales the Government introduced a Bill on the 1st December, and the Minister, in moving the second reading, said—

The Government were not going to place themselves under an obligation to buy every bushel of wheat grown in New South Wales at 5s., as some would be offered to everybody who cared to bring in their wheat.

The Government there realised that if a farmer had wheat to sell he must be able to sell it, and get his money promptly. If the Government here undertake to buy all the wheat produced in Western Australia this year, they will require £80,000 or £900,000. I doubt if the Government are prepared to put the money into the venture, and if they have such a sum to spare they had better put it into other things. If they can prevent the export of wheat and still leave the people free to trade one with the other, it will be very much better.

The Minister for Works: You are opposed to the Bill, then.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier has not 100,000 pence with which to buy wheat, and he has taken care to provide in the Bill that he need not pay the farmer until it suits him to do so.

The Premier: You have not read the Bill.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If the farmer has wheat, hay, or anything else to sell, he is as much entitled to sell it and get his

money day by day as the Premier is to draw his salary every month.

The Premier: Does the Bill say anything to the contrary?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Unless farmers can make sales when they desire they cannot keep their farms going or pay their way. The position to-day is unsatisfactory because every one knows that the Government may interfere at any time. It is true that wheat is bringing in the open market far and away beyond the price of 4s. 6d. which the Government have fixed. While the Government think 4s. 6d. a fair price, the people are willing to give what they consider a fair price, notwithstanding the figure fixed by the Government. I do not intend to allow the Bill to go through without moving some amendments.

The Premier: That is an unnecessary observation.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier said he had copied the South Australian Act. That statute contains an important provision in connection with the fixing of the price of wheat which does not appear in this measure. Subsection 3 of Section 13 provides that the price must not be less than a fair market value. This point has been discussed, and I have no wish to pursue it further, but the clause is incomplete without the inclusion of a similar provision. Without it farmers will be left to the sweet will of some Commissioners. One of them may be Mr. Sutton, in whom I have the utmost confidence, but I doubt whether it would be wise to thrust upon him this additional duty. I intend to move that the Bill be limited in its operations to the end of September. If the 31st December is retained it will overlap the current season's crop and this would be undesirable. We should not interfere with the ordinary course of trade. Circumstances now are very special and it is necessary that something should be done, but it is not necessary that the Government should take power to secure wheat when next year's crop is being harvested. We have a duty to the State, and that is to keep the wheat in

the country. Beyond that the Government have no right to ask for any special power. The leader of the Country party said we ought to be patriotic. It is very easy to be patriotic with other people's money. Some people have wheat to sell and others will be compelled to buy, but I do not think that any argument has been adduced to justify any man who has 15s. demanding one of the Premier's sovereigns for it. Nothing would justify the Government in taking wheat at less than a reasonable price. If the Government are willing to take chaff and wheat at a reasonable price when the farmer wants to sell, I see no strong objection to the measure, but if it is the Government's idea to obtain these powers to fix the price of wheat at less than a fair figure, and to take it at such a price—

The Premier: Who said so?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If it is the Government's intention to take the wheat at less than a fair price when they want it, and not when the farmer desires to sell, we should be doing wrong in giving them such powers. The Premier laughs when I suggest he may not behave quite fairly. We have had some experience of him. We know our Premier and knowing him we are not going to hand the fruit grower, the potato grower, and the wheat grower over to him unless we have an assurance that these people are going to be treated with reasonable consideration.

The Premier: We have only acted on the advice of the Commission.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier must not hide himself behind the Commission.

The Premier: The Act provides that we cannot act otherwise than on their advice. If you have any complaint against them you must have it against your own nominee. We say it is a good Commission.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Commission recommend to the Government, and the Government approve or disapprove of the recommendation. The Government approved of the price of 4s. 6d. which was recommended by the three Commis-

sioners and not by one of them. It is nonsense to say that the Government are not responsible. The Premier and his colleagues are responsible for the fixing of that price.

The Premier: The price is all right.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It cannot be argued that Commissioner Rae is responsible for all that happened at York and Beverley.

The Premier: It is a good Commission; it is only your own people who complain about it.

The Minister for Mines: The complaints come from your own people.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Where?

The Premier: From your own irresponsible colleague. What about the *Sunday Times*, your official journal, which made a vicious attack upon him?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know what the *Sunday Times* has to do with the Premier's speech. I do not wish to discuss the matter further. I hope the Premier will allow the Committee stage to stand over until next Tuesday, until such time as hon. members have had an opportunity of going carefully into the matter. It is unfortunately true that the last few seasons have been very bad indeed, the 1914 season being especially so. This year we have not had that moisture which we expected all over the State.

The Premier: The farmers at all events have had too much wind in one district that I know of.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We will at all events go into the whole matter and see if we cannot take some of the wind out of the Premier's sails. We will give him power to protect the people but not to do with the farmers what he would like to do. I think we are particularly called upon to protect the farmers this year. It must be remembered that they have had no crop to speak of, that they have been very hard hit, and that they are deserving of great consideration. I dare say it would be better to see that the farmer gets more than a reasonable price for his wheat than that the Government should arrange by law that he should get less. That is a matter for the Govern-

ment, and the question will be left to them when the Bill is passed into law.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore) [9.20]: I do not wish to delay the House at this juncture. We have before us a very important measure. I view with regret any measure that is calculated to interfere with the free course of commerce along its ordinary channel unless in its flow the public are not needlessly injured. We are living in exceptional times; we are living at a time when the State is suffering from one of the worst droughts in the history of living man, and when we have not only the drought within but the war without. I think on an occasion like this hon. members must recognise that it will be necessary to introduce exceptional measures for them to consider. I am prepared myself to assist the Government in every possible way in passing this measure as long as every endeavour is made not only to protect the public but to protect the grower. All these food stuffs, wheat, and other agricultural produce should be protected in the interests of the grower, those who need the seed, and of the public generally. I think it is that which hon. members have to consider when going through the Bill in Committee. I trust that the Government will at any rate have that object in view, and that when they have an expression of opinion from this side of the House, from those who are more particularly interested in the agricultural pursuits of the country, and represent those who are engaged in these industries, they will give consideration to the proposals with a view to perhaps amending the measure so as to make it more acceptable to those who are more immediately interested in it. I hope the Government will at all events approach the matter in that spirit. If they do so, hon. members on this side of the House will be prepared to meet them in a similar spirit. We are here to do the best we can at this juncture in the interests of Western Australia, and we must consider fully the interests of those unfortunate people who have to produce that which is required for our needs. They must primarily be considered. The

farmer generally throughout the State is the hardest worked and the worst paid man in the community. There is not the slightest doubt that under ordinary circumstances in this State the wheat and flour of this country have been produced under sweating conditions. In many instances I am sure that the poor unfortunate farmer who produces the foodstuffs for the people of the State has not taken out of it for himself more than four shillings day by day and has had to work hard to get that much. I hope, therefore, in considering the Bill that those who have produced the wheat but who have made nothing out of it, as well as those who may have been a little more successful than their fellows, may be considered in the Bill that is before the House, and I trust that the Government will meet the situation in a spirit of conciliation.

The Minister for Works: What about the man who has not been successful and who has worked equally hard?

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I say that the man who is fortunate in having made a little should be considered as well as the man who has not made anything. I do not think because a man is fortunate enough to have a little wheat he should be shoved under. The spirit in which this Bill should be approached is that he should be considered fairly as well as his unfortunate fellow. If the Government meet the Bill in that spirit I am quite sure that hon. members on this side of the House will be prepared to meet them in the same spirit. I trust that at any rate we may be able to make this Bill, which I regret the necessity for the introduction of, acceptable to all classes of the community.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [9.25]: I feel somewhat diffident in approaching this matter, more particularly as one somewhat inclined to the Bill. Speaking for my own district I feel sure that the farmers there will view this Bill with a certain amount of disfavour. We are fortunate inasmuch as we have not had an absolute failure in the district, in fact some of our settlers are in the fortunate position of having a better crop this year than they

have had in previous seasons. I feel, however, that it is only fair they should have a just and reasonable price for their product, and if the Government will agree to Section 3 of the South Australian Act I am quite confident that the farmers in my district at any rate will view the Bill more favourably. The price of wheat has been freely discussed, and some hon. members have stated that the price is governed by the price ruling in London. In normal seasons, of course, we admit that that is the price which has ruled. In a year such as this, however, the price which wheat commands is the price based on supply and demand. I do not think it is fair for the Government to say that the price is to be continued at anything more or less than the market value. I hope in committee to have a little more to say on this subject. I only rose to express the feeling in my district as regards the fixing of the price of wheat and chaff. I think it is a matter we should approach with great consideration because I consider that the farmer who has had many lean years, speaking for those in my own district, where they have a fair average crop, should be entitled to get a fair, just, and reasonable price for their produce.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [9.28]: I do not intend to say much with reference to this matter. I think myself that the Bill shows that the Government had the welfare of the people at heart when they brought this Bill forward and that they are attempting to deal generously with them. There is no doubt, as my friend has said, that while a few people have a little wheat there are many who have none. I was tackled on this question when I was leaving Brookton to come down here. A friend of mine, who helped to place me in this position, said to me, "What about the price of wheat?" I replied, "I do not know that it is going to be at such an extraordinary price. I believe the Government are going to fix the price." Thereupon he said, "What nonsense! The idea of fixing the price of wheat! Those who have a little to sell will get nothing for it. Look at our losses." I said, "Which do you think will suffer most—those who have a little to

sell, or those who have a lot to buy?" I think it is only right that we should deal as liberally as possible with those who are in want of seed. There are in Western Australia many farmers who have scarcely enough to eat, and they have to come to the Government to-day to ask to be assisted through the great difficulties arising out of the sad conditions at present obtaining in our State. I am very pleased indeed to see the statesmanlike manner in which the Government are coming to the assistance of the farmer, and I think Ministers are doing very well indeed. I know what droughts are. In the district I lived in before coming to Western Australia I suffered often from severe droughts—droughts quite as severe as that from which we are suffering at the present time. I had two total failures. The last one was in 1907; I had 1,000 acres under crop, without stripping one grain. Of course, the Victorian Government came to the aid of the people, but not sufficiently. That is one of the main things to be considered in rendering assistance to the farmers. At the present time there is every indication of a fair price in 1915-16. If a farmer can get sufficient fodder and seed to put in a reasonable area, then in all probability he will have a fair season. If he has sufficient seed he will be able to pay off his liability to the Government and also to recoup himself largely if not entirely. I remember one case arising out of the great drought of 1902 in Victoria. A neighbour of mine, a large farmer with something like 1,500 acres under crop yearly, was a sufferer; and the Government would allow him only £60 in seed and fodder for each 640 acres. I had a conversation with this farmer, who said, "This is no good to me at all. I am considerably behind, and the little bit the Government are offering would not pay the debts I owe at the present time." That gentleman was fortunate enough to have a brother in South Australia who possessed plenty of wheat. He went across to his brother in South Australia to obtain seed, and he got the £60 from the Victorian Government and spent that in fodder alone. The following harvest he

was not only able to pay off the whole of his liabilities to his brother and to the Government, but he had a considerable banking account besides. This goes to show that if the farmer gets a fair quantity of seed and fodder, sufficient to enable him to put in a reasonable crop, he will be able not only to pay off his liabilities to the Government but also to place himself in a much better position. One of the main features to be considered in supplying the needs of the farmers who have suffered is that the aid given them should be sufficient to carry them over the intervening time. I am very pleased with the attitude which the Government have adopted in this matter, and I am also thoroughly satisfied with the interpretation which our leader has given or this party's position. I also approve of the amendments suggested by the leader of the Opposition and by the leader of the Country party. I have no wish to prolong the debate at this stage. Some of our friends on the right have, I think, repeated over and over again the very same arguments and words that each of the preceding speakers had already used. We do not seem to have got any further ahead. The discussion appears to me to be needless. When the measure goes into Committee it will receive from me the support which it needs.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM (Greenough) [9.35]: A great deal has already been said on the Bill under discussion. As representative of an electorate in which there are farmers with perhaps a little wheat to sell, and farmers whose crops have been an absolute failure and who therefore must be buyers, and in which there are, further, large numbers of consumers, I recognise that we must consider the needs of each class of people. I am pleased indeed to see that the Government have taken this matter up in the proper spirit, with the desire of keeping in the State for the benefit of our people what has been produced in this State. I do not wish to enter into details or to criticise the measure at this stage, because that would be, as my friend has said, a mere repetition of previous utterances. If there is any defect in the Bill

as it has come before the House—I understand it is a copy of the South Australian measure—the defect can be remedied in Committee, and the Bill generally made suitable to our local conditions. I am glad that the Bill has been introduced, and I feel sure that when it has been finally shaped in Committee it will render justice to every section of the community.

Mr. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [9.37]: I do not intend to offer any objections to the measure, but I desire to draw the Premier's attention to a certain provision of the Bill which, in my opinion, directly affects its administration. The measure provides for a board of directors, and the number of directors is three. The chairman of the board, who is to be appointed by the Governor in Council, is vested with both a deliberative vote and a casting vote; and in the absence of the chairman the deputy chairman has the same powers. Two of the three members of the board form a quorum. Thus the chairman for the time being, whoever he may be—either the chairman himself or the deputy chairman—is placed in the position, when a meeting is attended only by the quorum of two, of being enabled to carry anything that he desires. To me this seems an anomaly, and undemocratic. In my opinion, the chairman should have only a casting vote. I have always been opposed to allowing the chairman a deliberative as well as a casting vote. I have objected to that principle in the Municipalities Act, and wherever else I have encountered it, and I desire to draw the Premier's attention to its operation under this Bill. Possibly in connection with this measure there may be some extenuating circumstances or special circumstances justifying the inclusion of that principle.

The Premier: Two are to form a quorum.

Mr. TAYLOR: In that case the chairman may as well sit by himself, because the other member of the board is absolutely powerless.

The Premier: If the chairman were not given a casting vote, the quorum of two might never arrive at a decision.

Mr. TAYLOR: We might as well make this board consist of the chairman alone. If the position arises of only two members of the board meeting, then the chairman with his deliberative and casting votes controls the position. I do not see where the other member of the board would come in, under those circumstances.

Mr. Heitmann: If the chairman has only a casting vote it amounts to the same thing.

Mr. TAYLOR: Here there are four votes, of which the chairman has two, and the remaining directors one each. The chairman can use his deliberative vote to bring about equality, and then use his casting vote to carry any proposal. That is my objection to the chairman's having a deliberative vote. He can use the deliberative vote first and so make things equal, and then use his casting vote afterwards. If hon. members had been placed in the same position as I have been placed in through the operation of this principle, they would not regard my objection as they evidently regard it.

The Premier: The chairman cannot exercise both a casting vote and a deliberative vote where there are three members.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Let the hon. member explain, please.

Mr. TAYLOR: Under this measure the board would consist of three members—the chairman and two others. The chairman has a casting vote and also a deliberative vote. I presume that under this Bill he is permitted to use his deliberative vote, and then he can use his casting vote afterwards. I have seen a meeting of nine members divided into two parties of five and four; and the chairman has made the position equal by giving his deliberative vote, and then has carried his point by giving his casting vote. In connection with this measure he will be able to take that course in a meeting of two members; and two form a quorum. Therefore I say that the Bill proposes to place great power in the hands of the chairman. I am objecting on principles which

I hold, and I hope the Premier will be able to show the necessity for the two votes in the present case. It is idle to say that people will not use powers given to them. Powers are used on every occasion where they are given.

The Premier: Under this Bill it is not possible on any occasion for the chairman to use both his deliberative and his casting vote.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! May I suggest that this point be settled in Committee?

Mr. TAYLOR: I was hopeful this afternoon, when the Bill was introduced, that the unanimity of the House would have put the measure through all its stages by this time.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is that the only objection you have to the Bill?

Mr. TAYLOR: I have other objections, but I hope that in his reply the Premier will make this point clear, so that there will be no further discussion on it. When the House suspended the Standing Orders, I thought the matter was practically settled between the leaders of the three parties. I thought it was agreed between them that the Bill is necessary. For my part, I am convinced that the measure gives the Government great powers. I hope the Government will not have to exercise those powers, but I realise the necessity for conferring them on the Government. I thought hon. members on both sides were satisfied in that direction. It is a Bill to protect the people of our own State, and I do not think the Government will deal harshly with any powers they have when they are protecting their own people.

Mr. Robinson: May I ask if the Premier is going to proceed with the Committee stage of this Bill to-night?

The PREMIER: It is my intention to ask the House to go into Committee on the Bill and proceed as far as we can until we meet knotty clauses, the consideration of which can be postponed. In this way we shall leave as little as possible for consideration on Tuesday next. I would like an assurance that if we do not proceed too late we will get through the Bill on Tuesday.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I do not think there will be any difficulty in dealing with the Bill in Committee.

The PREMIER: There is another point; we shall require to suspend the Standing Orders again on Tuesday to permit of the remaining stages being dealt with at that sitting.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [9.48]: I rise to address the House with somewhat mixed feelings. I will not remind the Premier of his maiden speech, because he declares that he usually likes to be left alone on that particular subject. The diffidence I have as an embryo politician without experience of the usages and the customs of this Chamber is emboldened somewhat after having listened to some of the speeches which have been made already.

The Premier: On your own side too.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: It is pleasing to note how glad hon. members are at seeing the Country party in this Chamber, but it is not surprising to find that the other parties did so much for us in the past. The nature of this debate will not allow me to go into details to try and prove to the House the reason for our presence here. So far as this measure is concerned, I am pleased to see the conciliatory spirit evidenced on both sides of the House. As representing one of the districts mostly affected so far as shortage of grain is concerned, it is satisfactory to see that such a decided effort is being made to try and meet the existing difficulties. In the far eastern portion of the electorate I represent there are a number of settlers who will not have a grain of wheat this year, and there are many who have made contracts which they will, I believe, be called upon to fulfil. These people are in a dire plight, and I do not know at this hour that it would be well for me to dwell at length on that point. I only want to express my satisfaction at the efforts which are being made to try and meet the difficulties. I have been inundated with letters from many of these settlers in the eastern end of the York electorate, who are in trouble about their con-

tracts, and in regard to their food supplies. Many of them hardly know where their Christmas dinners are to come from. I say without fear of contradiction that there are people in that part of my electorate who do not know where their food supplies are to come from, and although I have written and assured them that they will not be allowed to want, that pressing burden of want and anxiety remains on their shoulders. I had intended to speak on the Address-in-reply, and there were many things that I wanted to say, but my leader considered it advisable that we should restrain our eloquence so that the important legislation which is to come before us might be debated. I shall reserve until some future occasion the right to express my view on a number of subjects. I shall be very pleased, however, to communicate with the unfortunate settlers to whom I have referred and point out to them the efforts which are being made to meet the difficulties which are facing them at the present time.

Mr. ROBINSON (Canning) [9-53]: Owing to the extreme importance of this measure, I would like to know if the Committee stage is to be deferred until Tuesday. If the Bill is to be passed through all its stages to-night—it is a measure which affects everyone in Western Australia—it will not receive that deliberation that its importance warrants. I feel sure that members coming here on Tuesday will attend with their thoughts crystallised and the measure then will be dealt with in a shorter space of time. I venture to suggest for the Premier's consideration that he and his colleagues and his party have had for some days past all the clauses of this Bill under consideration, whereas we have had the Bill placed in our hands only this evening, and it is impossible for anyone to do adequate justice to a measure of this importance in the few moments at our disposal. The Government have a majority in this House, and the Premier can work it as he pleases.

Mr. Heitmann: He has no desire to do that.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Premier I am sure will respect the deliberations of members on this side of the Chamber, and I hope the Committee stage will be allowed to stand over until Tuesday.

Mr. WILLMOTT (Nelson) [9-55]: This Bill covers amongst other things chaff. I would like to point out that in my opinion holders of chaff must not be greedy at this particular time. Coming as I do from a timber district, I know that the carters will have to give up their occupation should the price of chaff rise higher than £8 15s. per ton. If those carters cease work it will simply mean that we shall lose our market. I hope growers will note that fact and not open their mouths too wide, because if they do they will kill the goose that is laying the egg. I do not want to speak on the wheat side of this question, because I represent a constituency that does not grow a great deal of wheat, but this is a phase of the question which I think deserves a certain amount of consideration and thought, and I trust that when the public of Western Australia see what steps are being taken in regard to this matter they will quietly consider amongst themselves the advisability of not trying to send up the price of the commodity I have referred to. If they do, they will lose their market and their sales. I will not say any more to-night. Other matters will crop up at a later date in which I am more vitally interested, namely, the timber and fruit industries.

Mr. WANSBROUGH (Beverley) [9-58]: It affords me a great deal of pleasure to note the manner in which this Bill has been received on all sides of the House. Unlike the previous speaker, I represent a chaff district, and it is particularly with that phase of the question that my constituents are interested. The outstanding features of the Bill to my mind are clear enough. The machinery clauses are the only issues on which we shall have to exercise care, but I do hope that the leader of the House will not try to rush the matter through to-night. We should have ample time to consider the clauses, particularly those referring to the board.

I am not going to say anything more at this juncture, but will reserve to myself the right to speak again in Committee.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe—in reply) [10.0]: There have been one or two points raised which I would like briefly to explain. I appreciate extremely the remarks which have fallen from new members on the Opposition cross-benches. All the more do I appreciate them because at a time like the present a little encouragement does no harm, but materially helps when one has a burden to carry, and that we have a burden just now is undoubted. I want particularly to stress the point that those members directly representing constituencies that produce the commodities we are trying to control have shown by their speeches this evening that they appreciate the fact that in producing a commodity they have to consider their market, namely, the rest of the community. So long as we can view these questions in that impartial spirit, I am satisfied that we will do good, not merely to the producer, but to the consumer as well. The Bill is devised to serve the interests of all, producer and consumer alike, large and small. No better words have been spoken in this debate than those of the member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott), when he said that it is to be kept in mind that, while there are a few who have a little wheat to sell, there are many who have a lot to buy. Personally, I appreciate the fact that we are up against bad times in regard to this harvest, and will have worse times ahead unless we are careful in dealing with what we have on hand. I want to do what I can to make this burden as light and as short as possible, and we can make it short by providing all facilities in anticipation of a bumper harvest next season. I regret that the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) should have expressed the opinions he did. I am afraid he was following the bad example of the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell), in whose spoken opinion we are introducing the Bill for no other purpose than to exploit

the farmer. No one knows better than the member for Northam that there is nothing in the Bill capable of exploiting the farmer; yet in criticising the measure the hon. member practically made that his keynote. He said he was prepared to support the Bill if I would give an assurance that we were not out to exploit the farmer. I am prepared to give the assurance I gave in moving the second reading, to repeat it now, and to re-echo it until even the hon. member is satisfied. The Bill has another object, namely, to be fair and just to the man who has to purchase the farmer's product. The hon. member ought to appreciate the fact that the fixing of a price for wheat was done after due consideration by Parliament. Both Chambers passed the Bill empowering the appointment of the commission. The only price fixed by the commission has been that for wheat, and the hon. member complains that it was too low. It may have been too low from the point of view of those fortunate farmers who were able to carry over some of their wheat even after the declaration of war, but they were few and far between, and they have no right to hold up the rest of the farmers and the community generally. The wheat they were holding was being sold immediately prior to the war at 3s. 10d., and the action of the Government in adopting the recommendation of the commission was taken in order to give them the right to sell their product at an advance of 8d. And it had another effect, namely, to prevent thousands of bushels of wheat from being exported from Western Australia to South Australia. Therefore, I am satisfied the Government did a right thing. We have never made any complaint against the commission. The commission is not infallible any more than is Parliament or the Government. The only person infallible, in his own mind, is the member for Northam. In regard to complaints against the commission I have no knowledge of any member supporting the present Government having made complaint, not even excepting the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr.

Johnston). He is the only one of our supporters representing a farming constituency. The others represent in the main the consumers, the industrial classes congregated in the cities and towns and on the goldfields, where they are consuming the product of the farmer. No complaint has been made against the action of the commission, or the adoption by the Government of a price of wheat which meant an immediate rise of 8d. a bushel. The only criticism of the commission was hurled against it by those in direct Opposition, and by the newspaper which has given them the most support, namely, the *Sunday Times*. That paper made a deliberate attack, full of spleen, on a member of the commission, an attack which, in my opinion, was wholly unwarranted. I do not think I ever met Mr. Rae until he was introduced to me by the leader of the Opposition. We accepted the advice of the leader of the Opposition, and appointed Mr. Rae to the commission; but if I had known Mr. Rae as well then as I know him now I would not have hesitated to appoint him off my own bat. The commission have done their best under trying circumstances.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But you referred to an hon. member.

The PREMIER: Your own colleague, the member for Northam, was the only hon. member from whom I have had any correspondence intimating that the farmers were concerned about the fixing of the price of wheat.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You have not replied; you are too lazy.

The PREMIER: It is not worth replying to. It is too selfish to take any notice of. When the hon. member can broaden his views somewhat, and recognise that there are others in the community besides those whom he represents, he will be more useful to the State. I regret that it should have been necessary to make these remarks, for I want the Bill to be treated in a non-party spirit. There is no party principle involved. All that is involved in the measure is a desire on the part of the Government, after having consulted the two parties concerned in con-

stituting this Assembly, to pass a Bill to protect the interests of the producer and consumer, as well as the merchant or miller. We have never endeavoured to get the miller to purchase wheat from the farmer at less than a fair price to the farmer, and we do not propose to do it. Neither do we propose to ask the miller to grist wheat and sell it to the consumer at less than a fair price.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You have not fixed the price for millers at all.

The PREMIER: The millers came along, and discussed it with the commission, and, like reasonable men, fixed their own price. The leader of the Opposition made some reference to the need for being cautious in regard to fixing the prices of commodities, and the leader of the Country party referred to the need of amending one clause for the purpose of inserting a provision from the South Australian Act. The Parliamentary draftsman consulted me on that point and explained that the provision was valueless, that it could effect no purpose in the measure. However, as we are not going into Committee until Tuesday, I will see him again and ask him to discover why it was inserted in the South Australian measure. Personally I think it was in order to make it appeal to the farmer that extra precaution was being taken to see that he got a fair deal. It is of no effect, but if our farmers really desire the same assurance I have no objection. The question of fixing the market value is very different. Some say it should be fixed on the world's market, which means in other words, the London market, whilst on the other hand, some say it should be fixed on the basis of supply and demand. I would not like to be a member of a commission which had to answer for having fixed a price on the law of supply and demand. That has been a subject for controversy from time immemorial, and nobody has yet discovered a satisfactory solution.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But supply and demand fix the values for you.

The PREMIER: Then we do not require the Bill if we are going to argue on the basis that supply and demand will

fix the price, and if the leader of the Opposition is prepared to leave it to supply and demand.

Hon. Frank Wilson : I did not say so.

The PREMIER : But one of your colleagues did.

Hon. Frank Wilson : No, you said yourself that the values should be fixed on the basis of supply and demand.

The PREMIER : Under existing conditions we cannot take into account the question of supply and demand fixing the prices of the necessities of life. What we have to take into account is the fair value to the producer, while serving the interests of the consumer. This is a question which, in my opinion, it is undesirable that Parliament should try to solve, or give a decision upon for incorporation in an Act of Parliament. Even since we have had the Food Commission the prices of commodities have varied from day to day, and under local conditions it will be always necessary to have sufficient freedom to alter the prices, if not from day to day, at least from week to week or month to month. I do not want to be placed in the position of having continually to come to Parliament, or call Parliament together to meet an emergency brought about by a measure previously passed, and I think it would be preferable to deal with the Bill from the point of view of the general concern of the community, and endeavour to get a board which will make it unnecessary to appeal to any other authority on the question of prices and which will adjust these matters in a manner satisfactory to all parties. Of course the board will not be able to give entire satisfaction. One person who had a little wheat to sell said he would burn it rather than sell it to the Government for seed at 7s. That is a selfish attitude to adopt, and one which will not be supported by any section of the House. The prices which might be fixed for commodities will vary so constantly that it will be better to have a board or commission who can alter the prices quickly to meet the different conditions. The leader of the Country party referred

to Clause 19, and I have asked the Attorney General to give it special consideration so that in Committee we shall be able to thoroughly explain its purport, and if it does not meet the wishes of hon. members we might be able to amend it so that it will. We wish to protect all parties, but I want to disabuse the hon. members' mind that this clause has any bearing on the contracts made by farmers for the forward sale of wheat. That is a matter which the Government have considered, and another Bill will be introduced in the course of a few days to give relief in respect to all industries, and we hope to afford relief in the case of the contracts which have been mentioned by hon. members. In regard to the remarks of the member for Mount Margaret (Mr. Taylor) respecting the position of chairman, the board will consist of three persons, and when all three are present the chairman will have a deliberate vote and no casting vote will be necessary. We provide that two will form a quorum because we want decisions arrived at. It is undesirable that there should be wrangling and that one should vote one way and the other another way and that the time of the country should be taken up in useless controversy. On such an occasion who is the person who should give a final decision but the chairman ?

Mr. Holman : It is done on every bench.

The PREMIER : Yes, and the same applies to the Arbitration Court. The chairman will be unable to give a casting vote against the majority because the only occasion on which he will be able to exercise it will be when only two of the three members are present. I appreciate the remarks of most hon. members but I regret particularly that the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) could not raise himself above his usual position and recognise in the Bill a desire on the part of the Government to do what is considered best for all concerned, and not as he would lead people to believe, a desire to exploit any one section of the community.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

PAPERS.—QUESTION OF PROCEDURE.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (Perth) [10-20]: On a question of privilege, I would like to point out before the House adjourns that this afternoon the Attorney General read some correspondence from a public file. I merely wish to draw attention to the fact that it is a well-known parliamentary procedure when a Minister of the Crown quotes from public correspondence or public files he should then lay the papers on the Table of the House.

The Premier: Who said he did?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Attorney General read from correspondence or a file, I would ask if the Attorney General laid those papers on the Table, and if not, I would request you to remind him to do so.

Mr. SPEAKER [10-21]: There is no question of privilege; it is a point of procedure.

The Premier: He is privileged to talk so much.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do not be insolent.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The point raised by the hon. member for Perth is perfectly sound. The only objection is that he should have taken the point when the Attorney General quoted from the papers. If the Attorney General desires to lay the papers on the Table of the House now, that is entirely in his hands.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: I depended upon the Attorney General following the usual procedure.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. Walker—Kanowna) [10-22]: My remarks this afternoon were not intended in the strict sense of the word to be a quotation from a file. It was simply a statement, and for the purposes of making that statement clear, and in order to avoid any comment, I read a letter especially at the request of the hon. member and sequentially the statements collated by the Chief Electoral

Officer. It was not a matter of quoting from the file or of reading correspondence so much as one of making clear the exact position in relation to a charge made last night by the hon. member. Inasmuch as every word which was uttered here to-day will appear in *Hansard* I cannot see the necessity for laying the papers on the Table. Every word will be published, and the report will comprise the whole of the matter I read from. It was not a file in any sense of the word. It was a statement in the words of the Chief Electoral Officer chiefly for the purpose of clearness and precision.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Was not it a file?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No; merely a report I called for to-day, to deal with the matter mentioned last night.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It was a file.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was entirely a series of statements collated to meet the particular case mentioned last night. It was a statement and nothing more than a statement, and in order that there might be no imagination about it and no departure from actual facts, I read the actual words and the actual figures.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: What objection can you have to following the usual procedure and laying it upon the Table?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There is no necessity to do so when every word of it will appear in *Hansard*. Why does the hon. member desire to have it both in *Hansard* and on the Table? Unfortunately I have sent the papers back to the office, but if the hon. member wishes it I will lay them on the Table, though surely it is sufficient to have the report in *Hansard*.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Why not follow the custom which is observed by every Minister of the Crown?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is unnecessary; the hon. member will have *Hansard* on Tuesday.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Bring the papers back with you on Tuesday.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The whole of it will be in *Hansard*.

Mr. SPEAKER (10.24): I will not insist on the papers being laid on the Table by the Attorney General because the time for raising the point has been delayed too long.

House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 15th December, 1914.

	PAGE
Papers presented	218
Question: Parliamentary Members Privileges...	218
Motion: Bush Fires Act, suspension of Regulations	218
Bills: Land Act Amendment, 2a., Com.	221
Lunacy Act Amendment, 2s., Com.	222

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Public Works Department, report for the financial year 1913-14; 2, Government Savings Bank, annual balance sheet, report and returns for the year ending 30th June, 1914; 3, Fisheries Act, 1905-13—Whaling License to the Australia Whaling Coy., Ltd.

QUESTION — PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, How many persons have been returned as members of the Legislative Council since the inception of Responsible Government? 2, How many members or ex-members of the Legislative

Council are there who have at any period occupied a seat therein continuously for a period of twelve years? 3, How many persons have been returned as members of the Legislative Assembly since the inception of Responsible Government? 4, How many members or ex-members are there of the Legislative Assembly who have at any period occupied a seat therein continuously for a period of ten years? 5, How many Ministers and ex-Ministers of the Crown have there been since the inception of Responsible Government? 6, How many Ministers and ex-Ministers of the Crown are there who have been granted life passes over the Railways of Western Australia? 7, How many Presidents and Speakers have there been since the inception of Responsible Government? 8, How many Presidents and Speakers have been granted life passes over the Railways of Western Australia?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied as follows: 1, 103; 2, 16; 3, 407; 4, 19; 5, 55; 6, 24; 7, 3 Presidents and 5 Speakers; 8, 1 President and 2 Speakers

MOTION—BUSH FIRES ACT, SUSPENSION OF REGULATIONS.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [4.40]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should take the necessary steps to suspend the regulations in connection with the burning-off and bush-firing in the Victoria district from the 1st January, 1915, owing to the droughty conditions—the absence of grass and crops—the necessity of getting scrub burned off before the cool weather sets in, thus affording additional employment to workers.

The object I have in moving this motion has been so plainly set forward in the motion itself that it is almost superfluous to make many remarks in connection with it.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Has it not been carried out already?

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: No. I would like to explain to hon. members