

# Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 15th December, 1920.

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

## QUESTION—IMMIGRATION, DOMESTIC SERVANTS.

Hon. W. C. ANGIN asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Have a number of girls arrived in this State as immigrant domestics during the past six months? 2, If so, were these girls engaged as domestics before their arrival by a few privileged persons and before they were taken charge of by the officials of the State branch of the Immigration Department? 3, If so, will he notify the London office that such system must stop, and instruct them to notify the female officials of the London office accordingly? 4, Is he aware it was found necessary previously, to prevent the engaging of immigrant girls as domestics before the State officials took charge of them on their arrival, so that all might have an equal opportunity to engage them, and to see that the girls were paid fair remuneration?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, Yes. 2, I am not aware that this is the case. The majority on arrival were met by friends and were not available for engagement. 3, This matter will be discussed with the Agent General, with a view to ascertaining if any such practice exists. 4, Yes.

## QUESTION—PASTORAL LEASES, TRANSFER TO COMPANIES.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Premier: 1, Is it a fact that Mr. R. E. Bush, many years ago a resident of the Gascoyne district, but for a number of years domiciled in England, has been enabled, through the formation of three limited companies, in which he and his family (also domiciled in England) are the main shareholders, to transfer his former pastoral holdings, totalling an area of 2,929,055 acres, to the three companies referred to in which he and his family hold shares totalling £141,386, less 99 held by several others resident in the State? 2, Will the bona fide applications

for transfers to companies of residents in the State receive at least equivalent consideration to that accorded to Mr. Bush and other pastoral lessees?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Transfers of 2,927,114 acres from R. E. Bush to the Clifton Downs, Mt. Clore, and London Squatting Companies, Ltd., were approved on 11th April, 1919, in accordance with the then existing law under which a shareholder in a company was deemed to have no beneficial interest in leases held by such company. The total number of shares in the three (3) companies was 200,000, of which 141,736 were issued at the date of approval of transfers. Of these issued shares R. E. Bush held 70,818, J. T. & F. R. Bush (jointly) 70,819, A. G. Leeds 30, F. E. B. Wittenoom 30, E. F. Darlot 30, F. A. Davies 1, R. A. Cameron 1, E. W. Waugh 1, H. Evans 1, N. D'Arcy 1, G. W. Le Vaux 1, F. E. Wingrove 1, C. H. Lamb 1, J. Morrison 1. 2, All applications for transfers to companies since the passage of the amending Act of 1919 have been and will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the amending Bill of this session, under which a shareholder is deemed to be beneficially interested in the leases held by a company, and under which no person may be beneficially interested in more than one million acres in the State, an undertaking being required from transferee companies that shareholders will not sell to each other nor will further shares be issued to them without the approval of the Minister for Lands.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Munsie (Hannans) on the ground of urgent private business.

## ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the undermentioned Bills:—

- 1, Guardianship of Infants.
- 2, Prices Regulation Act Amendment and Continuanee.

## BILL—GENERAL LOAN AND INSCRIBED STOCK ACT AMENDMENT.

### All Stages.

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

### Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [4.37] in moving the second reading said: This Bill merely fixes the rate of interest that may be paid. Hon. members know that time after time we have varied the

rates. I now ask that a rate of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. be fixed as the maximum which may be paid. Money is very dear and difficult to get. I have told the House that it would not be necessary to go upon the market for some time, certainly not until after the middle of next year. In the meantime it is hoped that the money market will become easier. Under the first Act the rate of interest was 4 per cent. This was in the good old days when money was cheap. Subsequently in 1915 a rate of 5 per cent. was fixed. Last year the rate was fixed at 6 per cent. and that rate lapsed in September last. Unless this amending measure is passed any money borrowed would have to be borrowed at the maximum rate of 5 per cent. Hon. members know it is impossible to obtain money at this rate except by paying an enormous discount, which is very undesirable. Our last loan was raised at  $5\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. That was a loan of a million and a half. It realised 98 per cent. and was subscribed three times over. There have been three or four recent loans placed upon the market. The last New South Wales loan was raised at par at  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. New South Wales is now endeavouring to raise a three million loan locally at  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: South Australia is  $5\frac{1}{2}$  and New South Wales  $6\frac{1}{2}$ .

The PREMIER: They are endeavouring to raise a three million loan at  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., and Queensland is endeavouring to raise a two million loan at  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. I doubt if we can fix the rate at less than  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. It would be very difficult to get the money at par at that rate now. Hon. members will have noticed the remarks of the Federal Treasurer in this connection, in which he pointed out that the £2,500,000 for New South Wales at  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. was only subscribed for by the public to the tune of  $44\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., the balance of  $55\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. being left in the hands of the underwriters. In asking for a  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. rate, I am not asking to be given power to pay too much.

Hon. P. Collier: What is it now?

The PREMIER: It is really 5 per cent., because the 6 per cent. maximum expired in September. For some little time we fixed the rate each year, a very wise provision, I suppose. Now the rate is 5 per cent. unless we raise it by this Bill, as I am asking the House to do. It is intended to fix the maximum rate of interest which may be paid on loans raised at  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [441]: The Premier has told us that the last loan of a million and a half was raised at  $5\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. I would point out, however, that it cost the State £6 ls. 8d. per cent., and would have cost more had it not been for the sinking fund trustees waiving their charges, which amounted to many thousands of pounds. The State has, therefore, benefited by the sinking fund in regard to this flotation. Money is dear and while it is dear the Government

should act warily in regard to heavy loan expenditure.

The Premier: We intend to do that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is a matter of doubt. Our loan indebtedness last year increased by over three millions, and now it is going to nearly four millions this year. It does not look as if the Government are taking any steps to keep things within reason in the matter of loan expenditure. I do not remember but one year during the last seven or eight years when the loan indebtedness increased so much as it did last year. It is higher this year than it was last.

The Premier: That is entirely due to soldier settlement, of which the House approved.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Unless the Government pay a higher rate of interest they will receive a lesser amount in the matter of loans. It will only be debited to the cost of the loan, if they pay less than the current rate.

Mr. Hudson: What do you pay the Commonwealth for the money you borrow for soldier settlement?

The PREMIER: (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam—in reply) [444]: In reply to the member for Yilgarn (Mr. Hudson), I would inform him that we pay the Commonwealth £5 8s. per centum. It ought not to be necessary to point out that the loan expenditure last year, apart from soldier settlement, was less than it has been for many years.

Mr. Troy: No public works have been going on.

The PREMIER: We have not been able to carry out any, as I have already explained. It is not advisable to spend money now, when the present rate of interest is so high, on anything except necessary work. The soldier settlement scheme was responsible for a loan expenditure last year of £1,933,000. That money was borrowed from the Commonwealth at a low rate of interest without any charges. The House has already approved of the settlement of soldiers on the land. I do not suppose anyone wants to place any obstacle in the way of that scheme. The expenditure last year was largely due to soldier settlement, and will be largely due to that account this year.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

#### BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

# BILL—PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

Read a third time, and returned to the Legislative Council with amendments.

## BILL—LOAN, £3,870,000.

### Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.53]: In this Bill the Government ask for authority to borrow a very substantial sum of money. It goes without saying that we must provide the funds which are needed in order to carry on those public works which are essential to the development of the State. At the same time we ought to consider, particularly in the circumstances which exist, where we are landing ourselves. The Government propose under the authority of this Bill to borrow a sum approaching four million sterling. We have already passed Loan Estimates of £3,641,000 for the current year. It is well to recognise that within the past year or two we appear to have been launching out on an expenditure of loan funds on a very extensive scale.

The Premier: Principally for soldier settlement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. Last year we spent considerably more than three million pounds of loan funds. Now the Government ask for authority to borrow £3,870,000. Thus we have an average of fully three million pounds for the two years. The Premier has pointed out that two millions of the amount proposed to be raised under this Bill will be required for soldier settlement. Of course it is also true that of the total amount passed under this year's Loan Estimates, the greater proportion is likewise required for soldier settlement. That brings us to the point whether we are expending money wisely under our soldier settlement scheme. A very considerable proportion of last year's loan expenditure was in the direction of purchasing estates for soldier settlement. Having regard to the general statements made from time to time as to the possibilities of land settlement in Western Australia, particularly with a view to immigration, it is rather surprising to find that only a few scores of returned soldiers, one might say practically none of our returned soldiers, are being settled on Crown lands, and that practically no land settlement of any description, whether of returned soldiers or others, is taking place on this State's Crown lands.

The Premier: Oh yes!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Very little.

The Premier: A very considerable amount.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Only on repurchased estates.

The Premier: That is not so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier says it is not so. I ask where, then, is land settlement taking place in this State on lands other

than those which have been repurchased for that purpose?

The Premier: I gave the figures the other day on the Land Act Amendment Bill.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Where are Crown lands being taken up?

The Premier: In the South-West and on the wheat belt and—

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is settlement which is effected by buying out one farmer and putting another in his place.

The Premier: No!

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier knows that the figures, which I have not by me at the moment, but which were supplied by the hon. gentleman himself, bear out what I say, that a very small percentage of those of our returned soldiers who are settled on the land have been settled on new Crown lands, on virgin country.

Mr. Troy: A mere handful.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are borrowing money and propose to continue to borrow money at exceptionally high rates of interest—6½ per cent. is the maximum authorised now—to purchase estates for soldier settlement. That does not seem to me a wise policy. Naturally I have nothing to say against the desire of the returned soldiers to acquire improved properties in preference to starting out on virgin country, which they would have to clear and develop for themselves. But from the State's point of view it is not sound policy to be buying out experienced settlers in order to replace them by others who may not be so experienced. When we read of the number of returned soldiers who have been settled—it is given as 3,800, speaking from memory—that appears to be a very good thing. From those figures it would seem that splendid results have been achieved under our soldier settlement policy.

The Premier: There is far more difficulty in settling soldiers on repurchased lands than in settling them on Crown lands.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is far more expensive. I do not see how it can be more difficult. If it is more difficult to settle the soldiers on repurchased estates, why have we not been settling them on Crown lands?

The Premier: Because the Crown lands were not ready.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Who is responsible for that?

The Premier: My friends opposite have done little towards it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the present Government have been in office for nearly 4½ years. It is the old, old story. No matter what is done or not done, or what happens now or has happened during any of the years that our friends opposite have been in office, any neglect as regards the carrying out of any particular work is entirely due to the failure of the Labour Government.

The Premier: We are all in it. - You started land settlement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We set to work on it.

The Premier: No, you did not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We set to work to do something.

The Premier: No. You said you would do something.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We were turned out of office 4½ years ago, and yet the Premier would say that the neglect to prepare Crown lands for soldier settlement—

The Premier: I did not use the word "neglect."

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, but I am putting that construction upon the words which the hon. gentleman did use. I say his words were to the effect that the failure to prepare Crown lands for soldier settlement was to some extent due to want of action on the part of the Labour Government. It is not a good policy to be borrowing money at a high rate of interest for the repurchasing of estates.

The Premier: It all depends on the price.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The fact that the Government are in the market as purchasers must have a tendency to send up values. So long as we keep on borrowing money and spending half a million of loan funds in one year in the purchasing of lands, the inevitable result will be that land values for improved properties will keep on increasing. The State has to shoulder the responsibility, will have to provide the high rate of interest and provide sinking fund. Yet, as the result of the expenditure of this large sum of borrowed money, we get practically no increased production of wealth. We merely take a number of men off the land and put on others in their places.

Mr. Davies: What becomes of a farmer who is bought out?

Hon. P. COLLIER: He mostly drifts into some other occupation or to some other State. He does not sell out to go and settle on virgin country.

Mr. Davies: He may.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But he does not. If he does, it only proves what I have said, namely, that the land values are increasing and that he has taken the opportunity to sell out at a remunerative price. However, none of them has sold highly improved farms to go and take up Crown lands. We are adding to the burden of the State through this interest bill, and at the same time we are not getting a result from the expenditure of that money which will give us an increase in the wealth produced.

The Premier: You are wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I cannot be wrong in this. If you buy out 3,600 farmers and put 3,600 other men in their place, and if it costs you half a million of loan money at six per cent., it follows that you do not achieve any increased production. The new

men are not likely to produce any more wealth than did those who left the land.

Mr. Pickering: They might; they might be facing it under better conditions financially.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: With 6½ per cent. interest to carry!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even if we were to allow a percentage of increase in the wealth produced it would be but a very small percentage. And the net result is that we have a very few more settlers than we had before. But we have added millions of pounds to our total indebtedness, and scores of thousands of pounds to our annual interest bill.

The Premier: Which the soldiers will meet.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I admit that when the State purchases a large estate which for years has supported only one family, and which on purchase is subdivided into many holdings, to that extent we secure increased settlement.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There have not been many of those.

Mr. Pickering: There has been a considerable number.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not such a lot. There is on the Table a return which gives one a fair idea of the increase in the number of settlers resulting from the purchase of these estates. The fact stands out that we are borrowing money at a high rate of interest for the purpose of buying out settlers and putting others in their place. We read in the newspapers that some 3,600 soldiers have been settled on the land, and from that it is implied that we have secured 3,600 new settlers. Of course it means nothing of the sort. The Government are going in for the expenditure of loan funds to a very considerable extent. Under the Estimates passed the other day and under the Bill, we are to spend in all £100,000 on tramways in the metropolitan area.

The Premier: Not on the building of additional lines.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But in various ways on tramways. I hope the Premier recognises the need for cutting down our expenditure to an absolute minimum. Any work constructed now will be saddled for all the time with this abnormally high rate of interest, and the people who will have to use those facilities will in consequence be saddled with high charges for the services rendered.

Mr. Pickering: That applies more particularly to improvements.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Only work that is absolutely essential should be undertaken at present. Of course very many works are essential, but we must discriminate in favour of those works which we cannot afford to do without. No doubt the extension of the tramway system into various suburbs would be a very great convenience to those to be served by such extension, but is this the time to do it?

The Premier: Most certainly it is not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are spending loan moneys now to a higher extent than ever before.

The Premier: Apart from soldier settlement we have spent in the five months only £238,000.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have just authorised nearly four millions of loan money, and of that two millions is for soldier settlement. The Government are responsible for it.

The Premier: I hope we are all responsible for soldier settlement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I disclaim any responsibility for a policy of settlement which means buying out one farmer to put in another. If there were any foundation in fact for the optimistic statement that we possess unlimited areas of land still awaiting settlement, it might be different. Only three years ago we were advertising broadcast in Great Britain that we had millions of acres of first class land awaiting settlement. Now, when we are faced with the responsibility of settling 3,000 or 4,000 soldiers, we are not able to do it except by purchasing estates for the purpose. No doubt some of those who have been holding those estates for many years without doing much to develop them have jumped at the opportunity for selling at a profitable price. Has the Premier considered the question of borrowing money locally? When required, we have been able to raise money in Western Australia for war purposes. Even to the last loan raised by the Commonwealth this State subscribed over a million pounds. I think we have subscribed about a million pounds to each of the war loans. It is a very great sum for a small community to raise. I do not know that we should not be justified in making an attempt to raise money locally for works required within the State.

Mr. Angelo: And make the bonds free of Commonwealth income tax.

The Premier: They are now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is a policy which the Queensland Government have been forced to adopt. In that regard the fact that Queensland has been refused money in England will ultimately be a good thing for Queensland. The Premier here knows the great difficulties we have in financing a huge sum of money. We have to provide interest on our loan, which goes to the other end of the world, and if we were to raise money locally for reproductive works it might not be a bad thing for the State.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [5.14]: I am somewhat disappointed at the Loan Bill, and its schedule. I am in favour of the suggestion put forward by the leader of the Opposition. We should endeavour to raise money locally. I see no reason why our people would not contribute; in fact, I am sure they would.

Mr. Davies: How much could we raise?

Mr. THOMSON: If we can raise half a million for the Commonwealth, we can raise a similar sum for ourselves, especially if we make it sufficiently attractive.

Mr. Davies: Every year?

Mr. THOMSON: There is no reason why we should not make an effort to raise money

within the State. When the Bill is in Committee I intend to move an amendment in the direction of reducing the total by £50,000, as a protest against the failure of the Government to include a sum for the construction of the Nyabing railway. Some time ago the Premier was in my district. He went through Nyabing, and told the people there that he intended to build the railway at an early date.

The Premier interjected.

Mr. THOMSON: That may be so, but when we realise, on looking at the schedule of the Bill, the amount of money that is involved—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You cannot go altogether by the schedule.

Mr. THOMSON: We find that there is only £1,000 provided for the Nyabing railway. I want to read for the information of the House what the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin), when Minister for Works in 1914, said in connection with the proposal to construct the Nyabing railway. At that time he moved the second reading of the Bill, and said amongst other things—

This railway Bill, like the previous one, has been before Parliament already. The line here proposed is almost similarly circumstanced, so far as quality of land and rainfall are concerned, to the Kukerin-Lake Grace railway. The Bill proposes a continuation of the Katanning-Nyabing railway to Pingrup. It is an extension which has been promised to the settlers in that district, and the promise is one which the Government feel bound to fulfil at the earliest opportunity. It is the intention of the Government, if the Bill is passed, to make this the second railway in order of construction, the first being the Kukerin-Lake Grace railway.

The Hon. Frank Wilson interjected, "Where does the Margaret River railway come in; it has been promised for years?" The hon. member for North-East Fremantle went on—

We have to take the small lines first, and as regards this particular extension we are in the fortunate position of having on the site of the line a quantity of rails which can be used for the work.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You turned us out and would not give us a chance to build the railway.

Mr. THOMSON: I believe the hon. member was sincere when he made the statement I have read. Unfortunately his Government went out of office, and the settlers have been in an unenviable position ever since. I give the Premier credit for putting considerable heart into the people of Nyabing on the occasion of his recent visit. The settlers have been battling against impossible odds out there for many years. The Premier knows what the roads are like down there. There are miles of sand, which make it impossible for a proper load to be carried. It was also put up to the Premier

that he should authorise the establishment of wheat dumps. He promised that he would, and I believe he was sincere.

The Premier: I did not promise.

Mr. THOMSON: The premier did promise, but he said he would rather see the railway built.

The Premier: I did not say that.

Mr. THOMSON: The Premier said the railway would be built at the earliest opportunity. Now we find that in the Loan Bill a sum of only £1,000 is provided. I have to justify my position, though, I assure hon. members, I am not out for vote catching. I have a better chance of being returned than many members present; I have gone through a selection ballot successfully, and since then I have not heard of any possible opponents.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member had better keep to the Bill.

Mr. THOMSON: I saw a suggestive smile on the faces of hon. members opposite and I thought I would get this in. I say candidly that it is going to be very hard for me and for the Premier.

Hon. P. Collier: We do not desire to make it hard for you. We will do all we can for you.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope the leader of the Opposition will always act in that friendly spirit. Here we have a railway line promised definitely as the second to be constructed, and no attempt being made so far to fulfil the promise. The people down there have been buoyed up by the hope that the railway would be built at no distant date and now they are to be disappointed again on finding that only £1,000 has been placed on the Estimates. We find that for the Busselton-Margaret River railway the provision is £10,000. I have no desire to detract from the importance of any particular district. The sum of £20,000 is set down for the Esperance-Northwards railway.

Hon. T. Walker: That was started and stopped unjustly.

Mr. THOMSON: For the Perth-Fremantle-Cottesloe deviation there is provided £50,000.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And if that work is not done soon we will have to pay more than that for compensation.

Mr. THOMSON: The money must be spent judiciously and in the best interests of the country. The line, the construction of which I am advocating, is, as the member for North-East Fremantle said in 1914, one that is necessary. The settlers have stuck to the district and worked against great odds. One man whom I know left his property to take up an important engagement in India, and he has been sending out the whole of his earnings to keep the farm going. I consider I would be failing in my duty if I did not make urgent representations to the Government in respect of the Nyabing district, especially when we find that other districts have been treated liberally. In connection

with the Wyalatchem-Mt. Marshall extension, a sum of £50,000 has been provided. For the tramway extensions £100,000 is set down, and for the electric power station £80,000. Then we come to harbours and rivers and we notice that generous treatment has been accorded many works, and so on throughout the schedule. There is such a thing as hope deferred maketh the heart sick, and the settlers at Nyabing have undergone a very trying time. Therefore, as a protest, when the Bill is in Committee, I intend to move for a reduction of the total.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle [5.25]): I sympathise with the hon. member, but I am glad to know that he repents having voted to turn us out of office in 1916. The subject referred to by the hon. member should have been discussed in connection with the Loan Estimates, when they were before the Committee. The hon. member perhaps is not aware that a sum of £34,000 was voted by the Labour Government for the construction of this particular railway, and that that sum has never been expended.

Mr. Thomson: I know it has been authorised for years.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The authorisation is still there and consequently there is no need to include it in the Loan Bill. Therefore, if the hon. member moves for a reduction of the amount set out in the schedule of the Bill it will not affect the work of constructing the Nyabing railway as much as it might affect some other work for which there is no authorisation. We have to remember that loans are maturing within the next few years and that future loans will carry a higher rate of interest. Very little, if any, provision has been made for the redemption of some of these loans. In August 1922 there will be £1,000,000 falling due; in January 1923 a loan of £483,215 will mature; in January 1926 there will be another of £650,000; and in 1927 a loan of £5,500,000 will fall due. There is provision made for meeting the Coolgardie Water Scheme loan of £2,500,000. Out of the total falling due, which I have quoted, no less a sum than £4,150,500 has been borrowed since June 30th, 1916.

The Premier: Through the Commonwealth.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I know, but when the Commonwealth Government are in the position that they cannot place their own loans on the London market, how will that affect Western Australia? In all probability we will be at a serious disadvantage in raising the money which will be required to meet the loans when they mature. I desire again to tell my friend the member for Sussex that not a very large number of people have been settled on repurchased estates. The total number to August was 343 out of 3,151. That statement was made by the Premier, and I suppose it can be taken as being correct.

Hon. P. Collier: These estates cost over half a million to purchase.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There were 181 settled on Crown lands and 1,838 on individual farms. Therefore the hon. member was wrong when he stated that a majority had been placed on repurchased estates. I have dealt with the matter already on several occasions and I do not propose to deal with it again. When we realise the large amount of money which will have to be redeemed within the next five or six years, this State will have to be very careful, or we will find ourselves on the verge of bankruptcy.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair]

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [5.30]: I do not know that very much objection can be raised to the Loan Bill except that, in my opinion, work is provided for in the schedule which could very well stand over. A warning has already been issued that we must be careful in view of the fact that loans fall due shortly, one next year, and another amounting to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  millions, in 1927. The fact that these loans fall due should make us very careful as to how this money is expended today. This community of 300,000 odd people have a pretty big burden to face in the future. Just as the value of wool has fallen temporarily and will not regain its former price for some little while, so will the value of other primary industries fall. Unless a drought occurs in one or other of the big wheat producing countries of the world, I do not think wheat will bring more than 5s. or 6s. a bushel next year. The only other industry, regarding which the present values are likely to be retained, is the timber industry. There are no secondary industries of any great value in Western Australia and if the value of these industries declines the State will not have so much money to draw upon for taxation purposes and will have to face at the same time the same liabilities. The State in these circumstances, will be the poorer. I know that some expenditure is absolutely necessary, particularly on soldier settlement. I hope the Government will not entertain those works which are not of vital importance to the country and absolutely essential at the present juncture. There are some which in my opinion are not absolutely vital. There is the Wyalcatech-Mt. Marshall extension to Dowerin-Merredin.

The Premier: That area is closely settled with soldiers.

Mr. TROY: There are lands adjacent to railways not closely settled. It is a pity. I know the conditions under which these people must live. If we had proceeded on legitimate lines in settling this country and insisted on the land alongside the railways being settled first, it would have been greatly to the advantage of the State. I have already mentioned in this House the position regarding the Wongan Hills-Mullewa line.

For a considerable portion, the land along that line is not settled. After leaving Perenjori, a lot of country is passed in which no development is being carried out. I cannot understand the policy which inclines to the building of more railways, when that land is not being utilised.

The Premier: That land must be improved under the Act.

Mr. TROY: It is not being improved. The member for Cue (Mr. Chesson) and myself often pass through the country and we have often discussed the question of development as we have been passing through in the train. That country is in the state it was before the railway went through or, at any rate, a lot of it is.

The Premier: It must be subject to improvements.

Mr. TROY: Steps should be taken then to compel the owners to improve the property.

The Premier: They will, too.

Mr. TROY: A man cannot always do much towards the improvement of his holding in the first two or three years, but a lot of this country has never had an axe on it. They should not be allowed to continue wherever that condition of affairs obtains. I am not inclined to agree to the building of other railways. I am not misrepresenting the Premier I think when I say that he has stated that this land is too dry. It is not one whit drier than the Mt. Marshall area, in which, in my opinion, is the driest area in Western Australia. I do not say that the country is incapable of wheat production because I think it is, but the land through which the Wongan Hills-Mullewa railway passes, is in the same rainfall area as the Mt. Marshall district. I am glad that the "West Australian" representative who recently toured the South-West with the Parliamentary party endorsed my view regarding the areas in that part of the State. Provision, I see, is made for work in connection with the construction of the Margaret River railway, for which a sum of £5,000 is set down. That is not very much and probably the settlers want the railway, as they have looked for it for a very long time. When we consider the great amount of country alongside the railways in the South-West which is not developed, one cannot feel inclined to support expenditure for the construction of more railways in that part of the State at the present time. The areas held in the South-West are altogether too big. Some of the settlers there have been land hungry and are in consequence land poor. They will continue to be so until the policy of this country forces them to put the land to use. Referring to soldier settlement, I think it is a pity that the returned soldiers have not taken up holdings on Crown lands. They are entitled to the best the State can give them and no objection can be raised to the fact that the majority of the soldiers have settled on country purchased from other settlers. Nevertheless, it is a

pity that it is so, but one cannot hold out any serious objection to it, because the men were promised treatment along those lines and that promise must be fulfilled. It would be a good thing for the State if we entered upon clearing operations in order to prepare Crown land for settlement so that soldiers may derive the same benefits from the areas taken up on Crown lands as they do on land purchased from an original holder. I do not know what many of these original holders, who have been bought out, have done. In four cases where the properties were purchased in the vicinity of my district, two of the original holders have gone back to Victoria and the other two, went on the land here. I can only speak of my personal experience and I do not know what other settlers have done after selling out to the returned soldiers. It is certain that the returned soldiers who have taken up these improved holdings, have a greater capital cost to carry although they have the advantage of improvements. By reason of the latter fact, they may have better returns at the outset, but if they are confronted with one or two bad seasons, which God forbid, it will prove very difficult for them to pay back their liabilities to the State. The Federal Government, who have lent the money to the State, will not give this Government too much latitude, but will insist on the money being paid when it is due, unless, of course, the Commonwealth is in a very flourishing condition. I do not think there is much hope of that. The amount of their loans will fall due in 1927, and we should have gone through our worst times in the interval. I am not desirous of posing as a prophet of ill omen, but I am convinced that the next two years will be the worst in the experience of Australia. After that, conditions will commence to improve, and by 1927 we should have pulled around again. In the meantime, any Government will be wise in walking carefully, so far as the expenditure of money is concerned. No party in charge of the affairs of the State would be warranted in incurring expense which is not absolutely necessary at the present time. It would be easy for members on this side of the House possessing for the time being very little responsibility from the standpoint of the administration of the State's affairs, to tell the Government exactly what they should do and how they should do it. We have the interests of the State at heart, and do not desire to see the State over-burdened, nor do we desire to embarrass the Government. However, whatever Government are in power, they should walk carefully and spend money to the best advantage. Some of the money provided for under the loan is not in the best interests of the community as a whole. The expenditure provided for tramway extensions could well stand over. If the people of Perth had to walk a few miles it would not do much harm, because it has to be recognised that the State relies upon its primary and secondary industries. When the country is flourish-

ing, the city will flourish, and tramway extensions can be undertaken then. I cannot support the amendment indicated by the member for Katanning, because evidently he has a personal grievance. If the Government gave a promise regarding a railway in his district, he may be quite right in asking the Government to stand to it. I would support an amendment seeking to prevent the Government from spending money on works which are not urgent. If the member for Katanning brought forward some such amendment, I would support him, but I cannot give him my support in an amendment aimed to embarrass the Government because of his private grievance.

Mr. ANGELO (Gaseoyne) [5.14]: After perusing the schedule attached to the Loan Bill, I must admit to being disappointed. For the past two years there has been a considerable amount of talk throughout the State, and in the Press regarding the development of the North. Only recently a department of the North-West has been created, and a Minister appointed. It was suggested that at last the Government had seriously considered the advisability of doing something to populate the empty stretches north of Geraldton. And here we find that a Loan Bill comes down for nearly four million pounds, and the only items allocated to the north total £70,000, of which one item absorbs £50,000. I am not one who speaks from a parochial point of view; I am not going to mention my own district. I wish to speak for the whole of the North-West. The time has come when the Government should show its earnestness by doing what they have been telling us in the last three years they intend to do, namely to start some development in the North-West. Like the previous speakers, I do not wish the Government to spend one penny on anything which is not essentially necessary, and I would go further and say I should be sorry to see them spend a penny of loan money on any work not of a reproductive character; but there are some matters affecting the development of the North-West which are absolutely essential, and which will be reproductive from the jump. In the first place, I would like to ask how much of this two million pounds that is placed on the Estimates for the settlement of soldiers is to be spent in the North-West. From the North-West over a thousand men went to the front out of the total sent from Western Australia, and up to the present I do not suppose £5,000 has been spent in the North-West to assist the settlement of these soldiers.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Honorary Minister: Not £5,000!

Mr. ANGELO: I do not suppose there has been more. Not a war service home nor a worker's home is being built for these men. Most of the men who went to the front have had to find employment as team-



sters, labourers and station hands, and they have been in no way granted the facilities that the soldiers down here have received.

Hon. P. Collier: You did not give us much of a hand last week when we tried to get smaller pastoral holdings.

Mr. ANGELO: There are other methods of settling these men. I realise that to put a man on a pastoral holding will cost the Government more than the Government can afford to pay.

Hon. P. Collier: You are complaining that they have not done it.

Mr. ANGELO: There are other means of settling the soldiers.

The Honorary Minister: What are they?

Mr. ANGELO: Closer settlement. A suggestion was approved by the experts of the Department of Agriculture and nothing has been done. These returned men certainly deserve some consideration. We sent over a thousand men to the front, and no amount of money has been spent by the Government out of loan to give these men a helping hand and start them in avocations which will make them comfortable for the rest of their lives. They are entitled to a fair share of this expenditure.

The Minister for Mines: Are there any applications from that part?

Mr. ANGELO: Yes, dozens of them. Applications have been made for small holdings and have never been granted. Men have applied for war service homes and for workers' homes and the answer has been, "There is no surveyor available to send up there."

The Minister for Mines: A bigger percentage of the men who returned went from the North-West than from any other part of the State.

Mr. ANGELO: I question that and I do not think it can be proved. Here I find an item of £10,000 for steamers.

Mr. TROY: Are the war service homes the only means of developing the north?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. ANGELO: There is an item of £10,000 for steamers. I would like members of the House to travel on some of those boats which have been running down the coast during the last two months. The passengers could not find sleeping accommodation even in the bathrooms; the boats have been crowded from one end to the other. We have been promised that at least one new steamer would be provided. The Minister for the North-West told us that three new steamers should be provided and yet the Loan Estimates provide for £10,000. Is that an earnest that the promises made are to be carried out?

Hon. P. Collier: It would not be a very big ship for £10,000.

Mr. ANGELO: No, we should have to revert to the days of the small sailing schooners.

Member: Or the "Rob Roy."

Mr. ANGELO: I am afraid that the "Rob Roy" could not be bought for that sum to-day. In some parts of the North-West the

settlers have had no mails for five or six weeks. The people of Shark Bay have not had a mail for five weeks, simply because there is no steamer accommodation.

The Minister for Mines: You know why that is so.

Mr. ANGELO: Because the unsuitable ship which the Minister has is laid up for repairs. We would not mind if we could see some prospect of better treatment in future, but all we can see at the present time is that £10,000 is allocated for this important developmental work. If the steamers were provided they would pay from the very time that they took up the running. This is money which the Government, even at the present high rates of interest, could very well afford to expend.

The Minister for Mines: What, pay £480,000 for one ship?

Mr. ANGELO: The Minister for the North-West told us the other day that for a million pounds he could get three steamers built, and a big balance would be left which could be devoted to the repairing of harbours and jetties. If this is so, the time has arrived when the Government should seriously consider the absolute necessity of improving the service, or if they cannot do that, let them take their steamers off and let someone else come in. If out of four millions of loan money only £70,000 is to be shared by the North-West, we have very little hope of developing the North-West, and the statement recently made by the Minister for Mines that it will be 50 years hence before we can develop the North-West will probably prove to be correct. The member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Troy) said it would be impossible for Western Australia to develop the North and that it would have to be handed over—

Mr. Troy: I did not say that.

Mr. ANGELO: I thought I heard the hon. member say that Western Australia could not develop the North.

Mr. Troy: From the south.

Mr. ANGELO: We do not want those sentiments to get abroad. I want to see the North-West remain part of Western Australia, but if it is to remain part of Western Australia and if we are going to carry out our national and State duty by developing and populating it, we must give the North more sympathetic treatment than £70,000 out of a loan of four millions.

The Minister for Mines: What sort of treatment did you get for the Carnarvon works? Was not it sympathetic?

Mr. ANGELO: The Government have jolly good security for that money.

The Minister for Mines: Do you think so?

Mr. ANGELO: Absolutely. Those works could be sold to-morrow for what they cost and considerably more. This is developmental work initiated and carried out to the extent of 50 per cent. by the squatters themselves.

The Minister for Mines: You ought to admit the fact that you got assistance.

Mr. ANGELO: We did get assistance as a loan, and we hope to pay it back shortly.

The Honorary Minister: You have got it and so you say nothing about it.

Mr. ANGELO: I hope that in future, in connection with any loan moneys, the North will get more sympathetic treatment, and that the undoubted duty of this State to develop the North will be carried out properly.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [5-53]: Regarding the settlement of soldiers in the South-West, I interjected that at least six or seven estates of which I knew, had been subdivided with advantage to the scheme. The estates are: Brooklands, Brazier's, Ryall's, Brockman's, "Cundinup," Rose's, and "Marybrook." Of the latter estate, the original holder still has one-half and the balance has been subdivided into three holdings. The Margaret river railway is absolutely necessary because it touches an area which will provide two essential requirements of this State, butter and potatoes. The route of this railway is closely settled, and the people who live at the lower end have at least 40 miles to cart their produce. Anyone knows that the business of producing potatoes and cream necessitates quick transit. Apart from that, the country carries a large amount of valuable timber which has been left by the millers, and which could be cut into sleepers and thus turned to profitable use. All these things would make the railway, from a profit earning point of view, a reproductive one. Therefore, I hope members will appreciate that the work done on this line—a line which has been promised for a great number of years—partially given effect to, if not carried to completion, will result in a loss to the country. Seeing that the State is committed to the building of this line the work should be completed. I am grateful to the Government for having included an amount for this particular work.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam— in reply) [5-55]: I think that a great deal of the discussion might well have taken place on the Loan Estimates. We are not discussing the Loan Estimates to-day, but the items which have been mentioned all appear in the Loan Estimates. I agree entirely with the view that we ought to be very careful with the expenditure of loan money. There are some necessary works and there always will be. I told the House last night that we had spent in five months £238,000 of loan moneys apart from soldier settlement. I also told the House that we had spent last year £720,000 of loan moneys apart from soldier settlement; also that if we are to have an immigration policy we must be prepared with necessary works. For these reasons I am asking for this vote. Everyone knows that money borrowed at a high rate of interest for the provision of public utilities means for all time a very much higher cost against the people who use the facilities provided. The soldier settlement scheme was approved by this House. I admit it would have been very much better to have settled 3,000 men upon Crown lands if Crown lands had been available and prepared for them. Members opposite know that in 1915 the first conference in connection with the settlement of returned men was held in Melbourne and Mr. W. D. Johnson, the then Minister for Lands, agreed to the scheme. Several conferences have since been held, and at each it has been agreed with the Federal Government

that we would provide for these men on their return. We agreed to prepare the land for settlement, and not ask them to go on unimproved blocks. We agreed to build homes and do other preparatory work. When I came back to the control of soldier settlement 20 months ago, it was not possible to do much to improve Crown lands for settlement. In the first place they have to be surveyed and then afterwards improved. It happened that land values were very low at the time, and it is a fact that we have bought a considerable area of land at very low prices, probably at less than the actual cost of the improvements and the stock on those farms. A good deal of land has been subdivided and 388 men have been settled on estates which were very little used before. Many of the single farms to which members have referred are also portions of farms which were held by settlers, and which have been sold almost unimproved to the soldiers. It will be remembered that Parliament agreed that the soldiers should be settled so far as possible in the districts from which they enlisted. We, therefore, have had to buy land for them. Something has been said about local borrowing. The money available for private enterprise is already less than the amount needed. If we did borrow locally we should interfere a good deal with the money that is available to private finance. If we did interfere with private finance and that money was available there would be a want of employment. The trouble to-day is that money is not available to the extent that is required for the persons who have enterprises upon which they would like to embark. I hope when the wool and wheat are sold the position will be considerably changed. For the moment there is not enough money in the State for private use. It has been argued that we should borrow locally. During the war a great deal of money has been borrowed locally, especially for war purposes. Recently we contributed a good deal to the Peace Loan, which was raised for the purpose of assisting in the repatriation of soldiers. It will be difficult to get money in London at anything like a reasonable rate for some little time to come. The London money market, however, alters so rapidly that one can reasonably hope for some change during the coming 12 months. We do not propose to spend money if it can be avoided. I have also told hon. members that we shall not need to go on the money market until June of next year. The member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) said something about the amount of money on the Estimates for the Nyabing railway. The Nyabing and other railways that are recommended will be built. The price of railway material has been very high indeed for some time, and it would not be wise for the Government, even if they could do so, to attempt to purchase any just now. Until lately we could not get any rails shipped. I admit the Nyabing line is one of the first railways which should be constructed. The small amount on the Estimates will not have the slightest effect on the date of the starting of the line or its completion. It is one of the lines on the schedule which was before the House when it was decided that the Esperance line was the first which should be built. The people there have been told that they will get this line. Many of them are settled close to the head of it, and there will be a good

deal of land beyond the head of the line available for selection. There are some lines to which we are committed, and this one in particular must be built. I told the people there that we would do so. I have never promised any date in connection with the construction of any line; it would be impossible to do so. The railways needed to complete the system are fortunately very few, and the mileage is not very great. Many lines were laid down years ago with cheaper material, which was a very good thing. The present cost of material means that a railway becomes an expensive affair. It costs as much for the rails alone to-day as it used to cost to complete the work before the war. During the war it was impossible to do anything in the way of railway construction.

Mr. Thomson: Then your intention is to proceed with the line as early as possible.

The PREMIER: Of course, it is. That and the other lines will have to be built. The Loan Estimates provide the authority to do the work, whereas this Bill merely gives the Government authority to raise the necessary money. The utmost care will be exercised in the expenditure of all loan moneys. As an earnest of that I have shown that we have spent only £239,000 in five months, apart from soldier settlement, and this works out at about £800,000 a year. No works of any magnitude have been undertaken.

Mr. SPEAKER: Before putting the second reading of this Bill I desire to draw the attention of the Premier to the fact that it will need a message from His Excellency the Governor. I have not received it yet.

The PREMIER: I thought you had it yesterday.

Mr. SPEAKER: That was on the Appropriation.

The PREMIER: I thought I had produced the message.

Mr. SPEAKER: I can allow the second reading to be carried and an order to be made for the Committee stage to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

### In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair, the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Extension of Acts to wheat harvested in 1920-21:

The CHAIRMAN: The leader of the Opposition has moved the following amendment, which appears on the Notice Paper:—

Provided also that wheat acquired under the agency agreement authorised by this Act, or under any agency agreement ratified by the Wheat Marketing Act, 1916, or any Act extending the operation thereof, and made available for local consumption shall be sold at a price or prices, wholesale or retail, as the case may be, not to exceed the price or prices, if any, lawfully fixed under the Prices Regulation Act, 1919, and applicable to the sale; but if no such price is fixed, or a sale takes place elsewhere than in an area proclaimed under that Act, the price to be charged for such

wheat on the sale thereof shall not exceed 7s. 8d. per bushel.

Penalty: One hundred pounds.

### Point of Order.

Mr. Thomson: I rise to a point of order. Is the amendment on the Notice Paper relevant to the Bill?

Hon. T. Walker: You ought to give some reasons for assuming that.

Mr. Johnston: It seems very similar to the last amendment which was ruled out of order.

The Chairman: It is not my intention to consider my previous ruling in dealing with this case. To make this amendment inadmissible it must be shown to be irrelevant to the subject-matter of the Bill as introduced. The point is, what is the subject-matter of the Bill? It is a Bill for an Act to continue the operations of previous Wheat Marketing Acts, and it also makes some minor amendments. The crux of the amendment of the leader of the Opposition to Clause 2 in my judgment is as to the fixing of the maximum price for wheat for local consumption. The question is as to whether this is sufficiently removed from the subject-matter of the Bill to make it irrelevant to the Bill. Should like to hear some arguments for and against this point.

Mr. Thomson: In my opinion it is not relevant to the Bill. I have studied this measure and have gone through the Acts of the other States. I have not found in one Act which has been passed in the Eastern States, or in our own Acts, any section which gives the House the right to fix the price of wheat.

Hon. P. Collier: Is there anything which denies them that right?

Mr. Thomson: I will deal with South Australia first. In the 1915 Act of that State—

Hon. P. Collier: What has South Australia to do with this?

Mr. Thomson: It has a lot to do with it.

Hon. P. Collier: It has nothing whatever to do with it.

Mr. Thomson: I am putting my case as I think right. This is a Federal matter.

Hon. P. Collier: It has nothing to do with the Federal authorities; it is purely a State matter.

Mr. Thomson: In 1915 an Act was brought into existence in South Australia called the Wheat Harvesting Act, Section 5 of which says that all wheat delivered to the Government for sale by the Government on account of the owners may be sold at such time or times and at such place or places as the Minister may decide, and at the best price obtainable at the time.

Hon. T. Walker: That brings in the question of price.

Mr. Thomson: It does not give it to the price fixing commission.

Hon. P. Collier: It deals with the price.

Mr. Thomson: It does not give the commission authority to fix the price, neither does it give that authority to the House.

Hon. T. Walker: Neither does this.

Mr. Thomson: The New South Wales Act is called the Wheat Acquisition Act.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is not a wheat marketing Act.

Mr. Thomson: I will deal with that. These Bills were all brought in together, about the

same period, to enable various Governments and various Ministers to come together for the purpose of inaugurating the wheat pool for the handling of our wheat.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr. Thomson: Before the tea adjournment I was pointing out that Section 5 of the South Australian Act distinctly empowers the Minister to decide the selling of the wheat.

Hon. T. Walker: The selling?

Mr. Thomson: Yes. The section says—

All wheat delivered to the Government for sale on account of the owners may be sold at such time or at such times and at such place or places as the Minister may decide, and at the best price obtainable at the time.

I want the leader of the Opposition to remember those words, "the best price."

Hon. T. Walker: That is irrelevant.

Mr. Thomson: I hope to prove that the amendment of the leader of the Opposition is utterly outside the scope of the Bill.

Hon. P. Collier: Pure rubbish!

Mr. Thomson: Coming to New South Wales we find again that there is an Act to enable the Government to compulsorily acquire wheat, and so forth. Clause 7 provides—

The board shall, on behalf of the Government, sell or dispose of any wheat acquired under this Act at such times and such prices and on such terms as may be thought fit.

There is no question in either South Australia or New South Wales of any outside body; the only body referred to is that constituted under the Wheat Marketing Act of each State. Now I come to Victoria, and the preamble to the Wheat Marketing Act of that State reads—

Whereas owing to the great scarcity of the means of transport as the result of the existence of a state of war, the satisfactory marketing of the Australian wheat harvest was and may continue to be endangered; And whereas the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia and certain Ministers of the Crown of the States of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, in conference held for the purpose, formulated a scheme for concerted action by the Governments of the Commonwealth and the said States for utilising on a fair basis the means of transport available and for the marketing of the said harvest on behalf of the growers, at prices based on those obtainable on the London wheat market with certain deductions:

I want the Committee to note that point.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Our Act says something similar.

Mr. Thomson: That is quite correct. I am bringing before the Committee the whole of the Acts dealing with the marketing of the wheat of the Commonwealth.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The other States can alter their Wheat Marketing Acts if they like.

Mr. Thomson: They could do so, but they have not done so. Seeing that we have had uniformity throughout the Commonwealth, and

seeing that the Government of no other State have attempted to fix the price of wheat outside the Wheat Marketing Board, I submit that the amendment does not refer to the Government at all, but to an outside body not even responsible to Parliament. That body can fix the price of wheat, and Parliament will have no authority to alter such price. The Victorian preamble continues—

And whereas it is expedient to ratify the action of the Government of Victoria in joining with the said Governments in settling the terms of the said scheme, and to empower the Government of Victoria to join with the said Governments in settling the terms or any modification thereof, or in formulating any other scheme for concerted action for the purposes aforesaid, or any modification thereof, and to do all such acts, matters, and things as on the part of the said Government may be deemed necessary or expedient for the carrying out of the said scheme, or of any such modification thereof, or of such other scheme or any such modification thereof:

Then Section 4 of the Victorian Act reads—

The Premier of Victoria may join with the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Premiers of the States in settling the terms of the proposed scheme for concerted action in the marketing of the wheat harvest of 1915-16 outlined in the conference hereinbefore mentioned or any modification thereof.

And so forth. Therefore the Premier of Victoria is given authority to make arrangements in connection with the scheme and to finalise the marketing of the wheat.

The Attorney General: We have a similar section in our Act.

Mr. Thomson: Yes. My line of argument is as to the uniformity.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Are these Eastern States Acts from which you have been quoting the latest Acts?

Mr. Thomson: Yes. Not one of those Acts contains an amendment as regards the fixing of prices.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How do you know?

Mr. Thomson: I have searched for such amendments and been unable to find them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The latest Acts are not here yet.

Mr. Thomson: Section 5 of the Victorian Act provides—

For the purposes of the satisfactory marketing of the wheat harvest and for the purposes of this Act (a) the Minister, whether in conjunction with Ministers of the Crown representing the Commonwealth and the States or otherwise, may buy or sell or arrange for the purchase or sale of wheat, and do all acts, matters, and things necessary or expedient in that behalf accordingly; and in particular, but without limiting the generality of the foregoing powers (i) may appoint or employ such agents . . . and so forth.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you not think your arguments might be used against you?

Mr. Thomson: If the hon. member interjecting thinks so, I have no doubt he will take every opportunity to controvert my arguments. Coming to our own Act, its preamble is identical with that of the Victorian Act of 1916. Our Act was introduced by a Government in which the present leader of the Opposition was Minister for Mines. The question was discussed by the Labour Cabinet, and they took great credit to themselves for having brought in that Act. The preamble to the Act introduced by the Labour Government reads—

Whereas owing to the great scarcity of the means of transport, as the result of the existence of a state of war, the satisfactory marketing of the Australian wheat harvest was and may continue to be endangered: And whereas the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia and certain Ministers of the Crown of the States of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, in conference held for the purpose, formulated a scheme for concerted action by the Governments of the Commonwealth and the said States for utilising on a fair basis the means of transport available and for the marketing of the said harvest on behalf of the growers, at prices based on those obtainable on the London wheat market with certain deductions:

I have now shown that not one of the various existing Acts delegates the authority for fixing prices to anyone, but that under each of those Acts that authority remains with the Australian Wheat Board.

The Attorney General: How long were those Acts passed for?

Mr. Thomson: For each year, and they were renewed each year. I am somewhat surprised to find from the Attorney General's interjection that the hon. gentleman is willing—for reasons best known to himself—to depart this year from that which has been the established practice since 1916.

Hon. P. Collier: It is not a question of being willing, but a question of the power of Parliament.

Mr. Thomson: According to the Act as I understand it, the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition is not relevant to this Bill, because in not one of the various Acts which I have quoted is there any attempt made to fix the price of wheat. I wish to point out, too, that last January, when the price of wheat was fixed at 7s. 8d., we did not find either the leader of the Opposition or the Attorney General, or any other member, coming to this House to declare that the price was not just and equitable, that the price which was being fixed was below the world's parity. No; those hon. members agreed to the price fixed by the Australian Wheat Board. The price has been fixed by that authority from its inception. No outside body has ever attempted to fix the price.

Mr. Troy: On a point of order. The hon. member is not discussing the point of order, but is discussing the price of wheat. The argument he is using might be advanced against the amendment, but has nothing to do with the point of order. He has not attempted to show that the amendment is irrelevant.

Mr. Thomson: It is purely a matter of opinion whether the amendment is relevant to the Bill.

Mr. Troy: But I want your opinion, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The question before the Chair is as to the relevancy of the amendment. I should like an expression of opinion from the Committee as to whether the amendment is relevant or not.

Mr. Thomson: I have no desire to discuss the price of wheat, but embodied in the amendment is the provision that the price shall not exceed 7s. 8d.

The Chairman: That is not the point. The point is not the fixing of the price at all. Is it within the scope of the Bill?

Mr. Thomson: That is my point.

The Chairman: But you have been arguing about the 7s. 8d. You had better leave that out.

Mr. Thomson: I say the amendment is not relevant to the Bill.

Hon. P. Collier: The present price of wheat has no bearing on it.

Mr. Thomson: What a clever interjection! The whole amendment is the fixing of the price of wheat in Western Australia. I maintain it is not within the province of the Bill to fix the price of wheat, and my argument is that not one of the other States in its wheat marketing legislation has endeavoured to insert a provision which will give the Government or Parliament power to fix the price of wheat.

Hon. P. Collier: Because they have not done it, we have not the power to do it. What logic!

Mr. Thomson: I maintain we have not the power. If it was intended to give the Government or Parliament authority to fix the price of wheat, concerted action would have been taken by the various State Governments. According to our own Bill and to the legislation of the other States, it is not relevant to the Bill to give an outside body authority to fix the price of wheat.

Hon. T. Walker: There is only one point to be considered, namely, whether Parliament has power to amend any measure within the Order of Leave. I submit it has. We are a Parliament of our own, and can deal with the matter as we think fit. The hon. member has quoted from the South Australian, Victorian, and New South Wales Acts. They all differ from ours. There is no uniformity.

Mr. Thomson: The principle is the same.

Hon. T. Walker: The principle, of course; for the marketing of wheat is the object of them all. But in detail they deal with the

subject differently, and it shows that we, too, can do so. The only semblance of argument the hon. member used as to the relativity of the amendment was that of uniformity. He argued that the States and the Commonwealth are partners and have all agreed, and that not any of the partners can alter the agreement of its own accord. That is putting the case strongly for the hon. member. But the hon. member forgets that we have different conditions prevailing in each State, even for acquiring. We have specially drawn up a new schedule differing in detail from that which we had last year. The hon. member must recollect that, in spite of our partnership, as it is alleged in respect of the main features, we have dealt specially with New South Wales during the drought and the shortage of the harvest last year. We have gone outside the instructions contained in our preamble, which are to regulate the price by the London parity, and we have made special concessions to New South Wales.

Mr. Hickmott: The wheat board did that.

Hon. T. Walker: Under the authority of the Act.

Mr. Harrison: Which Act gives them authority?

Mr. Pilkington: The wheat board is under no Act.

Hon. T. Walker: That is true, but under the Act the Minister has to approve of what the wheat board does. So that argument of uniformity falls to the ground. We have no uniformity, and we can, with the authority of the Minister in any particular State, deal with particular prices. This measure, upon which we are all in agreement, is specially designed to deal with the overseas sale of wheat. Yet in that, with the approval of the various Governments, we have entirely departed from the statements made in the preamble.

The Attorney General: That is only the preamble. Look at Section 5 of the Act.

Hon. T. Walker: I know. We have sold wheat to various States at various prices and without regard to London parity, showing that there is discretion as to the partners. I specially draw attention to Section 10 of the Act which the Bill continues. In Sub-section 3 there are certain exemptions. They are very important. The Minister may exempt, either generally or in any particular case, from the operations of the section: (a) sales or purchases of seed wheat by growers to and from other growers, (b) sales by wheat-growers or purchases from wheat-growers of wheat of a quality below that fit for milling purposes for the bona fide use of the purchasers as food for poultry or stock, (c) sales or purchases of wheat grown by any wheat-grower in areas of limited production specified by the Minister, and (d) such other sales and purchases as are prescribed by the Minister. That section of the Act entirely brings the amendment within the scope of the Bill. The amendment is not as regards

overseas sales or Commonwealth sales, but is in regard to local consumption.

The Attorney General: Do you think that section really applies in this case?

Hon. T. Walker: I think so. It gives the right to deal with local requirements.

The Attorney General: I do not know that the Minister has prescribed any exemptions or any areas.

Hon. T. Walker: No, but he can. I will give the hon. member an illustration. In the Esperance district an exemption is made so that wheat may be sold without reference to the pool at all. That shows what can be done. If we can do it in regard to poultry and stock, we can certainly do it in regard to consumers generally in our own State.

Mr. Thomson: It is inferior wheat for poultry.

Hon. T. Walker: Any kind. We can make any directions.

Mr. Thomson: Why does it say "quality"?

Hon. T. Walker: That is one exception for milling purposes, but the end of the section reads, "And for sales and purchases as are described." I submit we are entirely within the scope of the order of leave of the present Bill. I am going to submit that whatever is presented to the House to consider, the House can amend; it cannot introduce something that is not entirely relevant, but if it is relevant the whole Bill is relevant to sales. The whole measure is that of sales—sales abroad and in the Commonwealth for milling, for poultry, for seed wheat, etc. If we have a matter submitted in regard to sales, it is relevant to move any amendment the House may think fit. In the original 1916 Act we give a direction for fixing the overseas price; we say it shall be the prevailing London market price with certain deductions. It was a direction to those who were entrusted as agents with the marketing of wheat, and if they were able to make that direction in regard to the London market, we can make it in regard to any other market. If they could suggest in 1916 the test of London parity, we can suggest another now, more particularly as that other does not affect our relationship as partners of the other States. It is purely a domestic matter. If we can sell wheat for local consumption, then we can suggest a method of arriving at the price, and even fixing the price. The point might have been raised in 1916 that we have nothing to do with the London wheat market or the London parity, that it does not concern the Bill, that it is outside the scope of the measure. As a matter of fact we have nothing to do with the London market, but the London market was merely suggested as a means of arriving at a fair price. There is a price fixing board in our midst and we say, "Have regard to the price that that commission fixes."

Mr. Thomson: It does not say that the commission shall fix the price.

Hon. T. Walker: It is the Government that fixes the price; the Government will take the responsibility.

Mr. Maley: The Government will have to get the market value of the wheat.

Hon. T. Walker: Undoubtedly, and the price fixing commission will fix the price for local consumption. The amendment says that if there be no price fixing, then in those districts where there be no price fixing, the price shall not be greater than 7s. 8d. per bushel.

Mr. Thomson: You want the House to fix the maximum of 7s. 8d.

Hon. T. Walker: I only ask the hon. member to try to fix his attention on the subject under discussion. If there is no board in the State that can direct the price to be fixed, Parliament can do it.

Mr. Pickering: That is not the intention of the Bill.

Hon. T. Walker: It will be the intention of Parliament if it carries it. The power of Parliament in this respect to amend measures is unlimited. We can even go beyond the order of leave and then come back and amend the order of leave itself to cover the amendments we have made. Parliament is supreme.

Hon. P. Collier: Parliament may not consider it advisable, but that is another matter.

Hon. T. Walker: To make it appear that we cannot amend the measure under discussion is to stultify Parliament altogether, to limit us to the utmost degree. Parliament can amend any measure, and this measure will be amended, if the amendment be carried, in perfect consonance with the intent and purpose and object of the measure itself. I would ask you, Mr. Chairman, in giving your ruling, to remember that the amendment deals only with domestic consumption, that is to say, consumption within the State. If there were something binding us by contract with the other States, you might well say we could not infringe upon that contract. But this is not a part of any contract with any other State; it is purely the regulation of our own consumption within the borders of our own State, where no State can overrule us or interfere with us.

Mr. Pickering: You did not say that when we wanted to raise the price from 7s. 8d.; it was all right then.

Hon. T. Walker: I did not speak on the subject. Besides, what does it matter; that has nothing to do with this question. What I am saying now is that what has not been put into a common pool we can deal with as we like.

The Attorney General: I gather from the remarks of the member for Katanning that he cannot imagine my reasons for suggesting, by way of interjection, that the amendment of the leader of the Opposition is in order. A very cheap and obvious retort was open to me. I do not propose to make it. I simply inform the hon. member that my reason for getting up now is, as Attorney General, apart from party or any faction, to tell the House what is my legal opinion on the point which has been raised. In considering the amendment by the leader of the

Opposition the first thing we have to ask ourselves is: what was the principal Act; what did it purport to do, and what scheme came into operation by reason of that Act? As to what is the Act itself, the preamble I will remind hon. members, is not conclusive, as other subsequent clauses in the Act will show.

Mr. Thomson: It shows what the intention of the Bill is, though.

The Attorney General: It provides for or relates to, a scheme for marketing the harvest at a price based on those obtainable on the London market with certain deductions. If members look at the preamble alone they will come to the conclusion that the only price on which wheat marketed under the scheme can be sold, is London parity. The preamble, however, although it lends some assistance to the interpretation of sections under the Act, is not conclusive. In support of my opinion I would quote a small passage from page 118 of Halsbury's "Laws of England." It states, under the heading of "Preamble"—

Following upon the heading or title comes the preamble (if any), which gives the reasons why the passing of the statute has become desirable. The preamble may now be regarded, like the title, as part of the statute for the purpose of explaining, restraining, or even extending enacting words, but not for the purpose of limiting express provisions couched in clear and unambiguous terms.

When we come to Section 5 in the Act it will be seen that the Government of Western Australia are authorised to join with the Commonwealth and the Governments of the States of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, in settling the terms of a scheme for concerted action in marketing the Australian wheat harvest of 1915-16—as outlined at the conference which had taken place—or in the production thereof and in formulating any scheme for concerted action for like purposes, or in modification of any such scheme. We are, therefore, authorised not only to join in the scheme discussed at the conference, but to take part in any modification of the scheme which the Governments decide upon.

Mr. Maley: It must be concerted action.

The Attorney General: Under Section 6, the Minister has power to buy or sell or arrange to purchase or sell wheat. The only other material provision in the Act which we can discuss for the purpose of the present argument, is Section 10, which provides that no person in Western Australia, except as prescribed by regulations, may sell or buy wheat from any other person in Western Australia for delivery in Western Australia. The effect of the Act was that all wheat grown in Western Australia was bound to be delivered, if the law was carried out, to the Minister, and the Minister was paramount under the scheme outlined and as agreed to, subject to modifications which existed between the

Commonwealth and the States mentioned. The effect was that the Government obtained entire control over all wheat grown in this State, and no one else could sell it. Bearing in mind that position, the next thing I will deal with is the scheme as I know it. I do not profess to know everything about the wheat scheme, and I am open to contradiction.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I do not think anyone knows all about it.

The Attorney General: The scheme was that this wheat, which all the Ministers of the various States had under their control, was subject to one general pool for one particular purpose, namely for export overseas. As regards that particular purpose, the Australian Wheat Board had power by reason of the partnership that existed, not by statute, to fix the export price. They do not require a statute for that purpose, and overseas export is simply a matter of having power to fix the prices, because they have full control.

Mr. Maley: They have no power to fix the prices. They only sell it at the price they can get.

The Attorney General: That is a distinction without a difference. We are now dealing with the question of home consumption. That is not a matter for the control of the Australian Wheat Board. It is under the control of the Ministers in each State.

Mr. Thomson: Why has the Australian Wheat Board always fixed prices?

The Attorney General: I cannot agree that the Australian Wheat Board has fixed prices. In any case, I will not say that everything the Australian Wheat Board has done is correct.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They do not fix prices on all wheat.

The Attorney General: I am telling members what I know of the board. Having got so far, the next thing to remember is that the Wheat Marketing Act of 1916 was an Act passed for one year. It does not operate unless it is renewed. It has been renewed every year, and this year we are asking the House to renew it again. Clause 2 of the present Bill is the one under which the scheme is to be extended. It is open for Parliament—it must be obvious to any member that that is so,—to say that Parliament will agree to the scheme being extended another year upon certain conditions. Parliament could say it would not consent to this Act being extended unless the Speaker stood on his head on the Table. Parliament has absolute power, and if Parliament choose to fix and condition attaching to the extension of the wheat marketing scheme, that must stand. It is idle to say that Parliament has not that power. If members admit the force of that argument then the next question that arises is: is the amendment proposed by the leader of the Opposition relevant to the Bill? There can only be one answer. The amendment proposed by the leader of

the Opposition is one to be added to the proviso to Clause 2. The proviso is a proper and recognised method in legislation of inserting conditions or exceptions to a clause. It is sought here to add conditions to the proviso upon which the scheme is to be extended for a further 12 months. I say now, as I said on a previous occasion, as an amendment to the proviso of Sub-clause 2 the amendment is quite in order.

Mr. Pilkington: Before the tea adjournment I entirely agreed with the member for Katanning on the point of order that he raised. Even now, after having heard the arguments, I still agree with him. The hon. member arrived at his conclusion, however, by a route with which I do not agree. It seems to me entirely beside the question to consider what Acts have been passed in any other part of Australia. It matters not one rap what has been done elsewhere. The sole question for decision is whether the amendment proposed by the leader of the Opposition is relevant to the Bill. In considering the relevancy of that amendment, one has to consider, as the Attorney General remarked, the purpose and scope of the Bill, which is to be ascertained from the principal Act of 1916, looking at the whole Act. The material provisions have been read, and it is obvious that the scope of the Bill was—I am paraphrasing the preamble—to provide for the marketing of the Australian wheat harvest by concerted action between certain States and the Commonwealth. That was the whole purpose of it. That could be carried out by the scheme which was proposed or by any modified or new scheme with the object of marketing the harvest. That is the whole object and scope of the Act. The other provisions are subsidiary to that purpose. The object of the amendment is to fix the price of wheat in Western Australia. There are two objects, one the marketing of the Australian wheat harvest—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How can you market it without fixing the price?

Mr. Pilkington: Fixing the price in the ordinary language means fixing it as under the Prices Regulation Act. The board does not fix it any more than any seller fixes the price. When the wheat board sell, they do not fix the price but sell at the best price they can obtain. The seller is very rarely in the position to fix the price unless he has cornered the market. There are two objects, one the marketing of the Australian wheat harvest under the scheme between the States and the Commonwealth, and the other is to fix the price of wheat locally. These things are totally separate and different, and the amendment therefore is out of order. On this point, let me point out that the right to fix the price of wheat locally is already included in the powers given by the Prices Regulation Act. The executive Government of Western Australia have power to fix the price of wheat or any other



commodity, subject to the issue of certain proclamations. They have that power now.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: On the recommendation of the Commission.

Mr. Pilkington: Yes.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is all the hon. member is asking for.

Mr. Pilkington: That is what I am pointing out. The provision is there already. As an illustration of the irrelevancy of this amendment to the Bill, I am pointing out that the provisions are already embodied in another statute.

Hon. P. Collier: This amendment does not affect any power to fix prices by the Commission.

Mr. Pilkington: So entirely irrelevant to this Bill, and so entirely relevant to another Act is this amendment, that the power to fix the price of wheat in any portion of Western Australia is already conferred on the Government, subject to the recommendation of the Prices Regulation Commission, by the Act already passed. Whether the amendment is passed or not, the Prices Regulation Commission can exercise their powers, and on their recommendation the Government can fix the price of wheat or anything they choose to bring within the Prices Regulation Act.

Hon. P. Collier: That does not make the amendment irrelevant.

Mr. Pilkington: I do not say that it necessarily makes the amendment irrelevant, but its obvious relevancy in another Act suggests that it is not relevant in this Bill. It does not necessarily follow, but the point is that the fact of this Parliament having put similar provisions into another measure, is very strong evidence that that is the place where the subject matter of the amendment should be inserted.

Hon. P. Collier: It does not touch the question of relevancy at all, simply because the power is in another Act.

Mr. Pilkington: I submit that this is a consideration which assists to decide the question whether this provision is relevant to this Bill. It occurs in the Prices Regulation Act, and I submit it should not occur in a Bill which has for its purpose the marketing of the Australian harvest. The member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) said this Act was one providing for overseas sales. That is not quite correct. It provides for London parity, which rather suggests that sales take place in Australia.

Hon. T. Walker: But the delivery is in London.

Mr. Pilkington: The London parity presumably means that sales would take place in Australia on the basis of the London parity. But the whole scheme is subject to modification. As the Attorney General pointed out, the scheme originally proposed is subject to modification and indeed to entire alteration; that is, the scheme for the marketing of the Australian wheat harvest. The exemptions which the member for Kanowna mentioned provide for certain wheat

being sold in Western Australia, and wheat sold in Western Australia is already subject to the provisions of the Prices Regulation Act.

Hon. T. Walker: There is special power to the Minister to buy and sell wheat.

Mr. Pilkington: Certainly, in order that he may enter into the scheme. The sales locally are controlled by the wheat board and for this purpose, as the Attorney General pointed out, the Minister collects the whole of the wheat. I speak with diffidence about the scheme because I do not pretend to know the full details. As the member for North-East Fremantle pointed out, very few people do. But I understand the Minister collects the whole of the wheat to put it into the Australian wheat pool. Normally the whole of the wheat should go into the pool, but by arrangement with the pool the local scheme is allowed to keep a certain quantity for local requirements. But the whole of the wheat is under the control of the wheat pool, because it is only by arrangement that the Minister can keep a certain quantity out for local requirements. What is kept for local requirements is kept by leave of the pool, and it simply reduces the quantity of wheat which Western Australia would have in the pool.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Each State stands on its own.

Mr. Pilkington: Quite so. With regard to the quantity of wheat required for local consumption, and what the Minister is allowed to reserve out of what would otherwise be put into the pool—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And there is milling for overseas.

Mr. Pilkington: Yes, but that comes out of the pool and is a charge to the pool. What we keep for local consumption is kept out of the pool and we have so much less for the pool. The Attorney General put up an argument which struck me as being somewhat startling. He said that Parliament has absolute power. Of course it has, but we are not dealing with the power of Parliament. Parliament has power to pass this or any other measure. It has absolute power, but that is not the point in question. The question is whether according to the rules of this House the amendment is relevant to the Bill. The Attorney General put up this amazing proposition. I wrote it down rather hurriedly, but I think these were his words—"We have a right to say we will not consent to the extension of the Act except under certain conditions." If that were so the point of order raised could not be of the slightest effect. We could always say, "Here is a thing we want to put in; we will not pass the Bill unless it is put in." The question is not one of the power of Parliament, but whether, according to our procedure, the amendment is relevant to the Bill before the House. That is the sole question. Is this amendment relevant and can an amendment be said to be relevant which provides for the fixing of the price of wheat in

Western Australia when the Bill before the House is one providing for the marketing of the Australian wheat harvest?

The Chairman: I have listened with interest to the arguments for and against the amendment, and feeling sure that it will be impossible to please every member of the Committee, and knowing there will be a full discussion in the House, which I hope will be couched in temperate language and of which I hope I shall not be made the subject as I was on a previous occasion, and charged with not being fair, I have come to the conclusion, after giving great consideration to the matter, that the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition is not relevant to the subject matter of this Bill and I rule it out of order.

*Dissent from Ruling.*

Hon. T. Walker: I move—

That the Chairman's ruling be dissented from.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Chairman reported the dissent.

Hon. T. Walker [8.40]: I shall have to go over the ground already traversed in Committee in order that my reasons for dissenting from the ruling of the Chairman might be understood. The grounds I have taken in Committee, and upon which I now dissent from the Chairman's ruling, are that an amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition is strictly relevant to the Bill. It has been urged by some that the object of this measure is simply the marketing of wheat, that we have for local purposes a Prices Regulation Act to which, it is urged, the amendment of the leader of the Opposition would be cogent or relevant. You, Sir, know full well that there may be common matters in many Bills. There may be matters of prices in a price fixing Bill and there may be matters affecting prices in a wheat marketing Bill, and matters relevant to prices may be relevant to either of these measures. I submit that the amendment of the leader of the Opposition is relevant to this Bill, more particularly as this is a measure for wheat sales and wheat prices. This deals specifically with wheat, not with oats or anything else. General commodities come under the Prices Regulation Commission, a body appointed to generally fix the prices of commodities consumed by the community, but this measure deals specifically with the marketing, the sale and the price of wheat, wheat specifically. It deals only with wheat, as to how it shall be marketed, and machinery to be created to market it, and there is in the original Act a suggestion as to how a body called the board is to arrive at the price. The preamble to the Act—it has been pointed out that the preamble does not really affect the Bill any more than it is an assistance to the interpretation of the succeeding clauses and may modify or limit, or may throw light upon

subsequent portions of the measure—the preamble, I say, is of value so far as it gives us the basis of principle upon which the Act is constructed. The preamble of this measure says that it is one for fixing a fair basis for the marketing of the harvest on behalf of the growers.

Mr. Holman: At what price is it to be marketed?

Hon. T. Walker: At a price based on that obtainable on the London wheat market with certain deductions. That shows that the Bill confers powers as to the price and suggests modifications. It speaks of certain deductions. It is a ready reckoner as to how the conclusion as to the price of wheat can be arrived at. The marketing and selling is the very basis of the measure. The member for Perth suggested that the marketing and price fixing were not in themselves price fixing, and that we had a special Bill for price fixing to which the amendment would be relative. Surely he has overlooked the scope and power of a Committee and of a House, and of Houses of Parliament. If the price can be fixed according to the market in London and this can be relevant to the Bill, then any other suggestion as to any other method of fixing or arranging the price can also be relative to the Bill. If one way of fixing the price is relevant so is another way relevant. It was fixed in one way in 1916, and now in a modified form the leader of the Opposition proposes to do it in another way but only in certain cases. It may be perfectly relevant for an amendment of the kind to be inserted in the price fixing Act, but it is also relevant in a measure for the marketing, selling, and pricing of wheat. It is more relevant here because this deals purely with wheat as a saleable commodity, and because this confines itself to wheat and nothing else, and we are fixing the price of wheat only under certain conditions.

The Minister for Works: The amendment refers to the Prices Regulation Act.

Hon. T. Walker: Just as the preamble of the 1916 Act refers to the London parity. It is not a Bill dealing with the London parity but one dealing with the marketing of wheat. We refer to the London parity as the basis for price. The prices are based on those obtainable on the London wheat market with certain deductions. That was the test then. We can have another test now. The amendment does not deal with overseas wheat. True, the measure gives the Minister the sole controlling power over the wheat grown in the State. That is to say, all wheat must be delivered to him. He must be deemed to be the owner for the time being of the wheat. He takes control of it so that he may carry out the agreement with the other States and the Commonwealth in the transport and outside marketing of the wheat to see that all that is grown in the State is accounted for, and that no one evades his obligations to de-

liver to him or his agents. In Section 10 of the Act it says that no person in Western Australia shall, except as prescribed, sell to or buy wheat from any other person in Western Australia for delivery in Western Australia except to or from the Minister or persons authorised by him. The Minister has to acquire all the wheat but he can make exceptions. In Subsection 3 the Minister may as prescribed—that is by regulation—exempt either generally or in any particular case from the operation of that section (a) sales or purchases of seed wheat by growers of wheat to or from growers of wheat; and further, for bona fide use by the producer in farming operations, he may exempt wheat of a quality below that fit for milling purposes for bona fide use by the producers for food for their poultry or stock. It further refers to sales or purchases of wheat grown by wheat growers in areas of limited production. That gives enormous scope for the Minister under regulation to make certain exemptions from the general scope and operations of the Act. It is on that we are relying for the value of this amendment. We have been able to sell below the prices obtained by the London parity to supply wheat in a neighbouring State where they had a failure of their harvest. We have been able to make an exemption there, and sell it for prices less than those fixed by the general directions of the first measure passed in 1916. We have been able to do it in this State; indeed we have been able to do it in the Esperance Northward district which I represent. Wheat grown there is not delivered into the pool, or need not be. Farmers can sell it at any price they can get for it to the nearest buyer. There is complete exemption in that case. Now, in the case of wheat generally for a specific purpose, that is for fowls, poultry, and stock, there is exemption from the usual operations, and by regulations and by prescriptions we can allow any price the Minister likes to be fixed for it. We can do it in the case of wheat of inferior quality for milling purposes, and the Minister can fix or prescribe any price he pleases. It does not come under the scope of this Act. If it can be done in the case of poultry, it can be done in the case of human beings. The amendment deals purely with wheat for local consumption, wheat that does not enter into the pool for overseas marketing. The Minister has control of it. It is delivered, so to speak, to him. It is wheat purely for local consumption for the use of our own people, and therefore in no way represents an infringement of the partnership rights of any of the other States or the Commonwealth. It is purely our own domestic management. It deals purely with that over which we have the sovereign rights within our own State, namely, the management of our own business. It does not concern anyone else. It concerns the sustenance of our own people. Such wheat re-

served from the pool or not put into the pool for our own consumption we can fix the price of, as we can fix the price for wheat for poultry. We do not, generally, fix the price by the amendment. What we do is to suggest and give a direction, which Parliament has a perfect right to do. It is a legitimate right. In fixing the prices for local consumption we shall not get the London parity, but the local parity. There is no direction in this. The price is not fixed. The Minister will still fix the price. It is only a suggestion as to the fixing of the price in the same way as the suggestion is contained in the preamble of the 1916 Act. There was a suggestion in that Act as to the measurement of the price. In outside districts the price is not to be fixed, and the amendment only says that wheat for local consumption alone shall not be more than 7s. 3d. per bushel. But even then the price is not fixed. It may be 5s. or 6s. Who knows but what 5s. may be a high price in a very few harvests hence, seeing how wheat has fallen? I shall not urge that consideration now. However, this is not fixing the price, but is only saying that the price shall not go beyond a certain figure. The proviso, therefore, is relevant to powers already conferred upon the Minister under Section 10. It is relevant to wheat marketing, wheat selling, and wheat acquiring—relevant, in short, to the Bill. I cannot conceive how, excepting by some obscuring of the issue, some confusing of the issue, and by comparing things that are not comparable, the amendment can be ruled out of order.

Mr. Speaker: As this ruling evidently hinges upon relevancy, and as relevancy has a very wide meaning, it is difficult for people to decide the point of relevancy with unanimity; and I shall therefore be pleased to hear from the Minister administering the 1916 Act and the 1918 Act, of which measures the present Bill is to extend the operation. Further, I would like to know, for my own guidance before coming to a decision, whether the Government have fixed local prices under these Acts which are to be extended—

Mr. Troy: Yes, they have.

Mr. Speaker: —whether they have fixed those prices other than as set forth in Section 10 of the 1916 Act. Section 10 is very specific as to powers. Have the Government ever fixed prices other than as provided under Section 10 of the 1916 Act? I would also like to know whether the Government have availed themselves of the last section of the 1916 Act, Section 18, which reads—

The Governor in Council may make regulations (a) prescribing the duties of agents, officers, servants, and other persons appointed by the Minister pursuant to this Act; (b) for all matters required or permitted by this Act to be prescribed; and (c) generally for all matters neces-

sary or expedient for carrying out the provisions and the purposes of this Act.

Have the Government framed regulations giving power to fix local prices other than as prescribed under Section 10? Such information might help me considerably.

The Premier: The Government have no authority except the authority they get under this Act.

Mr. Speaker: But have you done so?

The Premier: All the things we have done, of course we have done by the authority of the Act.

Mr. Troy: Have you fixed the local price under this Act?

The Premier: This is the only authority we have. I do not know that any regulations have been made.

Mr. Pilkington: There have been no prices fixed by the Government under this Act.

The Premier: This Act is the only authority we have, of course.

Mr. Pilkington: But you did not fix any prices.

Hon. P. Collier: That is beside the question. The Government might have the power and might not use it.

The Premier: All the power the Government have is under this Act.

Mr. Speaker: Under which section of the Act do you get the power?

The Premier: The preamble to the Act sets out how prices are to be arrived at. The Act gives us power to acquire all the wheat grown in this State.

Mr. Troy: It gives you a monopoly to do what you like with the wheat.

The Premier: Whether the Act does or does not give authority to fix the price of wheat and make sales, if we do make sales we do so under the authority of the Act.

Mr. Speaker: Do you make sales under the authority of Section 10?

The Premier: I did not rise to be cross-examined, and do not propose to be, either.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to know for the purpose of my ruling. It is purely a question of relevancy.

Hon. P. Collier: Of course the Government make sales.

The Premier: We do acquire the wheat. It must be handed over to us. Under Section 10 we can sell wheat.

Mr. Troy: And you fix the local price of wheat, too.

Mr. Pilkington: It has never been known to be done.

Mr. Thomson: The prices are fixed by the Wheat Marketing Board.

The Minister for Works: That is a delegation of authority.

The Premier: The price for local consumption is fixed and determined by a meeting of Ministers, of course.

Mr. Thomson: Of Ministers of the various States.

The Premier: Yes, of Ministers of the various States. Those Ministers met the other day for that purpose. Undoubtedly the Government have power to fix the price

and to make sales, and they have that power under this Act.

The Minister for Works: I am not going to attempt in any shape or form to expound the law, but I think the question before the House is as follows: Standing Order 277 provides—

Any amendment may be made to a clause, provided the same be relevant to the subject matter of the Bill . . .

What is the subject matter of this Bill? This Bill and the principal Acts give the Government the power to take the wheat and to deal with it, to buy and to sell wheat. How can they buy and sell wheat unless they can control the price of it? How do they control the price of it? By attending conferences of certain Ministers of the various States, who meet in Melbourne or elsewhere and agree upon a price, which price, however, is not operative until it is confirmed by the Government to which the individual Minister belongs. I have not heard a single argument as to why the amendment is irrelevant. I have heard a lot of statements which more properly might be made against the amendment when the amendment itself is under discussion. However, the Standing Order says quite plainly and distinctly—

Any amendment may be made to a clause, provided the same be relevant to the subject matter of the Bill . . .

I contend that this amendment, irrespective of whether I agree with it or not, is relevant to the subject matter of the Bill. Reference was made by the member for Perth, who of course, as far as law is concerned, can wipe the floor with me—

Hon. P. Collier: This is not a question of law at all.

The Minister for Works: But the member for Perth spoke about the Prices Regulation Act, and said that prices had to be fixed under the Prices Regulation Act. The proviso before the Committee says—

Provided also that wheat acquired under the agency agreement authorised by this Act, or under any agency agreement ratified by the Wheat Marketing Act, 1916, or any Act extending the operation thereof, and made available for local consumption, shall be sold at a price or prices, wholesale or retail as the case may be, not to exceed the price or prices, if any lawfully fixed under the Prices Regulation Act, 1919, and applicable to the sale—

Mr. Thomson: But not to exceed 7s. 8d.

The Minister for Works: Let the hon. member have a little patience. The proviso continues—

—but if no price is fixed, or a sale takes place elsewhere than in an area proclaimed under that Act, the price to be charged for such wheat on the sale thereof shall not exceed 7s. 8d. per bushel.

As for the terms of the amendment, those terms can be discussed on the amendment itself. But the question now before you, Mr. Speaker, and the question which was before the Chairman of Committees, a question which

I suppose the House will eventually have to determine, is whether or not the proviso comes within Standing Order 277. I say the amendment is relevant to the subject matter of the Bill. Any statements made which divert the attention of the House away from that simple question are, to my mind, absolutely irrelevant and should have no weight whatever. Any statements which may be made with regard to prices, such statements as the member for Kataunung has put up, are entirely foreign to the question which you, Mr. Speaker, are asked to decide. We are here now to ask you, Sir, to say whether or not this proviso is relevant under Standing Order 277; and for the reasons I have given I contend that the proviso is relevant.

The Attorney General: We are asked to say whether there is anything in this Bill or in the original Act that gives power to fix prices. The effect of the original Act is to give the Minister administering the Act the absolute control over all wheat grown in this State. So far as the local consumption in this State is concerned, the Minister can fix the price.

Mr. Thomson: Under what section?

The Attorney General: The Minister has a monopoly. The member for Kataunung prides himself upon his business knowledge, and yet he does not understand that a man who has a monopoly can fix the price of the article which he has to sell. That is a natural corollary. The result of the Act is that the Minister can fix the price at which wheat may be sold for local consumption.

Mr. Thomson: Under what section, please?

The Attorney General: If the hon. member cannot see the common-sense point of view, it is no use my trying to explain the matter to him. The result of the Act is, quite clearly, as I have stated. Price fixing has been done, and we have had statements that it has been done. It is conceded by all members except the member for Kataunung that Ministers do it.

Mr. Troy: And that Ministers have done it.

Mr. Thomson: Has any Minister done it on his own responsibility in Western Australia?

The Attorney General: It does not make a bit of difference whether a Minister has done it individually or has done it as a member of the Cabinet. The result of the Act is as I have stated, and I defy anyone to show me that that is not so. This being the result of the Act, would it not be clearly relevant to Clause 2 of the Bill to say that Parliament will extend this measure so as to provide what the price for wheat shall not exceed a certain figure, no matter what the figure may be? If that is so—and I submit it is clearly so—what difference does it make whether the price is fixed by the Prices Regulation Commission, or by the Minister administering the Act?

Mr. Thomson: What about your London parity?

The Attorney General: Will the hon. member please be quiet?

Mr. Speaker: Order!

The Attorney General: It is relevant to the extension of the 1916 Act that a limit shall be placed upon the price at which wheat can be sold for local consumption. That is the only point we have to consider. I contend it is a condition which Parliament has a right to impose. But not upon that principle alone is this amendment in order. I am not going to say that I agree with the whole of the amendment. On the question, however, whether the proposed proviso to Clause 2 is in order, I submit there can be no reasonable doubt.

Mr. Pilkington: I submit that the ruling of the Chairman of Committees is right. You, Sir, have been referred to the principal Act and the preamble of that Act. That preamble does indicate, I think, what the object of the Act was, as follows:—

Whereas owing to the great scarcity of the means of transport, as the result of the existence of a state of war, the satisfactory marketing of the Australian wheat harvest was and may continue to be endangered: And whereas the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia and certain Ministers of the Crown of the States of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, in conference held for the purpose, formulated a scheme for concerted action by the Governments of the Commonwealth and the said States for utilising on a fair basis the means of transport available and for the marketing of the said harvest on behalf of the growers, at prices based on those obtainable on the London wheat market with certain deductions: And whereas it is expedient to ratify the action of the Government of Western Australia in joining with the said Governments in settling the terms of the said scheme, and to empower the Government of Western Australia to join with the said Governments in settling the terms of any modification thereof, or in formulating any other scheme for concerted action for the purposes aforesaid, or any modification thereof, and to do all such acts, matters, and things as on the part of the said Government may be deemed necessary or expedient for the carrying out of the said scheme, or of any such modification thereof, or of such other scheme or any such modification thereof.

That preamble indicates the object of the Act, namely the marketing of the Australian wheat harvest. For that purpose, and for that purpose only, the Act provides that the Minister in charge of the administration of the Act in Western Australia may acquire the whole of the Western Australian harvest. The Minister is empowered to acquire the whole of the Western Australian wheat for the purpose of entering into arrangements in concert with the other States and the Commonwealth for marketing the Australian wheat harvest. That is the reason why he is given the

power to acquire the wheat. That is the whole object of the Act, namely to enable Western Australia, through the Minister representing the Government, to act in concert with the other States of the Commonwealth to market the Australian wheat harvest. The object of the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition is entirely different, wholly irrelevant, namely, the fixing locally of the price of wheat in Western Australia. Those two objects are totally and wholly distinct. As I have pointed out already, we have the Prices Regulation Act. I do not for one moment say that because we have a provision in one Act that therefore it is irrelevant if it occurs in another, but I say this amendment which the leader of the Opposition has moved is one which would fittingly find its place in an Act for the fixing of prices. And we have the power already in an Act for fixing prices, showing the place where the subject matter of the amendment ought to be. The two objects are perfectly distinct. The one is the marketing in concert with the other States and the Commonwealth of the Australian wheat harvest, and the other is the fixing of the price of wheat in Western Australia. The member for Kanowna said the principal Act of 1916 was a measure for wheat sales and wheat prices. He pointed out as an illustration of the fixing of prices that the preamble referred to selling the harvest at prices based on those obtainable on the London wheat market, with certain deductions. I confess it seems to me to be an abuse of language to speak of that as the fixing of prices. The fixing of prices is a phrase meaning the fixing of maximum prices at which a certain article can be sold; for instance to say that butter shall not be sold at more than 2s. 8d. per pound. That is fixing the maximum price. But if you say to your agent, "Please sell me this butter at the best price you can get on the London parity," that is not fixing the price. If the price were fixed you could not do that. It is an abuse of language to say you attempt the fixing of prices in an Act which tells you to get the best price on the London market. The object of the amendment is that a maximum price should be fixed, beyond which wheat cannot be sold. The object of the Wheat Marketing Act is almost the exact reverse; it is that the Australian wheat harvest shall be sold at the best price that can be obtained in the world's market. That is not by any means the same. It is almost the opposite object to that which the amendment of the leader of the Opposition aims at obtaining. The member for Kanowna also referred to certain exemptions in the Act and laid great stress on the fact that there were certain exemptions which the Minister might make in regard to sales of wheat which the Minister might make, and he thought those exemptions had a bearing on the present case. Let me point out that those exemptions

have no bearing whatever on the present case, for the reason that the amendment applies only to that wheat which is acquired by the Minister, and the exemptions deal with wheat which is not acquired by the Minister, and allow it to be sold to somebody else. So those exemptions are the one portion of the Act on which this amendment would have no bearing whatever. Then the hon. member pointed out that the amendment only deals with wheat for local consumption, and said that therefore it was not in any way an infringement of the partnership rights between this State and the other States and Australia, but was only dealing with domestic management. He added, "We have sovereign rights to deal with management." That is quite true, but quite irrelevant to the present case. This Parliament has power to deal with that matter. But that is not the question. The question is whether, under our procedure, the matter can be dealt with at this stage and in this way. The question is whether the amendment is relevant to the Bill. The sovereignty of Parliament to deal with this matter is not questioned. The question is whether, according to the procedure which governs this House, the amendment can be accepted at the present time and in this Bill. The Attorney General put forward a second argument which somewhat astonished me. He said the Minister can fix the price. I emphatically state the Minister has no power to fix the price, directly or indirectly.

The Attorney General: It has been done.

Mr. Pilkington: I most emphatically say it has not been done. It is quite clear from the original Act that the Minister does acquire the whole of the wheat of Western Australia, that he acquires it for one purpose only, namely, to join in concerted action with the other States to sell, with certain exemptions, the whole of the Australian wheat harvest. When he has acquired it he holds it for the wheat pool and the Australian Wheat Board, and subject to their control. He has no right whatever, neither have the Government of Western Australia, to fix the price of a single grain of wheat, and they have never done so. The only people who have fixed the price have been the Australian wheat Board.

Hon. P. Collier: They have not, not for local consumption. The hon. member is quite wrong.

Mr. Pilkington: The Australian Wheat Board have fixed the price for local consumption. It was fixed at, I think, 5s. in October and 6s. in November.

Hon. T. Walker: That is for the general pool sales, not for local consumption.

Hon. P. Collier: The price has been fixed by the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the board.

Mr. Pilkington: That was fixed by the wheat board. Those are the only prices that have ever been fixed for local consumption,

and the only body with power to fix that price is the Australian Wheat Board.

Mr. Troy: Where did they get that power?

Mr. Pilkington: From the partnership between the States.

Hon. P. Collier: That is wrong. You are entirely astray.

Mr. Pilkington: I believe I am not astray on this point. The powers of the Australian Wheat Board arise by reason of the partnership existing between the States. The Ministers from Western Australia and the other States acquire the wheat for the purpose of pooling it in order that it may be disposed of as part of the Australian wheat harvest, and the Australian Wheat Board have control over it. But the local Governments have no power to fix the price except under price fixing Acts, nor has the Minister. The point is a short one, as to whether the amendment is relevant or not. To put it shortly, I submit the object of the Act is to provide machinery for marketing the Australian wheat harvest. The amendment provides for something entirely different, wholly irrelevant, namely the price in Western Australia of such wheat as is not going to be marketed as part of the Australian wheat harvest.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not wish to weary the House by going over the ground covered during the evening, and which was covered very extensively a week or two ago. Let me state one or two of the points raised by the member for Perth. He says very definitely that the Minister has no power whatever to fix the price. The Minister has that power. The hon. member says the whole object of the Act is to act in concert with the other States in selling the Australian wheat harvest, and that outside of acting in concert with the other States the Minister has no power.

Mr. Pilkington: He is to use all his powers for that purpose.

Hon. P. Collier: The hon. member said more than once that the Minister had no power, outside of acting in concert with the other States.

Mr. Pilkington: No; I said the whole object of the Act was that he might do so, and that the whole of his powers are given him for that purpose.

Hon. P. Collier: And the hon. member said the Minister had no power to sell or fix the price.

Mr. Pilkington: Not to sell. I said he had no power to fix prices. Of course he has power to buy and to sell.

Hon. P. Collier: It is an extraordinary argument. Let us deal with the hon. member's first point, namely that the Minister has no power to act except in concert with the other States.

Mr. Pilkington: I did not say that.

Hon. P. Collier: I say deliberately that the hon. member did say it. I listened to the special pleading of the hon. member, which might go down very well with an unsophisticated jury. He made the statement

half a dozen times that the Minister had no power outside his working in concert with the other States; and the member for Kataning, by way of interjection to the Attorney General, wanted to know whether the Government had power, and which was the clause.

Mr. Thomson: The power to fix the price.

Hon. P. Collier: That is a very good quibble. I know how the hon. member will try to get out of it. If we turn to Section 6 of the Act we find that—

For the purpose of the satisfactory marketing of the wheat harvest, and for the purposes of this Act (a) the Minister, whether in conjunction with Ministers of the Crown representing the Commonwealth and the States or otherwise, may buy or sell or arrange for the purchase or sale of wheat.

Hon. members will contend that that section gives no power to fix the price. He may buy and sell wheat, but he may fix the price. It gives the Minister power to act independently in the buying or selling of wheat.

Mr. Pilkington: For the purposes of the Act.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes. He may act without regard to any action that may be taken by any of the States for buying or selling wheat. If he has absolute power to sell wheat under this Act, and I go to the Minister and I want to purchase wheat, according to the hon. member he is helpless to carry out any of the powers given to him. The first thing he would have to do would be to fix the price. Where is there any power in any Act controlling wheat which denies the Minister the power to fix the price? If he may buy or sell wheat he must fix a price for consumption in this State. It matters not whether that wheat is to be consumed by poultry or by human beings. Surely the principle of fixing the price of wheat for sale to poultry farmers is no different from fixing the price of wheat for sale to flour millers. The member for Perth states that the price is fixed by the Australian Wheat Board. The price of wheat for local consumption has not been fixed by the Australian Wheat Board; they have never fixed the price; they have not the power to do so.

Mr. Pilkington: I said it was fixed three times before.

Hon. P. Collier: It was fixed by the Prime Minister. On each occasion the wheat board desired to fix the price at a higher rate than was ultimately agreed to.

Mr. Pilkington: The wheat board passed a resolution fixing the price.

Hon. P. Collier: That is not so. There was a meeting of the wheat board in December of last year, when the price of wheat was 6s. The wheat board desired to raise the price, but at that time Mr. Hughes would not agree to it, and so the price remained as it was.

Mr. Pilkington: It was raised.

Hon. P. Collier: But not to the price desired by the board. Again in January the price was raised and Mr. Hughes agreed to it. At the last meeting of the board a recommendation was made that the price should be 9s. That recommendation was agreed to by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Troy: They have no power; they merely advise.

Hon. P. Collier: As a matter of fact I do not know what statutory power the Prime Minister has. We find that at the last meeting of the board the Minister representing this State refused to fall into line with the others until he had an opportunity of consulting his colleagues.

The Premier: He went on that understanding.

Hon. P. Collier: If what the member for Perth states is correct, he would have been committed to what they did.

Mr. Pilkington: I did not say anything of the sort.

Hon. P. Collier: The hon. member said that the wheat board had a right to fix the price, and Mr. Baxter being a member, would have been bound to accept their decision, and it would have been futile for the Government to withhold his powers. The Government have power to fix the price of wheat for local consumption; they get that power from the Wheat Marketing Act. They have no other power, and it is admitted that in the exercise of that power the Government could fix the price of wheat. Surely that means that the question of the price of wheat is a matter for which this Bill makes provision. It is well within the scope of this Bill, otherwise the Government have been acting illegally.

Hon. T. Walker: And all the other Governments as well.

Hon. P. Collier: In that case, any amendment dealing with the price of wheat must be relevant to the Act; there is no escape from that point. Section 6 refers to buying and selling wheat. It has to do with nothing else. Surely, under a Bill which deals with the selling of wheat, it is relevant to amend the Act on a matter referring to the price of wheat. If it is claimed that you can buy or sell wheat without regard to price, well, I do not understand it. I contend the amendment is entirely relevant. We have passed through the House a tributers Bill. The principle of that Bill was to fix the conditions under which tribute parties might carry on their operations underground. It had to do entirely with the operations of the tributers. Notwithstanding that, we inserted an amendment in that Bill which provided for the price that should be paid by the mine owner for the gold obtained from the tributers. If such an amendment as that was relevant in a tributers Bill, surely an amendment fixing the price of wheat in an Act which deals with nothing else but the buying and selling of wheat is also entirely relevant. It is unfortunate that, in considering this question

this evening, particularly the notice before the Chair to disagree with the ruling of the Chairman, that the matter cannot be decided free from any precedents or previous decisions which have been given on the question. This amendment is the same as that which was ruled out of order the week before last. I disagree with the ruling of the Chairman to-day, but I did not expect that he would give any other ruling because we are all more or less sensible of our dignity and desire to appear consistent before our fellow men. While it is true that the Chairman of Committees in giving his ruling said that he came to his conclusion after grave consideration that the amendment was not relative to the Bill, it is perhaps unfortunate that he did give any other ruling.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think it is wise to discuss that.

Hon. P. Collier: I think I can.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think it wise.

Hon. P. Collier: The wisdom of the statement is entirely a matter for my judgment. If I am in order I must be the judge as to the wisdom of my statements. I say it is a pity that the decision given to-night after grave and careful consideration has been, to hold the earlier decision which, to say the least of it, was not given after grave and careful consideration.

Mr. Thomson: That is not quite fair.

Hon. P. Collier: I am the judge as to what is fair.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. P. Collier: I am not going to be guided by the member for Katanning as to what is fair or not.

Mr. Thomson: I can express my opinion. I can be the judge as to what I say.

Hon. P. Collier: The hon. member can say what he likes and I can exercise my judgment and discretion as to what I consider fair or unfair. There are two points regarding this ruling. One is that some members, as well as the Chairman of Committees, may feel bound, having regard to their consistency, to vote in the same way as when the question was before the House last. That is one aspect which prejudices an impartial judgment this evening. Another aspect, as it appears to me, is that some members on the cross-benches particularly, having regard to the arguments made earlier in the evening when the point of order was raised as to the relevancy of the amendment itself, are influenced in their judgment in deciding whether it is relevant or not, by their attitude towards the amendment itself.

Hon. T. Walker: They do not like it.

Hon. P. Collier: They are opposed to it. There are some members who are against the amendment who will vote against the Chairman's ruling, and they are perfectly right in doing so. Anyone voting to reverse the ruling of the Chairman is necessarily voting for the amendment. It appears that



members on the cross-benches are making every effort to defeat the amendment.

Mr. Thomson: If they honestly think the amendment is not relevant, they are right in voting against it.

Hon. P. Collier: That is so. I think their judgment is influenced, however, by their feelings regarding the amendment.

Mr. Thomson: That is a matter of opinion.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not profess to be doing anything except giving expression to my opinions.

Hon. T. Walker: The measure of honesty of members on the cross-benches is based upon their self-interests.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not want the member for Katanning to remind me that I express my own opinion.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. P. Collier: I do not know whether the member for Katanning is a parrot and expresses other opinions. I was expressing my own opinions and not opinions of any outside executive or dictatorship. I do not come here to express the opinions of other people as the hon. member, perhaps, does.

Mr. Thomson: Yes, perhaps.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. P. Collier: There can be no question as to the relevancy of the amendment and I do not think there can be more than six members in this House who can honestly and conscientiously say otherwise.

Mr. Maley: I hesitate to give expression to my views on this point after the legal luminaries of the House have exhaustively dealt with it. The point I wish to make clear, however, is that, following on the remarks of the leader of the Opposition regarding the powers of Ministers to either buy or sell, it has been pointed out by members, other than the leader of the Opposition, that the Minister has no power to sell except in concert with others.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But he does, and varies the price.

Mr. Maley: I take the only instance we have regarding the power of the buyer. During last year Eastern States, owing to the failure of the crops in New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania, were forced to buy wheat for local consumption. No Ministers in those States had the power to go individually to Ministers administering the Wheat Marketing Act in any State, and buy, as between Minister and Minister. The price for wheat for local consumption in New South Wales, Tasmania, and Queensland was fixed by the Australian Wheat Board in concert with Ministers of other States which were represented on the board when the decision was arrived at, as to the basis upon which they would sell wheat for local consumption. The only time that power has been exercised, it was exercised by the Australian Wheat Board. The Bill under review is to extend the Wheat Marketing Act of 1916. Regarding the proposal to place the power for fixing the price of wheat for local consumption under

the Prices Regulation Commission, the power laid down under the Bill gives the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Wheat Marketing Act power to fix the price. If the amendment is carried a novel position will be created. The Minister for Agriculture, with the advice of the Wheat Marketing Committee, may decide upon one price and make representations accordingly to Cabinet. On the other hand, the Minister controlling the Prices Regulation Commission may, on the advice of the Commission, recommend another price to the Government so that two different propositions may be before the Cabinet dealing with the one matter.

Mr. Troy: The Prices Regulation Commission is not controlled by Cabinet.

Mr. Maley: It must be controlled by some Minister. The Prices Regulation Commission is much the same as the Wheat Marketing Board.

Mr. Troy: That is ridiculous. A Minister cannot interfere with the Prices Regulation Commission.

Mr. Wilson: It is a statutory body.

Mr. Maley: The Prices Regulation Commission cannot fix the price unless it is confirmed by the Governor in Council.

Mr. Troy: That is ridiculous.

Mr. Maley: I may be wrong, but the member for North-East Fremantle supports me in that contention. I place these views before the House in order that members make take them into consideration. If the circumstances I have mentioned do not place the proposed amendment outside the scope of the Bill, a very limited application of common sense, as the Minister for Works pointed out, is being applied to the subject.

Mr. Troy: The member for Perth gave a very fine legal exposition of the operations of the Wheat Marketing Act, but it had very little to do with the question of the relevancy of this amendment. The member for Perth said that this amendment would be possible if it were brought forward as an amendment of the Prices Regulation Act. It would be just as permissible there as here from the standpoint of his argument, because the Prices Regulation Act does not give Parliament power to fix the price but gives that power to the Commission and provides machinery for it to operate. It cannot appear there, however, because it would be irrelevant. There is difficulty, I admit, regarding this question of relevancy. I had the matter to decide on several occasions when I was occupying the position of Speaker. I am inclined to believe that, inasmuch as this Bill gives the Minister power to sell wheat and provides for the sale of wheat, it also gives the Minister power to fix the price at which it should be sold. Under the Bill the position is different regarding the Commonwealth Wheat Marketing Board. They have no statutory powers whatever. The only power they possess is through the

delegates appointed by the various Governments whom they represent, and the only power they have is to suggest. Their suggestions are adopted by Ministers, and Ministers have a monopoly of the wheat. The Commonwealth wheat board have no statutory powers any more than any member of this House has. The price fixed by the Australian Wheat Board would not stand for one moment if it were not backed by the Ministers of the States who hold powers through measures of this character. What is the use of introducing the Australian Wheat Board and saying that they alone have the power to fix the price when they have not? They merely act in an advisory capacity. They make recommendations to their respective Ministers. The respective Ministers go back to their States and the States decide whether they will adopt the wheat board's recommendations or otherwise. To those who say that the price must be fixed by the concerted action of all the States, I would point out that when the price was recently fixed at 9s. a bushel for local consumption, Western Australia would not agree to that price at the board sitting. Mr. Baxter was the representative of this State, and it was after consultation in Cabinet here that the Government decided by their own powers to agree to 9s. being fixed as the price of wheat for local consumption. This is evidence that the States are not compelled to act in concert. There is still another argument. Last year there was considerable discussion in the Press because Western Australia insisted that it was not bound by an agreement arrived at by the Australian Wheat Board to provide wheat for New South Wales and Victoria at 7s. 8d. per bushel. Why?

Mr. Hickmott: They could not get out of it.

Mr. Troy: That is the first we have heard of it here. The Government, the Minister in another place, and the members of the Country party insisted that Western Australia was not bound by the decisions of the Australian Wheat Board.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They said they did not agree to it, and some stated that they did.

Mr. Troy: I said at the time that they had agreed to provide New South Wales and Victoria with wheat at 7s. 8d. per bushel, and whether it was legal or otherwise they were honourably bound by the word of their own Minister, Mr. Colebatch, and could not get away from it. That was the reason. It was not because of any legal standing on the part of the Australian Wheat Board. The Australian Wheat Board has no statutory power.

The Premier: This measure gives them power.

Mr. Troy: No, it gives power to the Minister to join with the other States in wheat marketing, but it does not say that the Minister must agree to the price fixed by the representatives of the other States. It gives the Government power to determine any price they like, and they have done so.

What is the use of the Minister for Works talking about the Australian Wheat Board and their powers? All the proofs are to the contrary.

The Premier: Under this measure we can fix the price of wheat. Can we say when it is sold by the purchaser that it shall be sold at a fixed price?

Mr. Troy: The Act does not provide that at all. It provides that the Minister by his officers can fix the price of wheat for local consumption and this has been done. The price was fixed last year time after time and this could not have been done, except under the powers conferred by the Wheat Marketing Act. The powers given by the Act enable the Government to monopolise the wheat and to hold a monopoly, and the Government can do as they like. The Government have been operating under the Wheat Marketing Act during the last two or three years. I hope the amendment is relevant and I hope it would not be relevant to the Prices Regulation Act, because that Act provides for the appointment of a Commission and the machinery for the Commission to investigate and fix prices. If this amendment had been proposed in connection with the Prices Regulation Act it would not have been accepted. The Act does not fix prices, but gives the Commission power to fix prices. This amendment will put the wheat into the hands of the Minister. It says that he shall arrange for the sale. The preamble certainly says that the Minister shall arrange for the sale at London parity but with certain deductions, and those deductions are not stipulated. The fact that wheat for local consumption has always been sold at less than London parity is evidence that the Minister can act and has acted under the Wheat Marketing Act. Although the question of relevancy is a very difficult one in that this Bill gives the Minister power to acquire and sell the wheat, it certainly entitles the leader of the Opposition to move an amendment providing at what price the Minister may sell for local consumption.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The member for Greenough put the case in a nutshell in favour of the relevancy of the amendment. He said the Wheat Marketing Act gives the Minister full power to fix the price. The amendment only says that instead of the Minister fixing the price, the fixing of the price in future shall be done by the Prices Regulation Commission.

Mr. Harrison: Does the amendment say so?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Yes, that is the intention of the amendment and what it implies. The Prices Regulation Commission cannot fix the price of any article unless the Government first proclaim it.

Mr. Pilkington: Even then the Government fix the price on the recommendation of the Commission.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is so. The Commission cannot fix the price of wheat. They

can fix the price of flour, bran, pollard and offal because the products of wheat have been declared under the Act. Thus they have power to fix the price; but owing to the Wheat Marketing Act putting the powers into the hands of the Minister, wheat has never been proclaimed an article the price of which the Commission should fix.

Mr. Duff: There seems to be no reason why it should not be.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is so.

Mr. Duff: Wheat is a foodstuff.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Parliament is supreme, and if the Government do not desire to proclaim wheat so that the Commission can fix the price, Parliament is justified in putting in a measure such as the Wheat Marketing Act provision that the Commission shall fix the price instead of the Minister.

Mr. Duff: It appears that it should have been proclaimed for retail purposes.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The member for Greenough (Mr. Maley) in referring to the sale to New South Wales last year, said it was not possible for the representatives of that State to go from Minister to Minister and ask at what price he would sell the wheat. That is true. The Minister has no power to sell wheat outside the boundaries of the State. He can sell wheat only for home consumption. He differentiates in the price of wheat for home consumption. He fixes a price to the miller; he fixes another price for the poultry farmer, and he fixes a price for the different grades of wheat. Almost every morning one can read in the paper that wheat for the milling trade has been sold at so much, under milling standard at so much, and inferior wheat at so much less. There are two or three grades, the prices of which the Minister fixes. The amendment would take that power of fixing the price from the Minister, and he could act only on the advice of the Prices Regulation Commission. I maintain that the amendment is relevant to the Bill and, if Parliament so desires, the amendment can be put in the Bill.

Mr. Harrison: With the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington) I claim that this amendment is not relevant to the Bill and the reasons are these: First of all Clause 2 gives power to the State to continue as it has done before. If we were to carry into effect this amendment we would so alter the administration of past Acts that we would not recognise them. The amendment makes provision for fixing the price for the full 12 months. In the existing Act the preamble states that power is given to acquire the whole of the wheat of the State for one purpose, namely to protect the asset and to get the very best price for it. To assist in administering this Act the Government got a board of experts, men who had had special training to deal with all qualities of wheat and fix their values at various times throughout the year. This arrangement has been renewed year by year and yet, under

the amendment, we are trying to introduce a method of fixing prices by the Prices Regulation Commission; a body without special knowledge and without anything like the knowledge which the experts have gained from years of experience.

Hon. T. Walker: Nonsense!

Mr. Lambert: You are afraid of it; that is the trouble.

Mr. Harrison: I am not afraid of it; I am stating what I believe would be the position if the amendment were accepted. If we are going to take this amendment—

Hon. T. Walker: On a point of order I submit that the hon. member is discussing the merits of the amendment and not its relevancy.

Mr. Speaker: I was waiting to see how far the hon. member was going.

Mr. Harrison: I was coming to the point mentioned by the member for North-East Fremantle, that the Prices Regulation Commission should act under this agreement. If this were conceded we would have to amend ever so many clauses in the Bill in order to define where the Minister should act and where the Commission should act, how many various qualities of wheat the Commission could deal with and what the Minister could deal with.

Mr. Speaker [10.14]: I have listened to the arguments advanced by hon. members on this question of relevancy. It has been stated that it is very difficult to decide. I realised that at the very outset. I have been referred by members to the preamble of the 1916 Act. I have gone through this and I have been able to find only one place in the preamble where price is mentioned. It has been read before, but, in order to make the position clear, I will read it again—

Whereas owing to the great scarcity of the means of transport, as the result of the existence of a state of war, the satisfactory marketing of the Australian wheat harvest was and may continue to be endangered: And whereas the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia and certain Ministers of the Crown of the States of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, in conference held for the purpose, formulated a scheme for concerted action by the Governments of the Commonwealth and the same States for utilising on a fair basis the means of transport available and for the marketing of the said harvest on behalf of the growers, at prices based on those obtainable on the London wheat market with certain deductions: And whereas it is expedient to ratify the action of the Government of Western Australia in joining with the said Governments in settling the terms of the said scheme, and to empower the Government of Western Australia to join with the said Governments in settling the terms of any modification thereof, or in formulating any other scheme for concerted action for the purposes aforesaid, or any modification there-

of, and to do all such acts, matters, and things as on the part of the said Government may be deemed necessary or expedient for the carrying out of the said scheme, or of any such modification thereof, or of such other scheme or any such modification thereof.

Hon. members have stressed the point of the deductions. I do not know what they would be unless they are freight charges or something of the kind. That is the only place where I can find prices mentioned. All through the Bill it has to do with wheat marketing. It does not touch prices anywhere else. The clause of the Bill under discussion amends a certain section of the Act. None of these amending clauses affects the price. The first section amended is Section 10.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Section 14 mentions the price.

Mr. Speaker: May I point out that the amending Bill before the House seems to tighten up the original Act. Most of the amendments are making it more difficult for anyone other than the Minister, or by the Minister's authority, to sell wheat. It makes provision for the Railway Commissioner to object to the carrying of wheat for any person other than by the authority of the Minister. Unfortunately, the leader of the Opposition in stressing the relevancy of his amendment, emphasised largely the preamble of the original Act of 1916.

Hon. P. Collier: Are you referring to me? If so, I think you must be under a misapprehension. I never referred to the preamble.

Mr. Speaker: I was referring to the hon. member. I said he spoke of the prices being referred to in the preamble.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not refer to it once. Other hon. members did.

Mr. Speaker: I only said that because the next illustration given by the leader of the Opposition in support of this amendment was that we had amended the Tributing Act this session, and fixed the royalties and such like on gold, and that being so, we were quite right in fixing the price of wheat under the Wheat Marketing Act. As a matter of fact that Act was not an amendment of the Tributing Act. The title of the Act shows that it was to amend the mining laws. Part 3 of the Bill is the part where tributing comes in.

Hon. P. Collier: The title of the Bill does not affect my argument.

Mr. Speaker: The title of the Bill now before us is a Wheat Marketing Bill. At all events the illustration with regard to tributing has no bearing on the present issue. There is nothing in the original Act that affects prices other than where it speaks of it as on the London market price. In Section 10 it is pointed out that the Minister can only allow wheat to be sold under certain conditions.

Hon. T. Walker: What about Section 6?

Mr. Speaker: That does not affect the position in my opinion.

Hon. T. Walker: I think it is most pertinent.

Mr. Speaker: To what part of the section does the hon. member refer? It says—

For the purpose of the satisfactory marketing of the wheat harvest and for the purposes of this Act the Minister may, in conjunction with the Ministers of the Crown representing the Commonwealth and the States or otherwise, buy or sell or arrange for the purchase and sale of wheat, and do all acts, matters, and things necessary to expedite in that behalf accordingly, and in particular and without limit generally the foregoing powers.

Foregoing powers must stand. The whole of the original Act gives the Minister power, acting in conjunction with the other States mentioned in the Act, and also the Commonwealth, to market the whole of the wheat for export purposes—that is their function when they meet—and the preamble of the Act does say that they must on exporting the wheat give to the grower the London market price less deductions.

Mr. Troy: What are they?

Mr. Speaker: One of them might be freight, because they mention freight. It is necessary to give the best possible freight. Where it touches the local product it does not fix the price. It fixes the prices for the purposes of the Act, dealing with wheat shipped overseas.

Mr. Troy: And the action in fixing the local price is illegal then?

Mr. Speaker: My desire is to define the relevancy of the amendment before the House. Having listened to all the arguments in favour of the amendment and as to its relevancy, I must rule that it is irrelevant to the Bill under discussion.

#### Dissent from Speaker's Ruling.

Hon. P. Collier: I regret to have to dissent from your ruling. In doing so I do not intend to go over the ground again. It has been exhaustively covered, and I suppose every member is tired of listening to the arguments. In order to obtain the judgment of the House on your ruling, I move—

That the Speaker's ruling be disagreed with.

Mr. Troy: I second the motion.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	13
Noes	..	..	..	19

Majority against .. 6

AYES.		
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Holman	
Mr. Brown	Mr. Troy	
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Walker	
Mr. Collier	Mr. Willcock	
Mr. Davies	Mr. Wilson	
Mr. George	Mr. Lambert	
Mr. Hardwick		(Teller.)

## NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Money
Mr. Broun	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Duff	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Durack	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willmott
Sir H. B. Lefroy	Mr. Maley
Mr. Mitchell	

(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

Committee resumed.

Clause put and passed.

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

## Third Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [10.30]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [10.30]: Seeing that this Bill is one which does not render justice to all sections of the community, I hope hon. members will vote against the third reading. Undoubtedly the Government, who are taking by compulsion the wheat which is necessary for the sustenance of the community as a whole, should endeavour, so far as possible, to render that wheat available for the use of the community under satisfactory conditions without fear or favour as regards any section of the community.

Mr. Thomson: Hear, hear! That is all we want.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member interjecting does not want that.

Mr. Thomson: Yes, we do!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the hon. member wanted that, he would have endeavoured to facilitate the passage of a proposal whereby the rights of the public would have been protected. We know for a fact that the handling of the wheat during the past two years has not been satisfactory to a large proportion of the community. I have in the drawer of my table at the present moment a letter written to me by the secretary of the Poultry Farmers' Association asking me to endeavour to ascertain the meaning of the phrase "home consumption." It is well known that as to wheat marketing the powers of the State Government of Western Australia are practically confined to the selling of wheat for home consumption. As regards overseas trade in wheat they have had to join with the other States and the Commonwealth, because the State Governments standing singly had not sufficient money for the purpose of pooling the wheat. Consequently, the Commonwealth Government came to the aid of the State Governments as regards the guarantee, the terms providing that each State must bear its proportionate share of the cost according to the quantity of wheat it pro-

duced. The State Government could not finalise the pool, and the Commonwealth Government formed an Australian Wheat Board for the express purpose of financing the proposition. At the same time the Commonwealth Government reserved to the Australian Wheat Board the right to control overseas and interstate trade. Thus the only power left to the State Governments relates to the selling of wheat within the borders of the various States. What has been the position? While wheat has been sold during a considerable portion of the time at 4s. 9d. per bushel for milling purposes, it has been charged at a considerably higher rate to the poultry farmer and the dairy farmer. During the last 12 or 18 months wheat has been sold at 7s. 8d. per bushel for milling purposes, and during the same period the poultry farmer has been charged as high as 12s. per bushel. The latest report, which I read in the last issue of the "Sunday Times," shows that, while wheat of best quality is being sold to the miller for milling purposes at 7s. 8d. per bushel, the inferior quality next to milling quality is being sold to the poultry farmer at 10s. 2d. Is it fair that we should bolster up one section of the community while ruining another section? Is that what Parliament and the Government exist for? It is our duty to see that every section of the community gets fair play. That has not been the case as regards wheat marketing. We know, apart from the high prices charged for wheat by the Minister, who has full power in this matter—and an Honorary Minister at that!—that the products of the wheat have also been charged at such high prices that the owners of horses, and the dairymen who keep cows, have found it almost impossible to live. In some instances they have been unable to secure the products of wheat on account of the prices fixed, while this State was actually exporting those products overseas. As I said here recently, one could not even import the products of wheat from the Eastern States to be sold here unless one charged them at the local prices fixed by the Minister. Persons were told that if they brought the products of wheat here from the other States they must charge the local prices for them. A section of the community has been harassed at all points in this matter. Our desire should be to give satisfaction to the whole community, to see fair play all round in this matter. In dealing with a Bill of this nature there should be no wish to see any section of the community served unfairly. We are quite willing that the farmer should get a fair profit, that he should be paid for his labour a wage equivalent to the work, and that in addition he should be reimbursed the expenditure involved, and, lastly, that he should receive a reasonable profit. Our coal mines are not paid for their coal at world's parity. Coal has been sold at 27s. per ton delivered on ship board at Fremantle, while

in the city of London, in the river Thames, the price has been as much as £7 per ton. Where would our industries and our railways be if Collic coal were charged here at £7 per ton? Collic coal has been put on ship board at Fremantle for 27s. 6d. per ton, being purchased by a steamer which when in London had been obliged to pay for coal at the rate of £7 per ton.

The Premier: But they do not want our coal in London.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They would be very glad to have it in some instances. Many steamers have been greatly delayed in London because of not being able to get coal. Reading the Bill carefully, we find that under it the Government have taken on a greater responsibility than has previously been taken on, since the establishment of the wheat pool. Of course there is nothing wrong in that, but it is not the business of a continuance Bill to impose greater responsibilities than existed previously. Western Australia is the only State which has violated the agreement entered into by the Commonwealth Prime Minister with wheat acquiring agents in the various parts of Australasia. This Bill again proposes a violation of that agreement, which was honourably entered into. When we are told that a Bill has been introduced, and that it is our duty to abide by the decisions arrived at by the Australian Wheat Board, or the Ministers in conference constituting the Australian Wheat Board, that is all very well so far as it suits. But this Bill violates the arrangement entered into on the formation of the pool. While it has been declared to be wrong to make an innovation in one instance, it is quite right, apparently, to make alterations in a number of instances, provided only that certain persons think it should be done. We all know that the Bill gives the exclusive right to one agency. We know also that an honourable undertaking was given to the wheat acquiring agents that if they came to the assistance of the Australian Wheat Board and gave the board the advantage of their special knowledge and years of training in the acquiring of wheat, they would be appointed wheat acquiring agents; and they were told also that when the wheat pool ceased they would be able to resume their private business again. Right through Australia, except in Western Australia, that bargain has been honoured. Those agents placed their services at the disposal of the pool. They made a success of the pool, yet Western Australia has not honoured the bond given to them. I hope hon. members will honour the agreement entered into at the inception of the pool. We have been told repeatedly that it is impossible to make any amendment. Yet we find in Clause 3 that the Government have already entered into an arrangement with a certain party. That clause can only be adopted subject to amendment. We could alter the agreement in any way desired, so long as we

amended Clause 3 of the Bill. Yet members are denied the opportunity of placing any amendment regarding prices in the Bill. We are not even allowed to discuss it. I hope the third reading will not be agreed to.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [10.44]: I will oppose the third reading, although I have supported the principle of the pool ever since its inception in this State. I am not claiming too much when I say that the Government of which I was a member were responsible for initiating this system of handling our harvest. I have consistently supported that method throughout the war and right up to the present. I did so, and the party with which I am associated did so, because we felt that in the first instance it was essential to the very existence of the wheat growers, and also of course that it would be beneficial to the whole of the people of the State. But, having regard for our experience of the manner in which the pool has been manipulated in some instances for the benefit of one particular section to the utter disregard of the people as a whole, the time has arrived when we should get back to the old system of free buying and selling. That is, if the attitude is to be persisted in which we have seen in connection with the handling of the pool during the present season. It appears to me the interests of the general community are entirely of a secondary consideration. The pool was brought into existence by the aid and with the credit of the Australian people, but it has been and is being controlled by a small section of the community, that section consisting of people directly interested in the production of wheat. Any method of handling our harvest is wrong which places in the hands of the growers and consequently of the sellers the power to fix the price of wheat to the consumers in Australia. We have the spectacle of the price of wheat for consumption in Western Australia being determined by men who themselves have a pecuniary interest in the wheat in the pool. The Honorary Minister in another place has wheat in the pool and, consequently, is directly interested pecuniarily in the price of wheat. The men who comprise the Australian Wheat Board, who have the right to recommend to the Prime Minister what the price for local consumption shall be, are direct representatives of the wheat growers. If they are going to do their duty to the men they represent they will have regard for one thing only, namely, the obtaining for them of the highest possible price. The members of the Australian Wheat Board are not concerned with the vast population of consumers. Their duty and their interests are to secure the best price they can for the growers. That is one section of the board. The other section is composed of the several Ministers for Agriculture in the wheat-producing States who, by virtue of their positions are both directly and indirectly concerned in the price of wheat. I do not know whether

the Minister for Agriculture in any of the other States has wheat in the pool, but our own Honorary Minister has, and he represents a constituency made up almost entirely of wheat growers. Consequently, his sole object is to obtain the highest possible price for his wheat. And so, as the result of this position, we have the price of wheat fixed for the next 12 months to the consumers in Western Australia at a rate which I venture to say will be, before the 12 months are out, some shillings in excess of the world's parity. This is one of the evils of mixing politics and business. In this State this business has to stop. Are we to have the trade and commerce of the State, involving millions of pounds, determined by politicians who have the power to keep the Government in office or turn them out of office unless their requests are acceded to and huge sums of money put into the pockets of the people they represent? It is a vicious principle. In this connection we have started out along the road which has gained for America the reputation of Tammany Hall methods. If we are to get back to clean, straight-forward, honest government we have to revert to the methods that obtained prior to the introduction of the pool. I know why the price of 9s. has been fixed for the next 12 months. The man who determines the price is the Prime Minister; because the pool cannot be carried on unless it be financed by the Federal Government. If the board decides to come to any arrangement which is not satisfactory to the Prime Minister he says, "Very well, carry on for yourselves. I will not finance you any longer." The Prime Minister has fixed for the next 12 months the price of wheat for local consumption at 9s. per bushel. The same position obtains in the Federal Parliament as obtains here. We have here three parties, and we have three parties in the Federal Parliament. We have here a Government depending for their existence on the votes of men concerned in the price of wheat. We have the Government of the Commonwealth depending for their existence on the votes of 12 or 13 members of the farmers' party. Mr. Hughes more than once during the present year on a test vote has only survived by one or two votes. He is holding office by virtue of the support he is receiving from the farmers' representatives, and, therefore, those men are in a position to say to Mr. Hughes, as I have no doubt they did, "We want 9s. for our wheat." And they gave him to understand that if they did not get it he could not rely on them for their votes when he wanted to retain office. That is the position we are in. We have responsible people agreeing to a state of things which means putting up the price of a necessary commodity in order to secure votes and remain in office. That is why we have the price fixed at 9s. What other reason do they offer for their attitude? I repeat again that a little while ago all over this State there was a unanimous demand by the farmers' repre-

sentatives for world's parity. They objected to the price for local consumption being fixed at all. Every one of the Country party members in this House objected. Why are they so anxious now for price-fixing? Why have they changed their front? Why have all the wheat-growers who, two or three months ago, were clamouring for a free open market on world's parity, turned round and said they do not want world's parity, that they will be satisfied with having the price fixed? The reason is obvious. Everyone who has followed the trend of the market knows why. When, two or three months ago, they wanted world's parity, wheat was at a high price in the markets of the world. The parity had reached 13s. and 14s. per bushel in Australia. But prices in the world's market began to come down. They came down to a stage at which, when the board met and Mr. Hughes fixed the price at 9s., the members of the board were able to discern that if they were to rely on parity prices it would be a figure much below what they had anticipated. And so, in order to avoid any risk of a fall in the price, to avoid any possibility of having to accept 6s. or 7s. or 8s. throughout the year according to the parity in London, they said, "No, we will fix it for 12 months at 9s."

Mr. Harrison: This party did not ask that the price should be fixed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, but they never complained about it, never raised their voice against the price being fixed at 9s.

Mr. Pickering: Just now you said we did.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I did not. Three months ago the hon. member was one of those in the forefront of the hue and cry against the fixing of the price, one of those who joined in the agitation for world's parity. Why has he altered his attitude? Has he complained against the fixing of the price at 9s.? Has any member of the Country party raised his voice in opposition to the price being fixed at 9s.? No. Why? Because they know perfectly well that by fixing it at 9s. they are getting a price which presently will be higher than the world's parity. The whole tendency of the wheat market is downward. Every morning, when there is information in the newspapers as to the price of wheat, we find it is still coming down. This morning we have wheat quoted in London at a lower price than it has been at for some time. The message runs, "It has been officially announced that the price of American wheat has been reduced by 7s. 6d. per quarter. Australian wheat is now at 10s." A fortnight ago it was 11s. and the week before that it was 12s.

Mr. Harrison: And all this year the consuming public have had the advantage of 1s. 4d. per bushel.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Never mind. Wheat is coming down. They foresaw that, and so they protected themselves by fixing the price at 9s. Not only

is it down now, but I venture to say that if for the next twelve months the people of Australia have to pay for their bread a price based on 9s. for wheat, before we are half through we shall be paying at a rate anything up to 2s. a bushel above world's parity. Anyone can see that. All the information we have from all the wheat-producing countries of the world shows that the downward trend of the price of wheat is going to continue.

Mr. Harrison: This year many shipments have been sold at 6s. per bushel more.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know that the hon. member is in possession of information which nobody else has. The other evening I quoted from Broomhall, a recognised authority in London, who shows that in August or September it was estimated that there would be this season a surplus in the world's production of 100 million bushels, and that the estimate was based on an estimated surplus of 90 million bushels for Australia; whereas now we see that the Australian surplus will be something like 130 million bushels. Is it reasonable to argue that with 100 million bushels of wheat in excess of the world's requirements, the price of wheat will remain as it is?

Mr. Pickering: Do you think it will remain?

Mr. Brown: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am certain it will not. The member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) said he believed it would fall below 9s.

Mr. Harrison: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is already in "Hansard." When I said "Does the hon. member expect that the farmer will get less for the wheat he exports—I was referring to the price of 9s. The hon. member replied "Quite possibly." Now the hon. member cannot deny having said that. This is the official report taken by "Hansard."

Mr. Harrison: Many things are possible.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! It is very difficult to keep order.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A denial of facts is often possible with some hon. members.

Mr. Harrison: You quote what I said correctly.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I did. These words are taken from "Hansard."

Mr. Harrison: In the first instance?

Hon. P. COLLIER: They are in "Hansard" for the hon. member to see if he will look them up, and yet he asks me to quote what he said. I do not know of any more reliable authority, or anywhere I could go except to "Hansard." I do not know whether the hon. member will impugn the accuracy of the "Hansard" reporter or not. His judgment is right when he said, "Quite possibly." The price will fall considerably in the near future. I have an extract here dealing with the point—

In a recent review of the grain market at the end of October, the London firm of

Bathgate and Co. state (inter alia): It is now estimated that the Australian Commonwealth shows an exportable surplus of 13,000,000 qrs., and a well-known authority reports that Argentina alone may have a surplus amounting to no less than 21,000,000 qrs. If nothing occurs to mar the present prospects these two exporters alone would be able to provide no less than 34,000,000 qrs. This takes no account of anything that may be shipped from Uruguay, together with Chile's average of 500,000 qrs. per season. If all continues to go well with the growing crops in these countries, we may rest assured that there will be a strong pressure in two months to turn into gold this magnificent stream of natural wealth and sustenance. So far as the Australian harvest is concerned, we may regard it as already practically assured, and as cutting will begin in Argentina in six weeks, we are rapidly approaching the day when it may be hoped that we can say that the harvest of that country is a splendid reality. If that happens then it seems obvious that wheat prices throughout the world must decline. But there is another factor which we think will work strongly towards lower prices, and that is the probability of the early decontrol of the wheat trade. Even now Canadian farmers are complaining that decontrol in that country is bringing about a reduction in wheat prices. Decontrol in North America is one of the primary causes of the recent big reduction in the price of wheat; and there is good reason to suppose that if our Government were to announce to-day that wheat would be decontrolled on March 1 or any other early date, prices throughout the world would fall almost immediately. This is always on the assumption that the crops in the Southern Hemisphere be safely secured.

Of course with decontrol the price would fall immediately. If the people cannot obtain a fair deal under the wheat marketing scheme and the Pool, I am going to oppose this Bill in order that we may secure decontrol here as well. The price would immediately decline.

Mr. Harrison: The consumers have had a wonderful deal.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And the farmers have had a wonderful deal, too. Why has the price been increased to 9s.? What is the justification for it? Not one member during the progress of this Bill has given any reason why the price should have been increased from 7s. 8d., which has obtained since January last, to 9s. for this year's yield. Will hon. members deny that 9s. will afford something like from 70 to 100 per cent. profit on the production of wheat? They know that it will, and that 2s. 6d. less than the price fixed will be a profitable and payable price. They are extracting practically 2s. 6d. a bushel at the very least from the pockets of the people more than they are entitled to get. I have some information here which bears on the cost of the production of wheat. It is of sufficient importance to warrant me in quoting it. It



is an announcement made by the Prime Minister (Mr. Hughes), and published in the "Daily Telegraph" of 16th September, 1919—

The producer is entitled to the world's parity on all exportable surplus products. This refers to the price outside Australia, not inside.

One of the members of a deputation that waited on the Prime Minister on the matter after that announcement was the present Assistant Minister for Repatriation (Mr. Rodgers), who stated that "the producers were entitled to the world's price for its exportable surplus." We know that 9s. was fixed on the world's parity at the time that it was decided upon. There is no doubt it will be very considerably in excess of the world's parity before long, in spite of what the Prime Minister and Mr. Rodgers have so frequently declared. The Sydney "Morning Herald" of the 6th November, 1917, reports that the Prime Minister (Mr. Hughes), when asked by the Harden farmers—Harden is the principal town in what is known as the central wheat belt of New South Wales—to advance the price of wheat from 4s. to 4s. 6d. per bushel, predicted that the price of wheat after the war would be 3s. 6d. per bushel, which he said would be a good price.

Mr. Pickering: On the average of an eight-bushel harvest.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am giving the statement of the Prime Minister. The New South Wales Royal Commission on wheat production reported, on the 24th July, 1917—

That, in order to maintain stability in the wheat-growing industry, and to check a possible tendency to convert wheat-growing lands into purely pastoral areas, we consider that a guaranteed price should be provided over a period at least covering such time as war conditions prevail. For this purpose, we think that the present guarantee of 4s. per bushel f.o.b., should continue for such period. The statistics showing the yields for the past ten years, inclusive of 1916, indicate a State average of 11.44 bushels per acre, at an average price at rail of about 3s. 4d.

Mr. Pickering: That is not our average.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know it is not our average. There is a great difference between the price which the people should pay and the price which these people with an 11-bushel average said would be profitable to them.

If a further 2d. per bushel is deducted from the average price received for the middleman's profit, it might appear—seeing that wheat production has been extended—that wheat, on the yearly average, has been produced at a rate of 3s. 2d. per bushel, or 36s. 6d. per acre, in the case of a farmer applying his efforts to his own holding; and that, in the case of a share-farmer working on the halves, that he has done the actual work of cultivating and harvesting from the whole area, and the cost of marketing his own share, at about 18s. 3d. per acre.

That is from the report of a New South Wales Royal Commission. Bearing on the same matter, Mr. Lynch, formerly a member of the House of Representatives, and who has all his life been, and still is, a practical farmer, said on the 19th July, 1917:—

Honourable members will see that the community, whilst taking a responsibility in connection with the guaranteeing of a minimum price, must not be discouraged by any rapacious attempt on the part of us farmers to obtain more than we are legitimately entitled to. I think that in so acting we would only be destroying our hope of the development of the big principles which are exemplified in the pooling scheme, and from which, notwithstanding its many defects in administration, we as a class have benefited immeasurably. It must be apparent to anybody that if we were to insist upon 4s. per bushel being guaranteed to the grower, and the price were to go back even to the average price obtained by us in normal times, the community would be called upon—with a £40,000,000 crop such as we had in 1915-16—to face a deficit of anything from £8,000,000 to £10,000,000. I am sure that the common sense of the farmers will not allow their cause to be placed in such an untenable position. Whilst it is the most difficult thing in the world to get even a number of practical farmers to agree as to what the actual cost of wheat production is, yet we know to what extent the wheat industry flourished before the war and what prices were obtained. Whilst I quite agree with many of my class that it is easy to show that under existing conditions—with all the requisites to farming work so dear and with the cost piling up in every direction—we require a tremendous price per bushel to grow wheat, still the average farmer will be content to make his calculation on average conditions and not to put forward demands based upon abnormal conditions which would prove the industry to be utterly unprofitable. The average price which farmers in New South Wales received for their wheat for the ten years immediately preceding the war was 3s. 8½d. f.o.b. That, it was calculated, was equal, on the average, to about 3s. 4d. per bushel on rail; and, as the average crop was under 12 bushels to the acre, a great number of farmers managed, at all events, to live when they obtained an even lower price. Having regard to the fact that out of that return of 3s. 4d. per bushel on rail the cost of road cartage—which, on the average, would amount to from 2d. to 3d. per bushel—as well as the cost of bags, twine, and farm implements, which represented no inconsiderable sum, had to be provided, it must be apparent that wheat-growers were actually producing wheat on the farm for about 2s. 9d. per bushel. In many instances the net return was even less. I do not say it was a payable price. It was not. Then, again, a large proportion of that wheat was pro-

duced by share farmers, so that the actual work of tillage—the putting in and taking off of the crop—without the attendant expenses of marketing—was done on the average by such men for less than 1s. 6d. per bushel. While it was not a payable price, we, nevertheless, made much progress in wheat-farming during those years. Failures were many, and if the present abnormal prices for all farming requisites continue, I dare say failures will be numberless.

There we have the statement of a practical farmer, with a lifelong experience of wheat growing, that wheat can be grown, and even profitably, when the price is 3s. 6d. per bushel. I admit that 3s. 6d. would not be a profitable price to-day in this State, but I do say that a price considerably less than 9s. would provide a handsome profit to those engaged in the wheat growing industry here. I have also some figures as to the cost of production of wheat, figures prepared by the Government of New South Wales. They appeared in the "Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales," dated the 3rd December, 1917.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. Pickering: Things have changed a bit since then.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, a bit. But the cost of producing wheat has not increased to so great an extent as the price of wheat has increased. That is my point. Under the heading "A Basis of Cost in Wheat Production" the following statements are made:—

Operations Necessary in Producing Wheat.—These may vary according to class of soil, season, and, in some cases, the exigencies of other necessary work at a time most favourable to any particular operation. Under average conditions, however, they would include—

	£	s.	d.
6-inch ploughing . . . . .	0	6	4
Harrowing, 3 times, at 7d. . . . .	0	1	9
Disc cultivating . . . . .	0	3	8
Spring-tooth cultivating . . . . .	0	2	5
Drilling . . . . .	0	1	5
Graded seed, $\frac{3}{4}$ bushel, at 6s. . . . .	0	4	6
Superphosphate, $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt., at 6s. per cwt., landed on farm . . . . .	0	3	0
Picking seed, at 4d. per bushel . . . . .	0	0	3
Hail and fire insurance, say . . . . .	0	1	6
Harvesting with harvester . . . . .	0	3	10
Sewing bags, twine, stacking bags, etc., say . . . . .	0	2	0
Rental value of land (two years) . . . . .	0	12	0
	£2	2	8

All these items of cost are irrespective of the yield, but to deliver at railway the cost of bags and the cartage have to be added. Bags at the present cost about

10s. per dozen landed at the farm, or 3½d. per bushel, while cartage is usually assessed at 1d. per bag per mile, or 2d. per bushel for 6 miles. Receiving charges at rail and freight to seaboard at present amount to 7d. per bushel, but this, of course, is a war-time charge.

(Cost of Production per Bushel.—This can only be ascertained on the actual yields of any particular farm. As already stated, misleading deductions are drawn when State averages are quoted, inasmuch as the low yields in some districts are due to unsuitability of soil or climate, or injudicious methods of farming. The average for the State for the past ten years has been about 11½ bushels, and it is safe to say that the average yield from typical wheat land on unfallow land has been nearer 13 bushels. Departmental experience has shown that the return from fallowed land, well cultivated, sown with graded and pickled seed, and supplied with superphosphate, has been at least half as much again as the State average, and this would bring the average estimated yield from land so treated to at least 17 or 18 bushels per acre. On the basis of £2 2s. 8d. to cover cost of production and rent, with an assumed 17-bushel yield, the cost per bushel is a fraction over 2s. 6d. Add to this 3½d. for bags, 2d. for cartage, and 7d. for receiving charges and freight, the cost is 3s. 6½d. per bushel.

If we halve that New South Wales yield of 17 bushels for this State, and say the yield here is 8½ bushels—which, surely, is not too high—then the cost of producing wheat here would be 5s. per bushel.

The Attorney General: You do not know whether in those figures you have the whole of the cost of production.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This is an estimate of cost made by the agricultural authorities of the State of New South Wales, and I have no doubt that they have included all costs.

The Attorney General: Is there anything allowed for land?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

The Attorney General: Are details given?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; I have read the details. Shall I read them again?

The Attorney General: No, please do not trouble.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Surely no member of this House is a better authority on the question of wheat growing than are the responsible officers of the Agricultural Department of New South Wales. Under the authority of the New South Wales Government those authorities give out this information. That shows that with a yield of 12 bushels per acre, the cost at that time was 2s. 6d. From that I should say that if we had a yield of 8½ bushels, the cost would be about 5s. per acre, or practically double

that of the instance I have given. Then it continues—

Add to this 3½d. for bags, 2d. for cartage, and 7d. for receiving charges and freight, the cost is 3s. 6½d. per bushel. In the Sydney "Sunday Times" of 9th February, 1919, there appeared the following—

The Harden branch of the F. and S. Association recently considered and drew up a scale of fair costs of wheat cultivation in that district.

Surely that will appeal to members on the cross benches, because this is the work of a branch of their own organisation. This is the scale the branch drew up—

#### Fallow Land.

	s.	d.
Ploughing, five inches deep ..	6	8
Harrowing .. ..	1	0
Disc cultivator .. ..	3	9
Spring-tooth cultivator .. ..	2	6
Drilling .. ..	1	0
Seed, one bushel .. ..	4	6
Superphosphate .. ..	3	0
Pickling seed .. ..	0	4
Hail and fire insurance .. ..	1	6
Harvesting with harvester ..	5	0
Sewing bags, twine, stacking, etc	2	0
Rental value, land, 1½ acres, at 10s. per acre .. ..	15	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£2	6 9

To this must be added cartage to railway station and cost of bags.

That cost coincides with the estimate I have already quoted from the department of New South Wales. I have here another authority in the person of Sir Joseph Carruthers, of New South Wales, who has big interests in farming and is recognised by the wheat-growers of New South Wales and elsewhere as an authority. In an article contributed to the "Daily Telegraph" on the 21st December, 1918, he said—

It has cost these men at least 3s. 6d. per bushel on an average to produce their crops and deliver them on the railway, so that for their three years of toil and labour the bulk of them have not had one penny for themselves, unless they choose to sacrifice their wheat scrip for a few pence per bushel—forced to do so to meet their accounts to storekeepers and others.

There is the statement of Sir Joseph Carruthers, who is one of the most experienced farmers in New South Wales.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He has been held up by the member for York as a very high authority.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is quite true. Sir Joseph Carruthers continues—

Admitting that a small percentage of wheat-growers have been lucky men, owing to getting exceptional yields of 20 to 30 bushels to the acre in proximity to rail-head, thereby reducing carriage charges by road, yet the bulk—90 per cent.—have had to face the poorest financial returns ever known in the history of wheat-growing in

this State. The inevitable will result, and the bulk of the wheat farmers in 1919 will close down on that branch of agriculture unless the Governments of Australia take a bold and definite stand and give a guarantee that at least 5s. a bushel will be paid in cash or its equivalent for every bushel of wheat delivered at port in 1919-20. This price, after deducting about 4½d. for railway freight and an average of about 4d. per bushel for road cartage to rail per bushel, means to the farmer about 4s. 3d. to 4s. 4d. net per bushel for his wheat at his barn in bags. This would give a profit to the farmer of about 1s. per bushel on a 15 bushels to the acre crop, or 15s. per acre, after an outlay in costs of production of 45s. to 50s. per acre.

Mr. Pickering: Many of our farmers have not recovered yet from the drought years.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that.

Mr. Hickmott: In any case, a profit of 1s. per bushel is not much.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Hon. P. COLLIER: If members will permit me to say, the policy I advocate for the farmers—and the farmers will find it out before many years have passed—is infinitely better than the policy advocated by members opposite. No matter what happened in the past—when the farmers had to accept a price which was very often below the cost of production, when for years the farmers had to struggle and live under miserable conditions, denying themselves the ordinary comforts of life because they could only obtain a price for their wheat which was insufficient to maintain them in decent comfort, and because their returns were below the cost of production—it has to be recognised that the policy advocated by members on the cross benches means that we must revert to the pre-war conditions. If they are going to take advantage of the extraordinary conditions prevailing at the present time in order to extract abnormally high prices for their wheat from the pockets of the people of the State, they cannot have it both ways and put forward the proposition: "Heads I win, tails you lose." The farmers cannot come back when the pool disappears and when we revert to pre-war conditions—at any rate they cannot do so with any reason or consistency—and say that they want the price fixed to cover the cost of production and a fair profit in addition. I want to make it perfectly clear that I am prepared to give the farmers for all wheat required in Western Australia—I am prepared at the same time to assist them in every way by the agency of the Government, even to the extent of maintaining the pool, if necessary with the assistance of the State, for an indefinite period—a price which will amply repay the cost of production and give them a generous margin above that for profit. I will support a policy like that year in, year out. The farm-

ers in such a case would have no need to worry about the price of wheat in London or elsewhere.

Mr. Money: The local consumption would not keep the farmers going at that price.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that local consumption will not absorb all the farmer can produce, but we cannot assist him in any way I know of to obtain a higher price than the world's market will give him for sales overseas.

Mr. Money: He would have his future worries as to export.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But with the policy I advance he will have less worry, not only regarding the wheat for sale within the State but also regarding wheat for export. While my policy would not guarantee a price for overseas sales, it would at least insure him against loss for all wheat required for use within the State. I have no hesitation in saying that the farmer before long will find that this policy would be much better for him.

Mr. Money: He will probably insist upon it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have no doubt he will, and so long as he can control the machine which controls parties in this House, he may succeed, but there is a possibility of the rest of the people who are not directly interested rebelling against such a policy. I do not know that the people generally will agree to "Heads I win, tails you lose" to the farmer.

Mr. Hickmott: I think they have done so in the past.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They have not, because when the farmer got a price much below 7s. 8d. a bushel, he was still getting a payable price, even though the people of the State were getting their wheat and bread at the lowest price obtainable in any part of the world during a considerable period of the war. It is also true that the farmer was getting a price in excess of any obtained before, and it was a profitable price even when it went down to 5s. a bushel. If the farmers now are going to stand for fixing a price which will give them more than they could obtain in the world's markets—I have no doubt that the 9s. a bushel will be more than they could obtain in the world's markets—I for one will not support a policy to give them the advantage both ways. When the pool is abolished and the farmers are no longer able to extract these high prices, they need not come to the House and ask me to guarantee them prices above what they can obtain in the world's markets. Probably as the member for Bunbury interjected, they will ask for and demand it. Suppose the parity price of wheat in this State in three months' time should be 7s. 6d., I ask members do they imagine that the vast majority of the people in this State who are consumers will continue to pay, say, 1½d. a loaf more for their bread than they ought to be paying?

Mr. Pickering: They do not labour under that delusion at all. On the other hand, they

take the wheat at 7s. 8d. when it is worth 10s. a bushel.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This is not a matter of opinion. I am stating a plain fact, that if the price goes down to a parity in this State of 7s. 6d. a bushel, the people here will be paying 9s. Do members think that this will tend to preserve industrial peace? I make no secret of the fact that I would go out to any section of the people with whom I have influence and organise resistance against paying 1s. 6d. a bushel above world's parity for six or nine months of the year.

Mr. Teesdale: You would be fined £25 again.

Mr. Hickmott: We have been selling wheat for local consumption at 7s. 8d. and you know it is worth 8s. 6d.

Mr. Money: There is not much outcry over the low price of potatoes; that is a compensation.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You know the reason for that.

Mr. Money: I do.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Bunbury asked that the price of potatoes should be fixed, but only for the present season. If next season the price went to an extortionate figure, he would not then agree to the fixing of the price.

Mr. Money: That would occur only if the growers had no potatoes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Potatoes have in the past reached excessive prices. Now when the product is unsaleable and the price is low the hon. member wants a reasonable price fixed to the grower. If the position is reversed and the price of potatoes next year rises to double or treble what it is now, will the hon. member agree to have the price fixed the same as during this season?

Mr. Money: That is a principle which has to be debated.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But would the hon. member agree to it?

Mr. Money: I would take it for all time.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The motion before the House does not deal with potatoes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Bunbury is consistent. I am glad he has made that admission, although he is not a member of the Country Party. More than once during the passage of this Bill I have endeavoured to extract a similar assurance from some of the primary producers' representatives, but they have carefully refrained from making any such statement.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They do not represent potatoes; they represent only wheat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Bunbury is far-seeing, practical, and sensible enough to know it is a better proposition than risking the uncertainties of the market. It would stabilise the industry; the growers would know where they were and the consumers would be more satisfied if they knew they would not have to pay famine prices at one season and glut prices at another season. I have other evidence to quote.

The Premier: It is not good evidence.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The authorities I am quoting are all reliable.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Shall I call for a quorum?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, I prefer to speak to the few members who are interested. In April, 1920, the Department of Agriculture of Victoria issued a "Special Wheat Number," which throughout adopts 4s. per bushel as the cost of production. At page 25, the value of wheat per bushel is given at 4s., and, on page 26, there is the following:—

At Warracknabeal, on the Mallee fringe, the average results for the eight years 1912-1919 show that the net profit per acre, after paying for the cost of the manure, when  $\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. of superphosphate was used, was 21s. 1d.; when 1 cwt., it was 25s. per acre; and when  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. was used, it was 26s. 11d.—wheat being valued at only 4s. per bushel. At Longerenong College, on the black lands, a seven years' average shows that 1 cwt. of superphosphate, costing 5s., gave an increase over the no-manure plot of 6.78 bushels per acre, which, at 4s. per acre, is worth 27s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., a net profit of 22s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. When 2 cwt. was used, an increase of 8.5 bushels resulted in a net profit of 24s. to the acre.

Throughout the whole of that special number the references are all based on a cost of production of 4s. per bushel. On the 24th May, 1918, the following appeared in the "Argus":—

Commenting upon Mr. Watt's reference to the question of guarantees for future wheat crops, the Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Oman) said last night that the guarantee of 4s. per bushel, f.o.b., for the 1918-19 crop was made at Bendigo by the Prime Minister (Mr. Hughes), and the States had loyally accepted their share of the responsibility for this guarantee. The Australian Wheat Board at its last meeting, had passed a resolution in favour of 4s. 4d. per bushel, f.o.b., being guaranteed for the 1918-19 and 1919-20 crops.

Then we have an announcement by Mr. Hughes on the 19th March, 1919, as follows:—

Two matters affecting the next wheat harvest namely, the question of the continuation of the pooling system and of the guarantee to be given growers, were considered by the Federal Cabinet to-day. In a synopsis of the position, furnished later, the Acting Prime Minister stated that the Federal Farmers Organisation had urged the continuance of the Pool under conditions practically identical with those already arranged. . . . The Government, however, were prepared, provided the States were willing to co-operate, to offer a guarantee for the coming year of 4s. 4d. a bushel, less freight from the port of delivery to the port of export. . . . The Government had every reason to believe the States would accept the proposals, and so assure the wheat-growers, if not a highly remunerative, still a profitable return from their labours.

Mr. Hughes said a guarantee of 4s. 4d. per bushel insured the wheat growers, if not a highly remunerative, still a profitable return for their labour. I have shown that the cost of production in those years ranged from 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. per bushel. Mr. Hughes said 4s. 4d. was a profitable price. Having regard for all the figures I have quoted, I want to know how we are justified in charging the people 9s. Even if

I were to allow on these estimated costs of 4s. a 50 per cent. increase for increased cost of production, that brings us to 6s. per bushel; and if I allow another 50 per cent. for a lower yield in this State than in New South Wales, that only brings us to 8s., and there is still a surplus of 1s. per bushel.

Mr. Money: Do you allow any compensation for the lean years?

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are asked now to make the thing retrospective. If that were a good argument, we might go to the Arbitration Court and say, "We want not only an increased price now for our labour, but one which will give us an adequate remuneration for all the years during which we were working at a sweating wage." It does not seem reasonable to say we should extract from the pockets of the people a price to make good the low price that obtained eight or ten years ago. We cannot reasonably go back beyond the period when the pool started. Ever since then the farmers have had a payable price, each year higher than that of the preceding year. Now, when they think this is the last year in which they will have the benefits of monopoly, of the credit of the people and of the backing of the Government, they decide they must make the biggest scoop possible. Is that the attitude? Is there to be no regard for the consuming public, who have their troubles and their lean years just as has the farmer? As a matter of fact, a worker on the minimum wage, from the day he commences work until he is placed in his coffin, experiences nothing but lean years. The argument is that the farmer is justified in taking advantage of war conditions which enable him to get abnormally high prices; to put it plainly, the farmer, because of a war is justified in making a profit which he could not make in peace time. If that is the attitude, it means that the war has had on the farmer an influence diametrically opposite to that which it has had on the workers; because the workers' wages have not increased as have the farmers' profits. Having regard to the purchasing power of the sovereign, there is not a wage-earner on the minimum wage to-day who is not getting a return considerably lower than that which he was getting in pre-war days.

The Premier: I bet he would not change, just the same.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am sure he would. Let me compare that with the farmer. Not only are the farmers getting higher prices, but they are obtaining a higher profit than before.

The Premier: I do not think they are.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The farmer who obtained 7s. 8d. per bushel is infinitely better off and has made bigger profits than ever before.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have the largest Parliamentary wheat-growers on this side of the House, and so we know these things.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Speaking on behalf of the wheat-growers on this side, I may say they have more wheat in the pool than all the farmer members on that side, and they are perfectly satisfied to accept 7s. 8d.

The Premier: They have not said so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, by their votes and remarks on the Bill. They are quite content to accept 7s. 8d. One of the members sitting on this side of the House, who has the second largest quantity of wheat in the pool of any

member in the House, has said from his seat in the Chamber that 7s. 8d. is a highly profitable price, and that he would be well satisfied if he could be sure each year of a price even lower than 7s. 8d. How are we justified in charging 9s. ? Do we say to the people, "We are going to indulge in deliberate profiteering ?"

Mr. Pickering : What did they say in Queensland and New South Wales about the 9s. ?

Hon. P. COLLIER : The position is entirely different. In New South Wales 7s. 6d. a bushel was guaranteed. The Premier wants to have a price fixed which will ensure him against any loss so far as the guarantee is concerned. In Queensland not sufficient wheat has been produced for local requirements. It has been necessary to import it from the other States. In order to encourage local production the Government of Queensland have guaranteed 8s. a bushel. That was a good business arrangement, because the wheat cost them more than 8s. to import. They were safe in giving a guarantee of 8s. for wheat for local consumption because the wheat they needed cost them already more than that. Further, they would be encouraging production within the State, which would ultimately mean producing enough for their own requirements and getting the wheat at a lower price than they have been able to do up to the present. That is a logical and common sense attitude to take up. We are not on all fours with that here. We have an exportable surplus of eight million or nine million bushels for the season. All those who are responsible for fixing the price at 9s., and who have supported it, say in effect to the public of the State, who have to buy wheat, that they intend to take advantage of the existence of the pool, and the monopoly enjoyed by reason of the pool, to indulge in profiteering at their expense. Every member who supports the 9s. is supporting a profiteering price for wheat and bread in Western Australia. I challenge any member to show on the facts and figures that this is not the case. They may justify themselves on the ground that the farmers have had lean years in the past, and that they want to see them get a price this year greatly in excess of what they have had before.

Mr. Pickering : So that they can get off the I.A.B. and other charities.

Hon. P. COLLIER : We could not get them off.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : They would have to grow more wheat than you can grow.

Mr. Pickering : I have never been on the board.

Hon. P. COLLIER : The hon. member does not grow any wheat and neither do I, but he is just as much interested in the matter as I am.

Mr. Pickering : A good deal more interested than many who do grow wheat.

Mr. SPEAKER : Order !

Hon. P. COLLIER : As a representative of the people, the question of wheat-growing, and the price of wheat, concerns me as much as it does other people who do not grow wheat.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : There is not much wheat grown in the Sussex electorate.

Mr. Pickering : There used to be.

Hon. P. COLLIER : It is time this wheat marketing method stopped. I hope the Bill will be thrown out, and that we shall get back to open free trade along the lines of pre-war

days. Then I would be prepared to say, "Let the farmers get the world's parity, no matter what that parity may amount to." The House is not justified in supporting a proposal which will cause the people of the country to pay an unnecessarily high price for their bread supplies. This could not be done but for the fact that in this State and the Federal Parliament the Country party hold the balance of power. They are in a position to demand what price they like from the Government, and the Government have to agree or go out of office. There is no side-stepping or getting away from it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : We went out of office rather than give in to them. I am sorry for the Premier.

Hon. P. COLLIER : Cabinet was faced with two alternatives, either to agree to the 9s., when it was decided to accept it, or go out of office.

The Premier : No !

Hon. W. C. Angwin : At Monger & Co.'s order.

Mr. Pickering : That is absolutely without foundation and fact.

Hon. P. COLLIER : Every member sitting on the cross-benches who wanted the 9s. had the power to turn the Government out of office. Behind members, looming on the horizon, were the general elections and their electors. It became a question either of sacrificing the Government if they declined to accept the 9s., or face their angry electors in two or three months' time.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : They would sacrifice the Government.

Hon. P. COLLIER : Hon. members opposite would not have much hesitation as to which route they would travel when they were faced with such alternatives.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : Some of them are trying to sacrifice the Premier now.

Hon. P. COLLIER : They would not hesitate to choose between standing loyal to the Government, or taking the risk of facing defeat at the hand of the electors. So they forced the Government into the position they are in to-day. Now the people are committed to 9s. for the next 12 months. I am pleased there are some members of the Government who maintain an independent attitude on the question. The Government are made up of half Country party and half of other parties. I do not know what will happen in Cabinet in deciding a matter of this kind. The Minister for Works and others are independent enough to take up a stand regardless of consequences so far as the Country party organisation is this State is concerned.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : They believe in protecting the interests of the State.

Hon. P. COLLIER : It would be a good thing for this country if we had more members maintaining an independent attitude of this description. It is essential that there should be some independence on the part of members who are not tied up to any outside caucus. If we are going to have fair dealing and justice to the majority of the people, they should tell members of the cross-benches what they think of the whole situation. Whilst I endorse the principle of the Bill, and believe it to be a good one, whilst I would like to see it continued for all time, if that were possible, in the interests of our wheat growers and of our settlers generally, those views

of mine are subject to the principle being applied on fair and equitable lines. But if we are to have the power of fixing the price of wheat placed in the hands of those who can directly benefit from it, and who are pecuniarily interested—as we have such abundant evidence that they are pecuniarily interested—in the matter, the best thing that could be done for the State would be to let the whole business terminate at the earliest possible moment. No matter what the result might be, I would still say that that course was the right one, in view of the attitude adopted by those who, most wrongfully, insist upon profiteering on the people—the people who backed them by enabling the scheme to be carried on during the war. If that is to be the attitude of those whom the pool has benefited and is benefiting, the sooner the pool ends the better. For that reason I shall not support the passage of the Bill, and more particularly because we have not had an opportunity of fixing under it the price of wheat for local consumption.

*12 o'clock midnight.*

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam—in reply) [12.0]: The leader of the Opposition has said that if there were no Wheat Marketing Act and our wheat were sold in the open market, he would have no objection whatever to the price for local consumption being based upon the export value. Personally, I fail to see any difference between the sale of wheat in a free market and the sale of wheat under this scheme, because, although the people may be responsible in the matter of the guarantee, they certainly have not paid even one penny towards the cost of running the pool, and they certainly have had many advantages from the pool.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They have had no advantages but such as they have paid for.

The PREMIER: They have had a great many advantages.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Has not their credit been worth something?

The PREMIER: Oh, yes. We acknowledge that.

Hon. P. Collier: The people's credit has been everything. You could not have carried on the pool without it.

The PREMIER: But the wheat was very good security. Of course the people's credit was used, and used every day in many directions; but I do not know that they ran very much risk, because until last year wheat was at a fairly low price. In fact, since the war the price has been high only once, and that was last year, during which it averaged about 10s. The 1916 Wheat Marketing Act, let me point out, was passed by hon. members now opposite. In that Act they laid it down that the price of wheat for local consumption was to be based on export parity.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Yes, because we knew that the farmers would get only about a shilling a bushel for it.

The PREMIER: If the price of wheat were based on the law as it now stands, we should be paying more than 9s. for wheat to-day in this country.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We wanted to protect the farmers.

The PREMIER: When the Government take anything from people—pearl shell, wheat, or whatever hon. members please—the Government, in a manner, compel those people to hand over their goods. Therefore, the Government must treat them fairly. If this 1916 Act had been obeyed, we should now be paying 10s. for wheat, and not 9s. Last year at this time wheat was about 5s. 6d. per bushel. In England it was then 12s. In January last, wheat became worth probably a little over 7s. 8d. I want my friends to remember that we might, quite fairly and honourably and honestly, have secured wheat for local consumption at 6s. 6d. per bushel about this time last year. Now, the State is entitled to buy what it needs for its own requirements, because it must retain that quantity.

Mr. Thomson: Why not buy the surplus flour we have? It would be sufficient to keep the price of bread down for a considerable number of months.

The PREMIER: I would be very glad to buy that surplus. This time last year hon. members who grow wheat would have been glad to accept 6s. 6d. At that time 7s. 8d. was very near to export value. But London might have secured the wheat at the same price then, so that we have no right to say that wheat was supplied here at 7s. 8d. when it could have brought 16s.

Hon. P. Collier: When the price was fixed at 7s. 8d., that was the parity value.

The PREMIER: At that time last year we would have been glad to sell every bushel we had at 6s. 6d. or 7s. 8d. Let us be quite fair in the matter. It is true that wheat became more valuable later in the year, and that we had to secure from the pool the quantity necessary to supply our people. Naturally, we secured that quantity at the price it was worth when we bought it. Had there been no Wheat Marketing Act, though, millers and ordinary customers would have secured all the wheat necessary to feed the people for the whole year, and that wheat would have had to be paid for, not on the basis of 7s. 8d., but on the export parity, which was probably 15s. So the Wheat Marketing Act did benefit the people.

Hon. P. Collier: No, because the price of flour would have been controlled by the Prices Regulation Commission.

The PREMIER: The Commission could not have controlled the situation. The hon. member would have the House believe 9s. to be the export value.

Hon. P. Collier: I said all the indications were that before very long that figure would be above the export value. The last quotations, which was published to-day, 10s., leaves about 8s. 7d. per bushel here.

The PREMIER: A price of 108s. is equal to 13s. 6d. per bushel. Freight is down to 100s.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There are very few freights to be obtained at 100s., except possibly a sailer or two.

The PREMIER: Steamers are quoting that rate. On the basis of that freight the Australian Wheat Board have sold 900,000 tons of wheat at an average of over 10s., which means one-third of the total quantity of wheat that we shall have available for export. It means that in now getting wheat at 9s. we are getting it at 1s. per bushel below the present export value. Of course there are certain additions when wheat is sold for local consumption. However, that is the position. I assure the hon. member that the price he has quoted means over 10s. per bushel.

Hon. P. Collier: No.

The PREMIER: Yes, it does. If we were obeying the Wheat Marketing Act we should be charging 10s. per bushel for wheat for local consumption.

Hon. P. Collier: The price was 10s. over a month ago. That was announced by Hughes over a month ago.

The PREMIER: I am referring to sales to foreign countries. The position is as I have stated. We have secured wheat for local consumption at 1s. per bushel less than the export value up to date. I quite understand, of course, that if the world's parity fell below 9s., there would be an objection on the part of the people to paying that price for wheat for local consumption.

Hon. P. Collier: They would have to pay that price, because it is fixed for 12 months.

The PREMIER: I quite understand that will be so. I doubt whether we can forgo that, if the world is not so well supplied with wheat.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, I think we could.

The PREMIER: We see that America has a good deal and we hear that imports from Canada are to be prevented by the imposition of an increased charge.

Hon. P. Collier: That shows that they have got a good harvest.

The PREMIER: The leader of the Opposition dealt with the cost of producing wheat. If his basis were taken on the conditions in New South Wales, that State would require 9s. to cover two years because they lost the whole of their crop last year. Wheat, then, has to be produced at much lower cost. The leader of the Opposition would allow them the cost of production and his basis was a generous one. The farmer is affected by the elements, as was evidenced in New South Wales last year when the farmers lost so heavily.

Mr. Thomson: And they have lost a good deal this year.

The PREMIER: If I had my way, and the leader of the Opposition offered me a price on the basis of the resolutions carried the other day, to which he has referred, and the

offer was one for a period of years, I would take it. I think I would come out of it a good deal better off than I would if I exported.

Hon. P. Collier: I am sure you would.

Mr. Pickering: How would you give effect to it?

The PREMIER: I do not know.

Hon. P. Collier: How are we giving effect to it now? One of these days the farmers will want assistance again. In view of their attitude they will know all about it then.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I cannot allow a discussion on price fixing.

Hon. P. Collier: No, it is outside the scope of the Bill.

The PREMIER: The Bill deals with the method of marketing wheat. It was decided to get rid of a considerable quantity of wheat at 9s. per bushel. That was the decision of a conference in the Eastern States at which the Premiers of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland were present. Our Honorary Minister, Mr. Baxter, was there but I did not know anything of the world's market at the time, so we did not have the information till the Honorary Minister reported to us after he came back.

Hon. P. Collier: If I might interrupt, the Premier has been arguing that the world's parity has been 10s. or more, but the Prime Minister stated that 9s. was the basis of the world's parity.

The PREMIER: I have given the actual sales to show what the parity was.

Hon. P. Collier: The Prime Minister gave it as 9s. per bushel at that time.

The PREMIER: The information was not in our possession at the time when Ministers met in Melbourne, and we had to wait until the information reached here. It was quite impossible for this State to say it would pay less to its farmers than the Eastern States had agreed to pay their farmers. I have had some queer experiences lately regarding the production of wheat. I know that the compulsory acquisition of wheat is provided by the Bill and that affects others, including dairymen, poultry farmers and others.

Hon. P. Collier: It has ruined most of the poultry farmers.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We will not have any soon.

The PREMIER: I know that it affects them but only to this extent, that they are compelled to buy wheat in small lots. Probably if they were free, they would buy direct from the farmers and we are arranging for that now. Wheat would not be any cheaper unless the middleman were disposed of. We are endeavouring to arrange that, notwithstanding the Act. The poultry keeper gets a much higher price for his eggs.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They would not receive the higher price if they had not been compelled to kill their fowls. The poultry farmer has a job to live at the present time.

The PREMIER: As to the price of bread I have no desire to see it increased very much.



Hon. P. Collier: The price of bread will go up undoubtedly.

The PREMIER: In Northern they are selling bread to-day at 5d.

Hon. P. Collier: If the price of wheat goes up in the course of a year or so and the world's parity is below 9s., I will do what I can to give the people cheaper bread.

The PREMIER: I will wait until that time comes. Last year farmers in Western Australia were fortunate in that the pool existed, because they got a fair price.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: On his own credit.

Hon. P. Collier: If there were no pool the farmers would not have received half the price.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They could not have held on.

Mr. Thomson: They would not have grown the wheat.

The PREMIER: The farmer has not held it because the consumer had to bear his share of the cost.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: On the credit of the Commonwealth Government.

The PREMIER: No, not at all.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not an argument.

The PREMIER: Under the pool we are to get 2s. 6d. with a further 2s. 6d. in April and we will get the rest, God knows when!

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You have an over-draft.

The PREMIER: There may be an over-draft but there is a balance of money coming from the other States to Western Australia. However, the position is as I have described. I have no wish to discuss this matter at greater length. I hope the House will pass this measure. The responsibility of handling the wheat is greater now than during the war period when shipping was more scarce. In the existing circumstances, I think we would find that the farmers would elect to have their wheat dealt with in the old-fashioned way. I believe that the world is short of wheat and that the price of the commodity may increase.

Hon. P. Collier: The price is coming down every day.

The PREMIER: It may be that owing to the financial stringency wheat has fallen for the time being. How could it be otherwise? The continental nations want to buy.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But on credit. They have not the money to buy otherwise.

The PREMIER: Those nations have to live. Owing to the financial stringency there may be a drop in the price for the time being but I believe the price will increase during the year, instead of showing a decrease. I know it is difficult to sell anything now for we cannot sell wool or anything else at the present time.

Mr. Teesdale: Only beer.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

## BILLS—(2)—COUNCIL'S REQUESTED AMENDMENTS.

1, Railways Classification Board.

2, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.

House adjourned at 12.32 a.m. (Thursday).

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 16th December, 1920.

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

## SELECT COMMITTEE—OPTICIANS' BILL.

On motion by Hon. A. Sanderson (for Hon. J. Nicholson) the time for bringing up the report was extended until Tuesday next.

## QUESTION—PARLIAMENTARY OFFICIALS' SALARIES.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON asked the Minister for Education,—Referring to the answers of the Minister asked by me on the 10th instant, will he furnish replies to the following further questions?—1, Were the Library committee consulted prior to the increase in the allowance of £50, stated to have been given to the Librarian? 2, Is not the method of increase adopted an attempt to over-ride the provisions of Section 35 of "The Constitution Act, 1889"?