

# Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 1st December, 1920.

## LOAN ESTIMATES, 1920-21.

### Message.

Message from the Governor received transmitting the Loan Estimates for the year 1920-21, and recommending appropriation.

### In Committee of Supply.

The House resolved itself into Committee of Supply for the purpose of considering the Loan Estimates; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Vote—Departmental, £56,917.

**THE PREMIER AND COLONIAL TREASURER** (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [4.37]: In introducing the Loan Estimates it is unnecessary for me to say that for the years that have gone large sums of money have been expended on public works in the development of the country. Whilst I realise it is undesirable to spend more loan funds than are absolutely necessary at present, and that because of the difficulty in getting money and the high rate of interest which must be paid for it great care must be exercised and only necessary work undertaken, I know the House will agree that it is impossible to carry on without some expenditure. I shall tell hon. members what the expenditure was last year, and how the expenditure was incurred, and show that a very small amount was spent apart from the settlement of our soldiers. The Loan Estimates this year appear to be large, but this is chiefly due to the expenditure on the settlement of returned soldiers. Funds for the settlement of returned soldiers are advanced to this State by the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. P. Collier: Not all of them.

**THE PREMIER:** Practically the whole amount. They act as borrowers for the States. That ought to be clearly understood by the people as well as by hon. members. The rate charged by the Commonwealth to date is £5 8s. per cent. There is also a rebate of 2½ per cent. for each of the first five years on each of these loans. Borrowings apart from money obtained from the Commonwealth for soldier settlement will cost very much more for the present, certainly not less than 6½ per cent. In order to develop the State we must first complete the works in hand and in some cases put in hand new works. A great deal of money is necessary now to provide water supplies. In the metropolitan area a better water supply is very urgently needed. In fact, an adequate supply must be provided at the earliest possible date for a growing city such as we have. It is not right that we should depend on the present means of supply, which are not adequate. On the goldfields a great deal of money has to be expended on water supplies, also in country towns and agricultural districts. Harbours must be improved to meet the expanding trade. Some new railways have to be built to open up land which is largely settled. We cannot develop the State without improvements to existing rail-

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

### QUESTION—STATE SCHOOL CHILDREN, CLASSIFICATION.

**HON. W. C. ANGWIN** asked the **Honorary Minister**: 1, Who were the teachers who classified children as "morons"? 2, After what tests did they grade individuals as "morons," "feeble-minded," etc.? 3, On what grounds did these teachers make such serious statements? 4, Is it a fact that over twenty children at the North Fremantle school have been isolated from their fellows and labelled defective, without being tested scientifically? 5, Does the medical examiner of school children hold the necessary credentials certifying that she is qualified to diagnose mental defect? 6, Is it a fact that persons holding no credentials certifying that they are qualified to diagnose mental defect are permitted to classify school children and institutional children as "feeble-minded"? 7, What qualifications do they hold to apply the special intelligence test?

**THE HONORARY MINISTER** replied: 1, No teachers have done any such thing, except Miss Stoneman, of the Training College. 2, After full examination according to the Tennan revision of the Binet-Simon tests. 3, On the results of the tests mentioned. 4, No. These children have been placed in a separate class on the ground that they cannot profitably be taught in the ordinary classes. Exactly similar classes have been conducted for years previously. They have not been labelled in any way. They have been examined physically, and are to be examined psychologically before any definite classification is made. 5, The medical officer for schools does not hold any special credentials certifying to this, but in most parts of the world medical officers are being entrusted with this work. 6, The medical officer for schools here is permitted to classify children in exactly the same way as medical officers for schools elsewhere. 7, No special intelligence tests have yet been standardised for Australia. Arrangements are being made by the various States for a central clinic for this purpose.

ways. Money must be spent on rolling stock, in particular. Our railways have not had expended upon them the money necessary to keep them in perfect condition. Land settlement is naturally increasing. The demand for our products and the price they realise have already stimulated settlement to a large extent. New districts have to be opened up. We have to face the responsibility of expenditure in the North-West. We shall be getting a largely increased revenue from that part of the State. Pastoral lands are being taken up and industries are being developed there. The livestock trade, the wool trade and the pearlshell industry are expanding. We have also erected freezing works at Wyndham and others are being erected at Carnarvon. These will mean expenditure by the Government in each case. Our trading concerns need capital, and some of them will need additional money spent upon them. That is inseparable from work of this kind. They have to be kept up to date, and supplied with all the capital necessary for the handling of the various products. Apart from the railways we have many business undertakings. We have a fairly large banking system. The Agricultural Bank is a very big institution now. I will deal with soldier settlement later on. We have the ordinary Agricultural Bank business, the Industries Assistance Board business, and the soldier settlement business. A large sum of money has been expended on these, and will have to be spent in the development and settlement of our lands, particularly as to soldier settlement. As I shall show presently these concerns have absorbed a very large amount in the aggregate. There has been and always will be some confusion in connection with the expenditure on many of these investments. We have under our Trading Concerns Act, and to some extent in connection with our business undertakings, definite instructions from Parliament as to the method of keeping accounts, and presenting statements to Parliament. There is in many other directions, however, not quite a clear position exposed from time to time. Every penny of money spent in connection with any one of these concerns should be debited to that concern. Every penny of interest that has been paid in any way, and all expenditure in fact, of any kind, should be debited up to each of these concerns, and kept well away from the ordinary revenue and expenditure. There has been considerable loss in connection with the business undertakings.

Hon. P. Collier: What are the considerable losses?

The PREMIER: The principal items last year, in connection with the invested money in business undertakings totalled £700,000.

Hon. P. Collier: That must have included the railways.

The PREMIER: Yes, those are included in the items I refer to. When I mentioned the trading concerns, I meant so far as in-

vested money was concerned, there had been the losses I mentioned. When I refer to each one of these concerns, I mean that each one such as the Agricultural Bank, the Industries Assistance Board, Soldiers' Settlement, Wyndham Freezing Works, and so on, should stand alone. Any money spent in connection with them should be charged to the respective trading concerns, and if there is to be a loss, it should be shown as a charge against the particular concern on which the loss was experienced, and not, as at present, under ordinary revenue and expenditure. To secure this end it will be necessary to bring forward several Bills, but I think the Committee desire to have the information in the direction I suggest. The total loan indebtedness to June 30 last amounted to £46,822,003. The sinking fund amounted to £6,848,825, leaving a net indebtedness of £39,973,178. The interest for this year will be £1,942,312 and the sinking fund will amount to £315,141, or a total of £2,257,453. If all this invested money was now earning the interest it once did, and the same applied to the interest on the sinking fund, all would be well. We should not have a deficit and we should have all the advantages of this invested money, without any cost to the general taxpayer. That would be an ideal condition of affairs and we shall reach that state of affairs when we have increased population. The money spent from loan funds has, I think, been well invested on the whole. On the railways, tramways, and electric lighting we have expended £20,048,993; on water supplies, £5,714,958; on harbours at Fremantle and Bunbury, £2,359,214; on abattoirs, £62,909; on State batteries, £381,504; on other works, £164,829, making a total of £28,732,409. Regarding our State trading concerns, we have invested in the State sawmills £502,264 including floating capital. In connection with large business undertakings, such as the sawmills, it must be remembered that we must have considerable floating capital which is represented by stocks. At the implement works we have spent, including floating capital, £223,009; on State hotels, £46,307; on ferries, £13,043; on brickworks, £37,451; on quarries, £12,347; on the State Steamship Service, £215,468; and on the Wyndham Freezing Works, £918,146, making a total of £1,968,035. The Agricultural Bank capital amounts to £3,017,335 and the Industries Assistance Board capital to £1,359,803, while the money invested in connection with soldier settlement aggregates £2,231,090. In the last mentioned case the money has been actually expended; in the two other cases, the amounts represent the capital provided for the working of those concerns. I propose to ask the Committee to bring the soldier settlement under the same conditions as the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank. Owing to a flaw in the existing legislation, that is not so at the present

time. On workers' homes we have spent £525,500. We are owed by the Federal Government in respect of the transferred properties £829,339. These items represent a total of £38,663,510 of loan moneys, and on these concerns we have spent within £1,300,000 of our net indebtedness. The Committee will realise that we pay interest, notwithstanding the sinking fund, on 46 millions of money. Of these concerns which are calculated to earn interest, most of them are earning sufficient and others not quite sufficient to meet the expenditure for interest and sinking fund in connection with their respective works. They are capable, under favourable conditions, which have not obtained for the last five years, of earning interest and sinking fund. I think they should be expected to do so because it is hardly right that the general taxpayer should be asked to make good the losses on these concerns. We have borrowed a great deal of loan money and we should expect to be able to make both ends meet. There is much other expenditure also which will be necessary for the development which has been encouraged by the expenditure of this loan money and that development has been satisfactory. It is true that our population is small and that it is spread over a scattered area, from Wyndham, in the north, to Eucla, in the south. Our population is not only spread over such a large area but it is engaged in many different industries. I admit that where the railways have been built, the land has not yet been brought into full use. That could not be otherwise. The land development has grown gradually. For very many years past little was done; since that time increased efforts have been put forward year after year. There was no great encouragement to produce, however, until we had reached the exporting stage. Land is brought under production every year largely by the increased amount of areas cleared. Time is wanted to correct the present position. We will find very little land adjacent to the railways capable of use which is not being put to some use. Possibly it is not being put to the best use, because that is impossible until men have sufficient money to be able to improve and clear and fence the land.

Mr. Willecock: A lot of it is not cleared at all.

Mr. Smith: A lot of it is not worth clearing.

The PREMIER: I suppose people who live on the land have done much more than the people who live in the city.

Mr. Willecock: Some of them.

The PREMIER: A lot of them. They work just as hard in the country as those in the towns.

Mr. Willecock: Some of them.

The PREMIER: It is no use saying that. I believe that during the past 10 or 12 years they have done their best in the country.

Mr. Willecock: Some of them are hanging on in order to secure the unearned increment.

The PREMIER: That is easy to say.

Mr. Willecock: It is very easy to get the unearned increment.

The PREMIER: It is news to me to know that. If the hon. member considers the taxation which the man on the land has to pay to the road boards, the State Government and the Federal Government, and in many other directions, he will find that the unearned increment is not what he thinks it is. The man in the country improved the roads that the hon. member travels over.

Mr. Willecock: They hang on for the unearned increment anyhow.

The PREMIER: That is not right. Men cannot hold on to land nowadays without paying taxation here, there and all over the place.

Mr. Willecock: They cut their land up into comparatively small blocks and get rid of them.

The PREMIER: The people in the country would be willing to sell land, and I invite the hon. member to come out and take up land in order to satisfy himself.

Hon. P. Collier: What is the good of that now that you have fixed the price of wheat? If you had given us the world's parity, we would probably have gone on the land. That is where you made your mistake.

The PREMIER: The leader of the Opposition is sitting among wheat-growers; they are on all sides of him. I understand that the wheat king sits on that side of the House.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have more farmers on this side of the House than you have, proportionately.

The Minister for Mines: You are confusing the sowing of wild oats with wheat growing.

The PREMIER: I think the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) should be invited to take up land and see for himself.

The CHAIRMAN: We are not discussing farms.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We will discuss the three million loan in a little while. Fancy £87,000 for the Perth trams!

The PREMIER: Our loan expenditure last year was £2,663,320, and of this £2,578,305 should be earning interest. On soldiers' settlement £1,947,772 was expended. The Agricultural Bank spent £118,285 as well, or a total of £2,666,057, trading concerns involved an expenditure of £248,249; railways, etc., £121,149; harbours, £98,024; water supply, £24,450; advances, etc., £20,376; or a total of £2,578,305. Miscellaneous items, such as roads and bridges, etc., which cannot earn any interest, involved an expenditure of £85,015, making up the total of the loan expenditure. Apart from expenditure for soldiers' settlement and the increase in the

Agricultural Bank capital, the total last year was £597,263.

Hon. P. Collier: Was that for last year?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You cannot buy farms out and have works going on as well.

Hon. P. Collier: You are more than doubting that amount this year.

The PREMIER: The number of soldiers who have been provided with holdings up to the 30th June last totalled 3,018. Persons including British ex-service men and war munition workers to whom loans have been approved total 3,504. The total number of applications is now 6,075. The amount asked for this year is, of course, much larger than was expended last year. It amounts to £3,641,932. Of this sum, the loans to soldier settlers are estimated to amount to £1,968,500, in addition to Agricultural Bank capital of £150,000 advances under the development of mining vote, £20,000, and other items £6,500, making a total of £2,145,000. On railways, trams, etc., there is £426,800; harbours, including Bunbury and Geraldton, £147,950, and water supply, including part of the metropolitan supply, £347,500. There is also work to be done at Geraldton, where there has been long delayed and very necessary work to be carried out. There is also a good deal of work on the goldfields and country districts as well as in the city. Regarding the development of mining, we expect to spend under that heading, exclusive of advances, £26,400 and on batteries £9,350. Regarding immigration we expect to spend £30,000, on forestry, £19,600, on buildings £80,150, on fisheries £10,000, on trading concerns £291,765, and on plant suspense £50,000. Departmental charges are set down at £56,917. The sum of £3,261,365 should be directly interest-producing. Of this £126,000 will earn interest indirectly and £146,000—a large amount, I admit—will not earn interest. Departmental and Plant Suspense are spread over the various works concerned. It is true that the sum I am asking for is a fairly considerable one, but if hon. members will look at the Estimates they will see that the amount is well spread over works that are necessary. Last year a considerable sum was voted, but there was no chance of spending it. There was a difficulty in regard to labour. I desire now to be prepared, in the event of difficulties arising through unemployment, to be able to put the important works in hand. At Geraldton some work is going on at the present time, and this will be increased. We must also keep our railway facilities up to date. There are a few lines that we desire authority to construct. It is important that we should have our system in proper working order. That will take a considerable sum of money. We also require additional rolling stock, and what we have must be strengthened in order to carry the traffic. There is real development going on, and that means increased facilities for the transport and the

marketing of produce. Hon. members will see what is proposed if they will refer to the Estimates.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It has taken me three weeks to read your speeches condemning the Loan Estimates of the Labour party.

Hon. P. Collier: I intend to concentrate my remarks on the Estimates of the Minister for Education.

The PREMIER: Apart from soldier settlement I do not suppose we shall spend anything like a million. Last year we did not.

Hon. P. Collier: But you have run amok since then.

The PREMIER: There has never been so little loan expenditure.

Hon. P. Collier: Soldier settlement will account for £900,000.

The PREMIER: No, it accounts for two millions.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, including the Agricultural Bank.

The PREMIER: The figures are £1,968,000.

Hon. P. Collier: We will cut a bit off that.

The PREMIER: We can at a later stage discuss these Estimates in detail, and if hon. members object to any of the items they will have ample opportunity to do so. They will find something for the North-West.

Hon. P. Collier: Something for everybody; that is what they say at the Christmas Fair. This is a price for everybody.

The PREMIER: Everybody who deserves attention at the hands of the Government should get it. That is what we want to do. There is an amount to be expended in connection with the Lands Improvement Loan Fund. Hon. members know that certain money in connection with land development is loan money. This expenditure is refunded year by year. It is a perfectly right method to follow. I move the first item.

Progress reported.

#### RESOLUTION—FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, CONVENTION.

Message received from the Legislative Council asking concurrence in the following resolution:—

That in the opinion of this House a Federal Convention, with equal State representation, should be appointed by the electors of each State on the basis of proportional representation to make recommendations with a view of revising the Federal Constitution, and that the Government of Western Australia be requested to urge this opinion upon the Commonwealth Government.

#### BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

## BILL—HERDSMAN'S LAKE DRAINAGE.

In Committee.

Resumed from 26th November; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair, the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Following on the undertaking I gave last week, I have had two maps prepared, and I have laid them on the Table of the House. I shall make an explanation to hon. members which will, I hope, have the effect of clearing away any doubt which may exist on one or two points in connection with this question, and I desire to have my remarks on record also, so that there may be no misunderstanding in years to come. The catchment area marked on one of those maps is 6,200 acres. That is the water shed where the water can be dealt with in connection with this particular scheme. There is within the water shed a smaller area of 450 acres under the control of the Njookenbooroo drainage Board. The other rateable lands are 2,250 acres, so that a total of 2,700 acres can be rated. No more can be rated in that particular area. And of the 6,200 acres hon. members will see that 3,500 acres cannot be rated and will not be rated. That area consists of high sand hills which can derive no benefit from the scheme. During the course of the remarks which were made last week some errors crept in which may be corrected at this stage. With regard to the depth of Herdsman's Lake, it appears that the figures of the contour line were given as the depth of the Lake. The actual depth of the lake at the present time is from four to five feet, but at times when it is in flood the depth is six to seven feet. It may be interesting to hon. members to know with regard to Monger's Lake that the depth of that body of water is just about the same. A little scare has been raised that the draining of Herdsman's Lake is likely to affect Monger's Lake. I am assured by the engineers that this is impossible, for the reason that the watershed that falls to Monger's Lake is not affected by Herdsman's Lake.

Mr. Willcock: What is the respective sea levels of the two lakes?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Herdsman's Lake is 30ft., and Monger's Lake 43 feet above sea level. That must not convey the idea that Herdsman's Lake will drain Monger's Lake.

Hon. P. Collier: What is the distance separating the two? I think it is only a quarter of a mile.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot tell the hon. member, but it is something like that. The red line on the plan shows the course of the proposed drain and tunnel. It was decided as the result of trials to place the drain and tunnel along this route. The investigations which were held showed that we were more likely to get a continuous depth of limestone through which to take the tunnel. Owing to the representations made

by the Perth City Council, and which they were justified in making, we are endeavouring to throw our line more north, and investigations are proceeding at the present time with the idea of seeing whether it is possible to get as good a quality of rock through which to take our tunnel on the contemplated new line. Members will understand that if we do not get indications showing that the best kind of rock can be obtained on a new line, we shall have to fall back on the original line. The Town Clerk of Perth, Mr. Bold, has sent to members a memorandum containing various statements which he appears to consider important. I tell members, as I told Mr. Bold this morning, that the City Engineer (Mr. Galbraith) is in close touch with our engineer, Mr. O'Brien, who is doing this work, that Mr. Galbraith quite understands it would be ridiculous to expect us to give a settled line until we have made our investigations, and that Mr. Galbraith appears to be satisfied that he will get a fair deal from the Water Supply Department, and does not appear to entirely agree with Mr. Bold's views. Mr. Bold said that they would not be able to build houses over the tunnel. Members will see from the contour line that we shall be so deep below the surface, 15ft. and in some places over 100ft., that this is only a bogey. Further, the drive will probably be about six feet by five feet, and members with experience of mining know that if we carry a drive of that size through limestone or stone that will stand, we are not likely to be throwing any obstacles in the way of the development of the city endowment lands. I told Mr. Bold this morning that the Crown Law Department and the engineers—both the City Engineer and our engineer—were satisfied that the description on the back of the Bill is sufficient to enable the work to be carried on and to give us the latitude of deviation required. Mr. Bold, however, is still of opinion that the description in the Bill is not sufficient, but it is useless to continue a controversy with a gentleman who, however estimable he may be, is not a professional man, and, therefore, can only speak from the promptings of a very active brain and a very limited experience in matters in which professional engineers must be regarded as the authoritative guide.

Hon. P. Collier: Would not he be acting on the advice of the City Engineer?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The City Engineer, Mr. Galbraith, is in accord with Mr. O'Brien, the departmental engineer.

Hon. P. Collier: Who is advising the Town Clerk?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Town Clerk himself, I think.

Hon. P. Collier: A very estimable gentleman.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, and I appreciate the activity of his brain, but when it comes to professional and practical work, those men with experience are the ones

on whose opinion we should rely. Those without practical experience, however estimable they may be, do not carry the same weight. If the leader of the Opposition would carry his mind back 30 years or so, he would remember a work on which he was employed and in which I had a little part and had to rely upon the professional men, and the same thing applies here. Reference to the plan will show that the land purchased by the Repatriation Department is that enclosed in the red line. The land adjacent enclosed in a green line belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, excepting the low-lying swamp which will probably not be affected by the drain. The tunnel will start on the 40ft. contour near the swamp, and will be two miles long, and it is believed that we shall find limestone of sufficient strength to carry the tunnel through. If we should happen to meet sandstone, it will be necessary to use some lining.

Hon. P. Collier: It would be extraordinary if you got limestone right through.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Western Australia is a country that carries very many remarkable features.

Hon. P. Collier: Including ourselves.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: One never knows what is going to turn up; the other night I did not know what would turn up with regard to this scheme. I have consulted the Solicitor General and I have from him a long opinion with regard to the debate which took place.

Hon. P. Collier: Let us see if it is the same opinion which he gave me.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think it is necessary to read it all. In conclusion, the Solicitor General says—

It is only such land as is served by the storm water drainage which can be included in the storm water district, and no land except that situated in the storm water district is liable for the rate.

I have given all the particulars I possess and I have given the assurance asked for, and I do not know that there is anything more I can add. I move an amendment—

That in line 6 the word "may" be struck out with a view to inserting another word.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That the word "shall" be inserted.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Though the Minister has endeavoured to give us a very full explanation of the whole position, I am not quite clear upon the point which was raised when the Bill was under discussion last week. I understand from the opinion of the Solicitor General as quoted, that it will not be possible under this Bill to rate anyone except the people who will be served by the drainage works.

The Minister for Works: That is so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not wish to set myself up as an authority against the Solici-

tor General, but it would appear that the Governor will have the power to fix the area of the district, and I fail to see what is to prevent him from taking in a greater area than that which will be served by the works. If the Government have the power to define the boundaries of the district, there will be no statutory limitation as to the area which they might include in a storm water district. Therefore it would be possible to bring in a number of residents who would not be served by the works, and to impose upon them storm water rates.

The Minister for Works: I have read the whole of the Solicitor General's opinion, and to me it seems to be absolutely clear on that point.

The Attorney General: You cannot rate people unless they are in a district which is drained.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the Government have the power to fix the boundaries of the district.

The Attorney General: If they fixed the boundaries outside of the portion drained, they would be doing wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I question whether the Government are limited to that extent. It has been alleged that in North Perth people have been rated, and their property has not been served by the works.

The Minister for Works: You know that the plans will be open to objection.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But what power is there to give effect to any objection which might be taken? In North Perth the Government rated an area which was not served and which could not be served by the storm water drain.

Mr. Smith: People are being charged rates at present, and their property is not being drained.

Mr. Harrison: The contour of the country would decide the boundaries.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Government have the power to fix the boundaries regardless of the contour of the country or area which would be served, they might include any area.

The Minister for Works: No, they would take in only the portion served, and I have given you the area of that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Can the Minister point out the section in the existing Act which limits him to the area which will be served by the scheme?

The Minister for Works: The locality is that shown in the plan.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That does not tie the Government down.

The Minister for Works: Then I cannot give you any further information.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Attorney General has stated that only the area served could be included. If that is set out in the Act it would be conclusive. It would mean that the Government could not go outside that portion of the district served by the works. I do not know that the Act is so clear on that point. The Minister did not

refer to the question of creating a drainage board. He did not say whether he thought it desirable to establish such a board.

The Minister for Works: We have power to deal with that when the necessity arises. It will take some time to get the drain constructed, and it is not necessary to think of a board until then. I understand that the hon. member will be in power in a few years' time.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is fairly probable, but not absolutely certain, and in the event of such a misfortune happening to the country as that we should not be in power, I want this matter clearly stipulated now. Last week many members thought that the best way would be to create a board which would take over the responsibility of managing and maintaining the works and paying interest on the capital. The Minister takes the view that it would be premature to consider the question of establishing a board before starting the construction of the works.

The Minister for Works: The enthusiasm might evaporate.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Minister takes up the work with that whole-hearted enthusiasm for which he is noted, time cannot wither his enthusiasm. On the other hand, if he is half-hearted about it, he may wilt.

The Minister for Works: I shall not wilt.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I want to be clear that the people who do not receive any benefit from these works will not be called upon to pay the storm water rate.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: In construing this Bill after it becomes an Act we shall have to consider the fact that it was a later enactment than the Act of 1909, and so far as it was inconsistent with the Act of 1909, the provisions of it, being a later measure, would prevail. Under the Act of 1909 the Governor has power to divide the area into storm water districts. He also has power to alter or extend the boundaries of any district. I do not think he could alter the boundaries of the district which is mentioned in this measure unless it was shown that there was some portion of country really drained by this work which was not included in any district that has been proclaimed. It appears to me that, if this Bill passes, Clause 3 will make it a condition which the Governor in Council cannot alter that the area which is indicated here is limited by the land which is drained by the work in question. It becomes, therefore, a question of contour, a question of fact as to what is drained and what is not drained; and this district could not be altered contrary to the fact as to whether it was drained or not drained. The test in each case would be, is the land included in the district which is drained by this work. I do not see how we could make the Bill more explicit. None of us here, and perhaps no one else at present without proper examination, can say what is the exact boundary of this district. That is a fact which has to be ascertained.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment, and the report adopted.

## BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT.

### In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair, the Minister for Mines in charge of the Bill.

Clause 28—Condition on which warden may register tribute agreement:

The CHAIRMAN: The leader of the Opposition has moved the addition of the following paragraph: "(c) That the tribute to be payable to the lessee or owner of the mine shall not exceed twenty per centum of the net proceeds of the sale of the product after deducting all the relevant costs, charges, and expenses of treatment and realisation; and that such proceeds shall be accounted for at the price actually received on the sale of the gold or other product."

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I felt that this amendment required consideration in view of the fact that at present what is termed in the Bill the "tribute" to be paid by the tributer to the lessee is on the gross proceeds. The proposal is that the tribute shall be paid on the net proceeds, after the total costs of mining, treatment, and realisation have been deducted.

Hon. P. Collier. Not the cost of mining.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I see no reason why that should not be included also, seeing that the tributer has to pay the cost of mining. The cost of taking out includes the cost of wages. We provide first of all that the tributer shall have the ruling rate of wages, and that his men also shall have the ruling rate of wages before he starts to take tribute. It is a question then whether 20 per cent. is not quite unfair, seeing that we shall be giving 80 per cent. of the profits to the tributer and only 20 per cent. to the owner or lessee, after first allowing the tributer to get the ordinary rate of wages. Of course, if he does not earn the ordinary rate of wages, no tribute is payable. The proposition of the leader of the Opposition amounts to cutting up the profits in the proportion of 80 per cent. to the tributer and 20 per cent. to the owner or lessee. In my opinion 20 per cent. of the net proceeds is unfair to the owner or lessee. Now, we have already provided that on the application of either party to a tributing agreement that agreement shall be submitted to the warden and two assessors, one for each party. I would propose, in place of the amendment of the leader of the Opposition, that the rate of tribute or royalty shall be expressly stated in the agreement and shall be subject to review, as aforesaid, by the warden and

assessors. Therefore, I should like to move, in place of the amendment of the leader of the Opposition, another amendment providing that the tribute to be payable to the owner or lessee of the mine shall not exceed a percentage to be fixed by the agreement, after deducting the costs, charges, and expense of mining, treatment, and realisation. My amendment would further provide that the proceeds of the gold or other product shall be accounted for at the price of such gold or other product actually received at the mine. Under those conditions each case would be decided on its merits. In the case of the Perseverance mine, where a huge expenditure is necessary for maintenance of plant, 20 per cent. would be quite insufficient; whereas, in the case of a tributer working on the surface, 10 per cent. to the owner or lessee might be reasonable. I do not know that owners and lessees would accept this Bill very readily if the tribute or royalty, after deduction of all charges, were made a maximum of 20 per cent.; but I think they would be prepared to accept in that connection the decision of a board consisting of the warden and two assessors. The leader of the Opposition will realise that 20 per cent. is very small, because it is only a percentage of the actual profits. The member for Coolgardie spoke of not letting tributes. That is always a possibility. I do not want that. On the other hand, unless we have a method by which we can fix a royalty, we shall not get that satisfaction out of tributing which we desire. The best method is that we shall have the warden sitting with the assessors for the purpose of deciding all these matters vital to tributing conditions on leases. Therefore, instead of fixing the maximum amount, we should leave it at a percentage.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should like to divide my amendment into two, because it might be said to deal with separate subjects. The Minister, in his suggested amendment, has adopted that course. The first portion of the amendment deals with the royalty that shall be payable, and the second with the price obtained for the gold or other product. They are really separate subjects, and a member might consistently support one and oppose the other. It may be argued that to fix the limit of 20 per cent. in the Bill would be to work an injustice on some of the mine owners; and it has been suggested, too, that if the conditions are made too stringent the tributes will not be let. But as a general principle the mine owners do not let a tribute until they find they can no longer profitably work the mine themselves. So, really they have no option to letting a tribute, even though the conditions may not be all they desire, unless it be to close down the mine.

Mr. Smith: Or sell it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, but when a company can no longer work the mine at a

profit, they are not likely to find buyers for it.

The Minister for Mines: They might sell it for breaking-up purposes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so.

The Minister for Mines: The tributers at the Perseverance could not then carry on.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, they would only require to get a winding plant. The tributers there are compelled to have their ore treated by the company at a charge of 40s. per ton, whereas a mine only 100 yards away would have treated it for 22s. 6d. In the case of the Perseverance company, 20 per cent. of the net proceeds for the company and 80 per cent. for the tributers would be very good for the company. They reached a stage where they had to close down the mine, but the tributers stepped in and, as a result, this company which for years could barely cover expenses have had returned to them in royalty during the past 18 months, no less a sum than 60 odd thousand pounds.

The Minister for Mines: Out of a total of over £500,000 worth of gold, and that on the basis of taking the royalty on the gross.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, that is so, but that was extortionate.

The Minister for Mines: Some of the tributers did better in proportion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is true the company have spent considerable capital in developing the mine, which alone enables the tributers to go into the mine. That is admitted. At the same time what is the tributer doing for the company? In the case of the Perseverance, the shareholders have had returned to them several times over the money originally invested, for the company have paid over three million in dividends. The company, as I say, reached a stage where they could no longer recover their gold at a profit; so, without the co-operation of the tributers none of this later gold would have been recovered, for the mine had actually closed down!

Mr. Smith: They might have sold the mine.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They would not have got any purchaser for it. The best they could have done was to sell the machinery, and that at a breaking-up price. Still, of course, it would have realised a substantial sum.

Mr. Lutey: They sold about half of it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When eventually the tributers work the mine out, the company doubtless will dispose of whatever assets are still there. It is necessary that we should lay down some maximum amount as a guide for the board. Wardens take a widely divergent view of this question. At present the tributing agreements have to be registered and approved by the warden, so we may take it the wardens have approved of the conditions of which we are now complaining, namely, the 40 per cent. royalty, the 40s. per ton crushing charges, and other charges which have served to distribute the gold in



the proportion of 60 per cent. to the company and 40 per cent. to the tributers.

The Minister for Mines: Did not you make a mistake when you said the crushing charges at the Perseverance amounted to 40s.? The ore is there treated at from 20s. to 27s. 6d.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Perseverance charges according to the value of the ore. In the case of oxidised ore the charge rises to 40s. per ton.

The Minister for Mines: Yes, in that instance it goes to the maximum.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Several rich crushings have been taken out of the mine, and on those the charges amounted to the maximum.

Mr. Pilkington: Does not that mean that the tributers are doing very well too?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Frequently it does, but not necessarily, because the tributating party may have spent three or four months on dead work in order to reach the rich stuff. Generally speaking, it would mean that the tributers were doing well. The men do all the work and take all the risk, and often do not earn wages. The companies take no risks, and generally speaking the mines are of no more use to them.

The Minister for Mines: Since May, 1918, the tributers engaged on the Perseverance have earned £43 per month per man.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That does not reveal the true position. There are four tributers in the party I have referred to, but these four men have six others working for them whose wages they have to pay.

The Minister for Mines: All the men engaged on the Perseverance.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I doubt that.

The Minister for Mines: Mr. Cleland is prepared to swear that.

Mr. Pilkington: He can only be referring to the tributers themselves.

The Minister for Mines: That is the average amount distributed to the tributers working on the Perseverance.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should like to know whether that includes the men engaged by the tributers. At any rate £40 per month does not cover everything. The tributer has to buy his explosives and machinery.

The Minister for Mines: Mr. Cleland says that the net surplus received by the company was £78,000, and that after deducting the company's charges, a sum of £164,000 was distributed amongst the tributers, which is equal to £43 per month per man.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Where was that statement made?

The Minister for Mines: It was made to me, at a deputation, by Mr. Cleland.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Mine managers have a habit of making statements to Ministers and others which are not for publication.

The Minister for Mines: That is for publication. He gave me authority to publish it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Mine managers often present their cases when they know the public gaze will not be upon them, leaving it to the Minister to impress the public with their arguments.

The Minister for Mines: He complained that your figures would not bear analysis. You said the company had recovered £12,000 in silver, and he says the figures are £600.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He has not denied the statement except through the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: He asked for this commission.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He did not push very hard for it.

The Minister for Mines: Yes, he did.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He has not come out in the open and made a demand through the Press.

The Minister for Mines: He is a bashful man.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It may be that his modesty prevents him from coming before the public. In actual fact he would be glad to see the whole thing slide into oblivion. To quote the figures as average earnings is very misleading. Two or three tribute parties may have had exceptionally rich returns and have made thousands of pounds. On the average that is worked out in conjunction with the earnings by other tributers, who have made very little, the sum per man may be quite a good one, but individually the sum may be a small one. Immediately the Perseverance closed down, two or three tribute parties composed of late officials of the mine, the samplers, assayers, underground managers, etc., secured tributes and obtained thousands of pounds in a very short period.

Mr. Duff: That is not straight work.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The fact has never been denied. Tribute parties, such as these, go to make up the average mentioned by the Minister. It may be all very well for the late officials, but it does not help the tributers who have perhaps scarcely made wages. Perhaps Mr. Cleland's modesty again prevents him from contradicting the statement that the late officials of the mine have secured from their tributes thousands of pounds.

Mr. Duff: Has that been made public?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I made it public in the House. It was further asserted that hundreds of tons of ore were lying broken in the stopes, the wages for this work having been paid, and that the men who got the tribute hauled this ore and obtained about three ounces of gold to the ton from it. The Fingal mine is leased on tribute, and may be compared to the Perseverance. Large sums of money have been spent on its development, equipment, and plant, and it has paid millions of pounds in dividends. Before the warden of the Que district would register a tribute agreement, he limited the amounts which might be charged by way of royalty to 15 per cent. The tributating arrangements carried out on the Boulder are harmful to the State. The conditions are such as to compel tributers to leave a large tonnage of ore behind because, owing to the charges made, it does not pay them to handle it. The cost to the company for treatment was only 21s. or 22s. a ton, which would be equal to about

5 dwts. Tributers to-day are passing over large quantities of ore going from 12 to 15 dwts. to the ton, owing to the charges made. If the charges were reasonable they could successfully work at least 10 dwt. ore, and the gold production of the State would be greatly increased. There is a great deal of 10 to 15 dwt. ore still left in the Perseverance mine. The workings are in such a condition that this ore will never be recovered, and thousands of tons of ore, going up to 15 dwts., will remain untouched. The men who are engaged in recovering gold should receive the major share, namely, 80 per cent., and the companies will not be harshly treated if they receive 20 per cent.

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

Mr. DUFF: I cannot agree with the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition. When the allowance for wages was increased to £3, this was giving the tributers more than was expected. Now the additional amendment provides for the deduction of various costs and charges in addition. A tribute was let by myself on the Edna May Consolidated Mine, which is a lower grade proposition than the Boulder Perseverance, of which we have heard so much. It was let to two men who worked for six weeks and the allowance which they received was £2 per week. The returns on the ore treated totalled £75, including what would be received from the Gold Producers' Association. The crushing charges, at the rate of 15s. a ton, amounted to £50, leaving a balance of £25 which worked out at £2 a week for the six weeks they were working. That was carrying out the tribute in the right spirit. It is the same as if a farmer took in a partner on the share system and provided him with a livelihood during the year and at the end, after this man had received £2 per week, there was no profit to share between them. It is purely a gamble, and I cannot understand the object of the leader of the Opposition seeing that he has already assured to the tributers the ruling rate of wages.

Mr. Willcock: That is a fallacy.

Mr. DUFF: You say that the wages must be paid before the company get anything out of it. The tributer knows that the gold is there, and he takes a gamble.

Hon. P. Collier: The tributer hopes that the gold is there.

Mr. MULLANY: I have on many occasions expressed the opinion that in no circumstances should a higher royalty than 20 per cent. be allowed. When I have expressed that opinion it has always been from the point of view that it would be based upon the gross yield, and not, as proposed in the amendment, upon the net yield; that is, after all the expenses of mining and treatment, including wages, had been deducted. I believe that the proposal would be sound and fair to all parties to the tribute agree-

ment, if it were based upon the gross yield. It would be wise to have some limitation say 20 per cent., as the maximum royalty. The impression should be removed that the board, consisting of the warden and the two assessors, will in every instance frame the tribute agreement. That is not the case. The position under the proposal would be that the parties to the tribute agreement would agree upon the terms of that agreement, and the function of the board would be to see that the agreement did not permit charges to be made which were not fair or equitable. I have had more experience possibly than practically any other member of the Committee in the working of tribute agreements, and that has always been my idea as to the function of such a board. It would not be fair to place the onus on the board of saying at all times what the terms should be exactly. All that the board should do would be to see that no unduly high percentages were charged. I have worked out roughly what the effect under the amendment would be. We have to remember that the interests of the tributers have been safeguarded already under the amendment which has been agreed to, whereby every member of the tribute party has to receive the ruling rate of wages in the district they are working in before any royalty is paid under the tribute agreements. Bearing this in mind, as well as the amendment which has been suggested by the leader of the Opposition, I have worked out a couple of instances to show the effect as between the leaseholder and the tribute parties. In the first instance, take a parcel of ore in which the yield was valued at £1,000. The royalty at 10 per cent. would be £100 on the gross result. The representative of the tribute party would then present the cost of winning that gold, which might work out as follows: cost of mining, including wages for tribute party, £500; cost of carting, crushing, etc., £200; cost of mining requisites, £100; making a total of £800. In these circumstances, the leaseholder takes £100 royalty and the tributers take the rest. Take another instance where the value of the gold might also be £1,000 and the royalty on the gross, £100. The bill of costs on that parcel might be as follows: mining costs, wages, etc., £600; cartage and crushing £300, mining requisites £150, or a total in this instance of £1,050. In this instance, if they paid the royalty and also deducted these costs, they would be £50 behind. It would not be fair or equitable, seeing that we provide that no royalty shall be charged until the tributers have made a ruling rate of wages; if we go on the gross yield that should be sufficient, particularly if we provide that a maximum of 20 per cent. royalty may be charged. We should issue this as an instruction to the board, that in no circumstances should more than 20 per cent. on the gross be paid by any tribute party, and that I think would be acceptable. I suggest to the Minister that he should accept an amendment along the lines I have suggested.

Mr. CHESSON: I support the amendment as moved by the leader of the Opposition. Mining companies do not let their mines on tribute when they are paying. The tribute party has to do a good deal of developmental work, or work that portion of the mine where they have the tribute, more efficiently than the company has done. It has to be remembered that the tributers are manning the lease and holding it for the company. It cannot be expected that a tribute party would keep the plant up to date. Take the Great Fingal mine, which paid something like two millions in dividends. A most expensive plant was put up out of the proceeds obtained from the mine. The company worked the mine for a number of years. The time came when they could not continue to work at a profit and they let the mine on tribute. The tributers did not use the whole of the plant; the biggest portion of it was sold. They pay £5 a week for the use of the boiler and engine. The stone is carted to Cue and is treated at the Government battery. The tributers pay the whole of the cost of working, and the maximum royalty is 15 per cent. The Perseverance Mine tributers pay crushing and hauling charges and for all mining requisites, and the royalty is fixed at 30 per cent. Considering that the company are under no expense, they would be well dealt with if the maximum were fixed at 20 per cent.

Mr. LUTEY: I hope the amendment will be carried. The Perseverance Mine would have been down and out, as it were, but for the tributers making the discoveries they did. I may refer to another mine, the Kalgurli. During the past 16 years, they have been talking of closing down that mine, but the company employ a man who has been doing nothing but sampling, and mainly through his energies and knowledge he has kept the mine going. The day will come, however, when the mine will be thrown open to tributers. We have to protect tributers against themselves. If we do not make a maximum percentage, the chances are that some of the tributating parties will agree with the mining companies to a higher percentage and the board of assessors may allow 40 per cent. if the maximum is not set down.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I would suggest to the leader of the Opposition that the proposal I have made as a compromise might be adopted. The best method to pursue, if we are to make anything in the way of an arrangement in regard to what shall be charged for royalty, is that we should say that it should be declared in the agreement, and that the agreement should be submitted to the warden and assessors, who could deal with it on its merits. The Perseverance Mine from May 1918 to September 1920, treated gold of a value of £405,000. Of that about £78,000 went to the Perseverance, without deducting anything for depreciation. The sum of £165,000 went to the tributers after paying all the cost of maintaining and operating the plant, which

amounted to £164,000. The cost to the company was almost as great as the amount earned by the tributers after deducting the costs, and the profit to the company was £78,000 out of a total of £405,000.

Hon. P. Collier: I am not accepting their figures.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I must accept them because they were given to me with authority to publish them. They may be right, or they may be wrong. That is what happens on the basis of the present method of levying royalty on the gross. If the method proposed by the leader of the Opposition were put into operation, instead of there being a profit of £78,000 for the company, there would be a loss of £78,000. That would compel the company to reduce their tributating to the minimum necessary to maintain their lease, and that of course would be detrimental to the tributer. That is what I want to avoid. Where we are allowing the tribute agreement to be reviewed, it will be more equitable to say that it shall be fixed in the agreement and submitted for approval. If the Committee agree to make the maximum I would rather accept the suggestion of the member for Menzies and make it 30 per cent. on the gross. I propose to move an amendment to that submitted by the leader of the Opposition. I move an amendment on the amendment—

That in line 2 the words "twenty per centum" be struck out and "a percentage to be fixed by agreement" be inserted in lieu.

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

Ayes ..	19
Noes ..	12
Majority for ..	7

#### AYES.

Mr. Broun	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Brown	Mr. Robinson
Mr. Draper	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Duff	Mr. Smith
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Maley	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Money	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Troy
Mr. Collier	Mr. Walker
Mr. Davies	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Jones	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Lambert	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Lutey	(Teller.)
Mr. Mullany	

Amendment on amendment thus passed.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier, amendment further amended by striking out the words "and that such proceeds shall be accounted

for at the price actually received on the sale of the gold or other product," and by inserting the following to stand as paragraph (d):—"That the proceeds of the gold or other product shall be accounted for at the price actually received on the sale of such gold or other product of the mine."

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 29—Power of warden to revise the conditions of tribute agreements:

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause (1) the words "before or" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I take it that wherever the warden, or the warden's court, is mentioned, a similar amendment will be made.

The Minister for Mines: Yes.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 30 to 36—agreed to.

Clause 37—Regulations:

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I move an amendment—

That after "may" in line 6 the following words be inserted:—"regulate and control in all respects any operations in mining for mineral oil by lessees under this Act, or by owners of land alienated by the Crown without the reservation of mineral oil, or any person claiming under them; and may"

This will give the State what I pointed out was essential, the right to control the mining for oil on private property, in order to safeguard the oil which might be on other property. I have also met the objection raised by the member for North-East Fremantle by providing that this shall be done by regulation, which must be approved by Parliament, so that the Minister will not be able to do as he likes.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 38—agreed to.

Postponed Clause 24—Subletting on tribute:

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The leader of the Opposition desires that approval should be given by the warden or by a court consisting of the warden and two assessors if claimed by either party. I agreed to postpone the clause in order to get a new clause drafted to bring about that result. I propose to move the new clause later; meanwhile I ask the Committee to pass the postponed clause.

Clause put and passed.

New clause—Assessors:

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I move—

That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 37:—"Any function of the

warden, and any proceeding in the warden's court under this part of this Act shall, if the applicant or any person interested in the application or proceeding so desires, be performed or heard and determined by the warden and two assessors to be appointed in the prescribed manner; and in the case of a difference of opinion between the warden and the assessors, the decision of the majority of them shall determine the matter or proceeding."

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

## BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

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

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 4 (partly considered):

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Progress was reported on this clause in order that there might be an opportunity of ascertaining how the earnings of a tributer could be assessed. The clause applies in two ways—as regards the amount of compensation in case of injury, and also as to whether a tributer is within the measure at all. If the tributer was earning over £400 per annum, he would not be within the measure. Since the adjournment I have looked up the corresponding Queensland Act, which was passed in 1918; and I find that that measure is no more explicit on the point than in this Bill. The weekly earnings here are calculated under the First Schedule to our principal Act, and those words in that schedule which affect the calculation of weekly earnings are included as part of the Act itself in Queensland. Whether or not the difficulty has been solved in Queensland I am not prepared to say; but I think it must be obvious to anyone who has read our First Schedule that there are bound to be cases in which it would be impossible to calculate what were the worker's earnings which would be the basis of the claim or of the amount of compensation. In order to get over cases of that kind, I move an amendment—

That the following paragraph be added to the clause:—"If the earnings or average weekly earnings of a tributer cannot be otherwise ascertained for the purposes of this Act, the earnings of the tributer shall be deemed to be equal to the ruling rate of wages for miners as prescribed for the time being by the current industrial agreement or award in force in the district in which the mine is situated."

That amendment may not provide a perfect method of ascertaining the fact which is

required; but I candidly admit that I know of no better method, and that I cannot devise any other method of arriving at the desired object.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The amendment seems to make the matter as clear and specific as it can be made. There are difficulties, as we recognised when considering the clause yesterday. In so far as the method of computing the weekly earnings cannot be ascertained from the First Schedule to the principal Act, the Attorney General's amendment should overcome all difficulties.

Mr. MULLANY: I welcome the Attorney General's endeavour to define something which is very difficult indeed to define, but I fear there may be danger in the amendment. What, under it, would be the position if the wages earned by the man can be accurately determined, and have been very little indeed, say, only £1 per week? That would often be the case of a miner who had been prospecting, or working in an unprofitable tribute. Would such a man be entitled to claim only on the same basis as a worker earning £1 per week?

The Attorney General: Yes.

Mr. MULLANY: In such a case the amendment would work very unfairly. Of course, in the case of a man who had been working in a good tribute and therefore earning a high rate of wages, the amendment would work fairly. I should be very sorry if we passed something which had the effect of further penalising an unfortunate man who possibly for a long period had been earning very little indeed.

Mr. CHESON: Would a tributer employing labour cease to be a worker under this measure? That is the position under the principal Act.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: A tributer is a tributer within the meaning of the Mining Act, 1904. The member for Menzies quite correctly put the position as regards a tributer who has been earning only at the rate of £1 per week. The risk, however, is one which cannot be avoided. I do not think a tributer should say, "I am going to take on a job which may result in a big profit, although it may result in only a small profit; but yet I am going to claim the right to be treated purely as a wages man." I do not think an employer should be asked to take a risk of that kind. The difficulty arises because under this measure we are going outside the ordinary principle of the workman, and are taking on a person who is more analogous to a contractor. The tributer cannot claim to have the rights of a speculative business, and also to have the rights, without the liabilities, of ordinary employment. I think the most a tributer can ask, when it comes to assessing compensation under this measure, is that his wages should be taken to be the amount he has actually been earning.

Mr. MULLANY: I am glad that I sought an explanation of the amendment. It is now obvious to the Committee that injustice

may very possibly result if the amendment is carried. When the members of a tribute party engage in work underground, each member of the party is called upon to pay a special premium to the insurance company; and that premium is a high one, on account of the dangerous nature of the work. Yet such a man, notwithstanding that he pays a high premium, may, if he meets with an accident, be placed on a very low wage basis. I realise the difficulty of framing an amendment to suit all cases, but I think the Attorney General might consider the advisableness of moving an amendment to some such effect as, "For the purposes of this Act a person engaged in tributing shall be deemed to be in receipt of the ruling rate of wages paid for that class of work in the district." Otherwise we shall be passing a provision which will prove extremely dangerous to very deserving men.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: A tributer earning, say, £600 a year would, under the amendment suggested by the member for Menzies, be entitled to compensation in accordance with the Workers' Compensation Act—a privilege which is not extended to any other worker similarly circumstanced. It is giving to the tributer a privilege which, perhaps, he is not entitled to. It is going beyond the intention of the Act.

Mr. CHESON: I wish to ask the Attorney General a question. At the Great Fingal some time ago a contractor had one man working for him. The contractor himself met with an accident, and sued the Great Fingal Company. The case went against him, the contention being that he, being an employer of labour, ceased to have a claim under the Workers' Compensation Act. Does the same apply to the tributer? I should like to hear the Attorney General on the point.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Within the meaning of the Mining Act the tributer is a worker. He would not cease to be a worker by reason of his being also an employer. As an employer of other men, he would be liable to those men under the Workers' Compensation Act, but as between himself and the lessee of the mine, he would be in the position of a worker.

The Minister for Mines: He is covered by the lessee.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 6, and Section 1 of the First Schedule:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Section 6 of the principal Act provides that the employer shall not be liable in respect of any injury which does not disable the worker, for at least one week, from earning full wages. The clause proposes to strike out "one week" and insert in lieu thereof "three days."

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 and 5—agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

## BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

### Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 16th November.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [8.37]: The Premier in moving the second reading, observed that he hoped it would pass without opposition.

The Premier: Without discussion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was rather optimistic of the Premier to hope that it would pass without opposition, but it is going to the extreme of optimism to expect that it should go through without discussion. I do not think it will go through without discussion, although I am going to support the second reading. The Government have been lacking in their responsibility to the House in having delayed the introduction of the Bill to so late a period in the session. The Bill ratifies an agreement made between the Government and the Westralian Farmers Ltd. for the handling of this season's harvest. Although, of course, that agreement does not become an actual fact until it receives the endorsement of the House, we are at this stage committed to its adoption. The harvest has already commenced. The early crops are now being stripped, and of course the Government must of necessity have made all arrangements with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. for the handling of the crop. If the House were to decide that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. ought not to have the handling of the harvest, I ask the Premier where the Government would be if they had to set about making arrangements through some other channel to have the harvest handled? Through the delay in the introduction of the Bill the House is virtually committed to accepting, if not the precise terms of the agreement as set out in the schedule, at least to accepting the Westralian Farmers Ltd. as agents for the season's harvest. It would be better if a Bill of this kind were brought down earlier in the session; then the House would have a free hand in dealing with it. It savours somewhat of a lack of courtesy to the House, or of recognition of responsibility to the House, to bring down so late Bills which virtually commit us to their acceptance. I support the principle of the wheat pool. As a matter of fact I can claim that the Government of which I was a member were mainly responsible for the introduction of the system. As a result of its operations since 1915 I see no reason for altering our judgment in that direction.

The Premier: Then let us pass the Bill.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We shall pass the Bill in good time. It does no harm to remind the people that the establishment of

the wheat pool, if not conceived by the Labour Government, was at least initiated by them at the beginning of the war, and that, too, in the face of the strongest possible opposition by the very section of the community which has benefited most from it. The farmers themselves, by way of public meetings called in various parts of the agricultural areas, passed resolutions in opposition to the action of the Government at that time, and in fact under the leadership of Mr. McGibbon went so far as to threaten to organise and, if needs be, by force prevent the Labour Government from taking possession of their wheat. I am glad that, as the result of their experience, they have come to see that we were right and they were wrong. There are some alterations in the agreement of this year as compared with that of last year. There are two to which, I think, the Premier did not refer in moving the second reading. For instance, the remuneration to be paid to the Westralian Farmers Ltd. for handling the harvest has been increased from one penny per bushel to 1½d. per bushel.

Mr. Thomson: What about wages having gone up?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course there will be any number of explanations. I am not at this stage saying the increase is not justified; but it is, I think, of sufficient importance to warrant an explanation. And after members have explained to the House, as no doubt they will be able to do, the need for this increase, it may be that the House will agree to it. I am not committing myself to agreeing to it at this stage. If hon. members can give me a satisfactory reason for it I shall be prepared to support it. One-eighth of a penny per bushel amounts to a considerable sum as applied to the whole of the season's harvest of perhaps 10 or 12 million bushels. It is not an infinitesimal amount in the aggregate. I notice in the schedule that the agents' liability has been reduced from one farthing a bushel, as was the case last year, to one-eighth of a penny per bushel this year. That liability has, therefore, been reduced by half. The Premier did not touch upon that in explaining the Bill. No doubt we shall have an explanation before it goes through Committee. There are some points about the Bill which from the public point of view require explanation. Perhaps the most important, although it only received passing reference from the Premier, is that of the price which has been fixed for the next 12 months for wheat for local consumption. The Government have accepted the price fixed by the Commonwealth Government or the Prime Minister of 9s. per bushel. So far neither the Premier when introducing the Bill—

Mr. Muley: Oh, yes, he did. He said the Government were prepared to fall into line with the Eastern States.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What I was going to say was that neither the Premier when introducing the Bill nor at any other period, nor the Acting Minister for Agriculture, who

attended the conference in Melbourne, had so far given any explanation as to the reason why the 9s. was fixed. We were told in a brief, bald statement that the Government had accepted the price of 9s.

Mr. Maley: Mr. Theodore or Mr. Storey—

Hon. P. COLLIER: Never mind about them. The hon. member is prepared to accept Mr. Theodore as an authority and guide on those matters which suit him. No section of the community will more severely condemn Mr. Theodore than the farming section when the occasion suits them.

Mr. Thomson: That is quite right.

Mr. Johnston: We would like you to agree with him on this occasion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not agree. It serves to show the broad basis on which the Labour movement acts through the Commonwealth contrary to the general impression that we are tied hand and foot and bound by some unknown hand which operates behind the scenes—

The Premier: Not in Queensland.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are free to exercise our own judgment upon this and other matters. I disagree with Mr. Theodore and Mr. Storey, if both of them have agreed to this. I am not declaring that 9s. a bushel is too high. The attitude I take up is that I do not know whether that is a fair price for wheat for local consumption. I shall be prepared to listen to any justification for it which hon. members can produce. If they can furnish facts and figures which will warrant the fixing of this price I may agree to it.

Mr. Brown: They cannot do so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No; does the Premier think that the great body of the people of this State, who are so vitally affected by this price of wheat for local consumption, are going to be content with the bald statement that the price of wheat has been fixed at 9s.? I venture to say the contrary will be the case. They are entitled to know the reasons which actuated and the facts which determined those who were responsible for fixing the price at 9s. The Acting Minister for Agriculture has given no reasons, although he was in Melbourne and attended the conference, and must have heard all the pros and cons of the arguments put forward before the board when the question was discussed. It was on the recommendation of the Australian Wheat Board that the Prime Minister acted when he fixed the price at 9s. Surely the people are entitled to know from the Honorary Minister the reasons which decided their course of action. Ordinarily he cannot be accused of extreme modesty or great diffidence in obtruding himself into the columns of the newspapers. Usually we can count on any amount of reading matter upon his return from his frequent visits to the Eastern States. That being so I am the more at a loss to understand his silence on this occasion. I hope before the Bill finally passes this Chamber we will have the whole

facts placed on the Table of the House for the information of hon. members and the public. What has altered the attitude of the Wheat Board and those responsible in fixing the price of wheat for local consumption? We do know that prior to the meeting of the board in Melbourne from one end of the wheat areas to the other public meetings were being held and resolutions carried by the farmers demanding that the price of wheat for local consumption should not be fixed at all, and asserting that they were entitled to the world's parity and no less.

Mr. Thomson: Are you willing to give them that now?

Mr. Mullany: But this House carried a resolution disagreeing with that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The price of 9s. per bushel was fixed before the House carried that resolution. What was responsible for the change? Even the farmers' representatives in this House, members on the Cross benches, joined in the chorus demanding the world's parity. Now a silence has settled upon them all.

Mr. Harrison: We are listening to the hon. member.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope the hon. member will derive some benefit. I should be pleased to listen to him when he addresses himself to the question. The attitude of those concerned has suddenly undergone a change. Instead of standing out for the world's parity they have decided to accept the price of 9s.

Mr. Thomson: They endeavoured to meet the consumer.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Your troubles about the consumer two months ago.

Mr. Thomson: They will take the world's parity if you will give it to them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should be glad to see the hon. member move an amendment to that effect. Possibly I will support him.

Mr. Thomson: What clause would that be?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should find a clause somewhere in the Bill which would enable me to move any amendment I wanted to. If there is no clause in the Bill, the hon. member can create one.

Mr. Thomson: Ask Mr. Speaker and see if he will allow it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member may laugh. Apparently he is prepared on one day to stand out for world's parity and nothing less, and the next day to accept a fixed price.

Mr. Maley: Nine shillings is close to the world's parity?

Hon. P. COLLIER: How does the hon. member know?

Mr. Maley: I will endeavour to explain.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member will be something of a prophet if he can foresee what the world's parity for wheat is going to be for the next 12 months. The 9s. has been fixed for that period.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He has been seeing Isherwood.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Those concerned were determined to get a price which would amount to nothing more or less than profiteering so far as the consumers of the States are concerned.

Mr. Harrison: That is wrong.

Mr. Johnston: A fair deal all round.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A little while ago when they were clamouring for the world's parity it appeared as if that would be something in the neighbourhood of 12s. or 14s. a bushel.

Mr. Maley: Never!

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is what they believed they would obtain. Immediately there is evidence of a downward tendency in the world's market, that is to say in London, they come to the conclusion that it would be unwise to stand out for world's parity, because the world's parity as applied to the whole of the season's output would be considerably less than 9s. That was the position. So they considered it would be in their own interests to fix the amount at 9s. Anyone following the course of the market and watching closely the scanty information that comes through in the cables could come to no other conclusion than that the price of wheat in this State, before the whole of the season's product was disposed of, would be considerably lower than 9s.

The Premier: I do not think that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do. All the evidence points in that direction.

Mr. Harrison: You are prophesying now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not prophesying anything. I am basing my view on the information that I have obtained from the newspapers, and from reading the quotations from London and elsewhere.

Mr. Maley: Probably more than half the grain is already sold.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know whether that is so or not. It appears to me that members of the Primary Producers' Association are privileged to discuss this all important matter of the price of wheat for home consumption by way of a deputation to the Government, when the Press are not present and the public have no opportunity of knowing the subject matter of the discussion. At a meeting of growers in Perth a few weeks ago it was decided that a deputation should wait upon the Premier to discuss with him the whole question of the price of wheat for local consumption. I do not know whether that deputation did actually wait on the Premier.

The Premier: Several gentlemen came to see me.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When any deputation appointed by a representative conference of growers waits upon the Premier and discusses with him a matter of such public importance, the people concerned should be compelled to do so in the ordinary way, just as other deputations are dealt with.

The Premier: That is not always done.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On a question which has been a matter of so much public interest for such a long time the people had a right to know what arguments were placed before the Premier which induced him to accept the price of 9s.

Mr. Maley: They have just as much right to know what is going on at some of your conferences.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have no access to Ministers to discuss matters of public concern in a secret way.

Mr. Maley: You have just as much right as we have.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Will the hon. member say that the representatives of this conference did not wait upon the Premier to discuss the price of wheat?

Mr. Maley: I admit that they did.

Mr. Thomson: Why should they not?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Why should they? What right have they to discuss the price of wheat, in which the public are concerned, without the Press being present so that the public may know what arguments have been advanced. We do not want this hole and corner method of doing business whereby discussions take place in a friendly way with the Premier. The matter affects the whole of the people of the State and the cost of living throughout Western Australia. At the same time the question under discussion materially affects the pockets of some of those who were present as members of the deputation.

Mr. Griffiths: And of farmers generally.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They should be content to place their views before Ministers in the presence of the Press, so that the public may know what is taking place.

The Premier: They had informed them already. It was merely to discuss the price of wheat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier says it was merely that, as though it was of no importance to him.

The Premier: They had already told the public what they were going to discuss.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Is that of no importance? Does the Premier consider the price of wheat to be a trivial matter?

Mr. Johnston: They had told the public what they wanted. The price of wheat had been fixed then.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, it had not been fixed.

Mr. Johnston: Yes, it had been fixed that day in Melbourne.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not dealing with Melbourne; I am dealing with the deputation to the Premier regarding the price of wheat here.

Mr. Thomson: You know we cannot sell wheat under the price which is fixed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am dealing with the deputation which was held in secret with the Premier. I want to protest against people who are individually interested in the matter under discussion conferring with the Premier



without the public knowing anything about it.

The Premier: They told the public they were coming.

Mr. Griffiths: They asked the Government to give the market price for their commodity.

Hon. P. COLLIER: How does the hon. member know that 9s. is the market price for wheat? I am convinced that 9s. is in excess of the market rate and that is why it was fixed at that figure.

Mr. Griffiths: You are wrong there.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order. He will have an opportunity of speaking on this matter later on.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Why the somersault? The hon. member is one of those who stated that he wanted the world's parity. He was screaming for the world's parity from the house-tops and then he somersaulted and abandoned world's parity for 9s. What was responsible for the change?

Mr. Griffiths: There has been no change.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for York must keep order.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What is the reason for that change?

Mr. Griffiths: The leader of the Opposition is barking up the wrong tree.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is the position. The price of 9s. has been fixed because members of the Country party believed that they would not obtain 9s. I am surprised at the inconsistency of a party, the members of which screamed on every occasion for the world's parity and then abandoned it in this precipitate fashion.

Mr. Harrison: We have not abandoned it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: So far as wheat for local consumption is concerned, they have abandoned the world's parity.

Mr. Harrison: That is a different matter.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member can achieve the impossible. He can stand for world's parity and abandon it and stand for 9s. at the same time. The leader of the Country party has admitted himself that he does not believe the world's parity will reach 9s. this season.

Mr. Harrison: I did not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We shall see. The member gave the whole show away last week when he admitted in effect that 9s. had been fixed because they were afraid that the parity would fall below 9s.

Mr. Harrison: That is wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have a note of what took place on that occasion. This is what occurred—

Hon. P. Collier: But it has been so fixed in other States. If it is fixed similarly here, the farmers of Western Australia will know what they are going to obtain for the whole of their product during the coming season.

Mr. Harrison: For local consumption.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, but does the hon. member expect that the farmer will get less for the wheat he exports?

Mr. Harrison: Quite possibly.

Mr. Maley: Is that in "Hansard"?

Mr. O'Loughlen: Yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is where the hon. member admits that it is quite possible the world's parity will fall below 9s.

Mr. Harrison: During the 12 months. You explain what is world's parity.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member is now groping for an explanation of world's parity.

Mr. Maley: Is that quotation you refer to in "Hansard"? I do not think it is.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is in "Hansard," although I did not get it from there.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: That brief interjection by the leader of the Country party—

The Premier: Has cost the State a chair. The member for York has just broken his.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At any rate, that interjection gave us the real reason why the price has been fixed at 9s. Immediately there was evidence of a downward tendency in the world's market, those concerned reconsidered their attitude in connection with this matter. They saw that it would not be wise to ask for the world's parity because it might fall below the figure which they anticipated, in consequence of which they fixed it at 9s. for the whole season.

Mr. Harrison: I did not fix the price at that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I did not accuse the hon. member of doing so, but the hon. member held the view that 9s. would be a price in excess of what the world's parity will be for the whole season. I do not say that 9s. is too high; I do not know if it is too high or not. I do say, however, that the price of wheat, if it is to be fixed at all, should be fixed by an independent and impartial tribunal. We have the Prices Regulation Commission dealing with all our food supplies and necessary commodities. The men comprising that Commission are not personally interested in any of the prices which are fixed. They are supposed to be impartial men investigating all the facts regarding the cost of production, marketing and so on, and they fix the price accordingly at a figure which they consider equitable as between the seller and the purchaser. So far as wheat is concerned, as the result of an accumulation of circumstances, which have been going on for the past three or four years, we find wheat controlled by a board which is known as the Australian Wheat Board. That board is composed of representatives of the Governments of each of the wheat-producing States, and representatives of the growers. Every member on that board is either directly or indirectly interested in the price of wheat for local consumption. The Ministers for Agriculture, who are members of the board, are interested in it, if only in a political sense. They represent wheat growers, or, rather, it is a fair assumption that they represent agricultural communities. It is so in the case of Western

Australia and I suppose it is so regarding the other States. The political existence of those Ministers is dependent upon men who are themselves wheat growers; consequently it is in their political interests to fix as high a price for wheat as they can possibly obtain for it. The other members of the board are direct representatives of the growers and as such they would be concerned in the fixing of the price as high as possible. In these circumstances, we have an interested board fixing the price of a commodity which the people throughout the State have to pay. Do we follow that line of procedure regarding other commodities required by the people? Of course we do not. What would be said if we brought forward legislation to fix the price of sugar, and provided that one of the members of the price-fixing board should be a representative of one of the sugar companies, or if we suggested that on the board to fix the price of bread there should be a baker, and so on?

Mr. Maley: Much the same thing occurs in other matters.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is decidedly wrong. This body, comprising six or seven interested men, have the right to fix the price of wheat, which may mean an extra 1d. in the price of a 2lb. loaf to the whole of the consumers in Western Australia.

Mr. Griffiths: Yet we get the cheapest loaf in the world to-day.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is no argument in a country where we are producing wheat and exporting scores of millions of bushels of wheat overseas.

Mr. Griffiths: Canada does that too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Does the hon. member contend that the price of wheat should be governed by the conditions operating in starving centres of Europe where they do not grow wheat and cannot get it? That is entirely apart from the argument. The question is: are we paying too much for our wheat? That question can only be answered by an impartial tribunal. Do not the representatives of the farmers consider that the people of the State are entitled to some consideration? What would be the world's parity if it were not for the fact that the whole of the people are behind the farmers at the present time?

Mr. Griffiths: How would the State have got on if the wheat had not been produced?

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have created a huge commercial trust with the credit and backing of the whole of the Australian people behind it. It is because of that fact that members of the Country party are in a position to talk about the world's parity. The world's parity would not have been worth 2s. to them if they had not been backed up by Australia as a whole. What would have been the position of the farmers if such had been the case?

Mr. Griffiths: The wheat would not have been grown.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But I do say that the grower is entitled to a fair price for his wheat.

The Honorary Minister: What do you consider a fair price?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know, and the hon. member does not know, and there has not been any information given which will enable us to judge. But I am not prepared to accept as a fair price that which has been arrived at by a partisan board of men who are directly interested. It is my intention at a later stage to submit an amendment to the effect that the price for local consumption shall be fixed by the Prices Regulation Commission. There we have a body who, at least, can have some justification for claiming that they are impartial. We should not have the price fixed as at present by a board, all the members of which are sellers of wheat. Can anyone say that the Minister for Agriculture had an open mind when he was recommending what the price of wheat should be for this State? Has not that Minister wheat in the pool? Will he not directly benefit—but I have no desire to individualise; there are others as well as the Minister for Agriculture who are directly interested. Can such men be said to be impartial? Should such people decide what the price of wheat should be? Is the Minister for Agriculture, for instance, likely to conserve the interests of the consuming public when attending a conference to fix the price of wheat?

Mr. Maley: You can apply the same argument to members increasing their salaries.

Mr. O'Loughlin: You were pretty glad it went through.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the consumers had representation on the Australian Wheat Board—

Mr. Harrison: The consuming States were represented.

Hon. P. COLLIER: By whom?

Mr. Maley: Theodore and Storey.

Hon. P. COLLIER: New South Wales is a producing State.

Mr. Harrison: What about Tasmania?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I can understand Mr. Storey trying to get as high a price as he could because his Government had guaranteed 7s. 6d. to the growers of New South Wales.

Mr. Maley: New South Wales was importing wheat when the price was fixed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That does not matter. It will be an exporting State this season, and for this season's crop the Government there have guaranteed the farmers 7s. 6d. If the price goes below that, the Government will have to make it good, and to relieve his Government of any liability he is not going to stand for a low price. On November 22 there was published a cable message which said that buyers of wheat in London were offering 110s. That would amount to 15s. 6d. per bushel or about 9s. 6d. f.o.b. here. That was the buying price only as lately as the 22nd of last month.

Mr. Brown: It is 8s. 3d. to-day.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am speaking of the 22nd November and hon. members know that there has been a downward tendency since. Nothing else can be expected, because the authorities who are estimating what the world's yield will be this season have declared that there will be a probable surplus of 100 million bushels.

Mr. Brown: That is for Australia.

Hon. P. COLLIER: For the whole world. Mr. Griffiths: Your figures are a bit rocky.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member will be a bit rocky before I finish with him. When the executive of the primary producers speak, the hon. member says "Yes, sir." When they say what the world's parity will be he will reply "At your service, sir," and when they declare that no matter what the world's parity will be they will fix the price at 9s., he will say "Very well, sir." That is the extent of the hon. member's independent thought and action in regard to this matter.

Mr. Griffiths: So says the leader of the Opposition.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And I am some authority on that matter, because, by virtue of my regular and close reading of the "Primary Producer" newspaper I have some knowledge of the working of the machine to which the hon. member belongs.

Mr. Johnston: We regret that you do not assimilate the views.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This was published a few days ago in regard to the world's supplies of wheat—

British authorities consider that the United States, taking into account the carry-over from the last cereal year, will have an exportable surplus of approximately 240 million bushels. This added to a probable surplus of 190 million bushels in Canada, 148 million bushels in Argentina, say 90 million bushels in Australia, and probably a few million bushels in India, makes a total available for Europe of over 660 million bushels. The estimate of "Broomhall" of Liverpool, on September 14, was about 616 million bushels, but since then conditions in Canada and Argentina have changed for the better. Now the consumption of foreign wheat in Europe last year, with smaller crops, did not amount to more than 560 million bushels, so that on the basis of the above figures there should be sufficient wheat to go round.

That was the consumption as against the estimated production this year of 660 million bushels. So that there should be a surplus of over 100 million bushels.

Mr. Maley: We always get that kind of inspired information.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member knows of course the Australian surplus was given as 90 million bushels, but the position has improved somewhat since then, and it is estimated that we shall have 130 million

bushels. If there is such a surplus in the world it is inevitable that the price must go down. That can only be expected, and from the fact that only 110s. was being offered a few weeks ago in London, we can believe that the price will go down.

The Minister for Mines: A fair percentage of our harvest has already been sold at 10s. or over.

Mr. Johnston: Up to 17s. 6d.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have no doubt that hon. members opposite are able to get all this information, and the member for Williams-Narrogin, I suppose, knows how much has been sold.

Mr. Johnston: It has been telegraphed from the East.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Such information should not be for the exclusive use of any section of this House.

Mr. Griffiths: This came through from the Eastern States.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member asked me a few moments ago to disregard what I read about wheat in the newspapers, and now, when it suits his book, he mentions what has been published as coming from the Eastern States. When I quote information as coming from London, the heart of the Empire, the hon. member says that it cannot be believed, but when it suits his purpose he quotes information that comes from the Eastern States. Why not the world's parity for other things as well as for wheat—apples, butter, timber, sugar, coal? But if we had to pay the world's parity for coal it would cost us 25 million pounds more than it is costing us at the present time. Why do hon. members think they should single out wheat and demand for it the world's parity? It would amount to nothing at all were it not for the backing and the credit of the people of the State. It was the people, through their governments, who maintained the price of wheat during the whole of the war period. By means of the pool, farmers were enabled to get a higher price than they had obtained in former years. Seeing that that is the case, there is an obligation on the part of the growers to supply wheat for local requirements at a reasonable price. I would allow the farmer a price for wheat would not only cover cost of production, but which would allow him a fair margin of profit, even a generous margin of profit. But I am not prepared to say that the farmer is going to use my credit and the credit of all the people of the State to enable him to impose a price which is unjust and which amounts to profiteering so far as those from whom he is receiving the benefit are concerned. If 9s. is a fair price at the present time, how do our friends defend the action of those who fixed the price at 7s. 8d. for last season's wheat. The cost of production has not gone up since. It is admitted that 7s. 8d., when fixed in January of the present year, was a fair and profitable price.

The Minister for Mines: You know why it was fixed at 7s. 8d.; because some of the

big producing States last year did not produce at all, and they had to buy our wheat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But they admitted that 7s. 8d. was a profitable price. It was never contended that 7s. 8d. was not a good price. I am not prepared to admit that the price for export should govern the matter at all.

Mr. Thomson: Has it not always been governed by the export price?

Hon. P. COLLIER: When the farmer had a free hand he did not have the credit of the State behind him; he did not have the Government to guarantee him. He had to accept in those days the market price, which was 3s. 6d. a bushel. There was no such thing as a guarantee of 5s.

Mr. Thomson: Are you prepared to give him the world's parity to-day?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He is getting more than that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The same people who cry for world's parity to-day will be crying out against world's parity if we get back to pre-war conditions, and the price pans out at 3s. or 3s. 6d. a bushel. Then they will be demanding a guarantee from the Government of a price which will be a payable one to the farmer, 8s. or 9s. a bushel, regardless of the world's parity.

Mr. Maley: What was the world's parity in 1914, when we had to import our seed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since 1914.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And some through the hon. member's head, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The whole method of disposing of the harvest has been entirely altered since 1914. The hon. member cannot expect to get the backing of the Government which enables him to receive 7s., 8s. or 9s. a bushel, and for his exportable surplus even 10s. or 12s. a bushel, and at the same time charge the local people who are backing him any price he likes.

Mr. Thomson: Has it cost the Government one penny piece for the guarantee? The whole of the cost has been borne by the farmers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It does not matter; the guarantee was there. The hon. member, although he clamoured for the guarantee, now takes up the attitude that it was of no value to the farmers, and that apparently it did not matter whether they got it or not.

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

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is no consistency about the hon. member. He wants the advantage every way and, unfortunately, he and his colleagues are able to get it. By virtue of the position they occupy in this House, they are able to dictate terms to the Government in secret caucus.

The Minister for Works: Not at all.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They are after your scalp. The Minister had better look out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When the Minister for Agriculture was at the conference in Melbourne he refrained from committing his

Government to the 9s. a bushel. He said, "I must return to Western Australia and consult my colleagues." He did so, and in the meantime the deputation from the representatives of the party on the cross benches waited on the Premier and put their views before him. After that secret deputation, after that secret interview, the Premier announced that the Government had accepted the price of 9s. a bushel.

The Premier: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is the fact.

The Premier: It is not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier himself has admitted that he received a deputation.

The Premier: Not a secret deputation.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If there was nothing secret about it, how is it that not a line appeared in the Press about it? When a deputation waits on the Premier or on any Minister and asks for a footbridge or for a paltry £50 to repair a road, it is blazoned forth in the Press on the following morning. There is no modesty on the part of Ministers then; they are quite prepared to put themselves in the public limelight regarding deputations of that kind.

Mr. Maley: The member for the district arranges all that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Matters which concern only a handful of people get publicity in the newspapers, but a matter of this kind which concerns every person and concerns the daily bread of every person in the State is a matter which is not of sufficient importance for publicity in the Press.

Mr. Griffiths: You always arrange for publicity regarding anything that affects your constituency. You would not leave it to the Minister to blazon it forth.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This is the first time I have heard of that.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You are here till five o'clock in the morning writing of what you do.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I object to these secret deputations and secret influences.

The Minister for Mines: Hear, hear! Cut them out and I shall have a nice time.

Mr. Troy: What about the one that got the Minister for Mines at Albany?

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have reached a stage in the government of this country when a section of the House by reason of the fact that they control the life of the Government—

Mr. O'Loughlen: Bulgarians!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Are able to dictate to the Government and to impose conditions on the whole of the people of this State.

Mr. Griffiths: The Bulgarians of politics.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Let the hon. member make a sensible interjection if he can. He should keep his eye on Burgess and York. It is of no concern to members who are growing wheat and who expect to be received with open arms in their constituencies, because they will be able to stand in the scrub and say to the farmers, "We have battled hard.

to get you an extra 1s. a bushel for your wheat." It will mean many votes for them.

Mr. Thomson: That is very vital.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I shall not call for order again. Members are getting too noisy.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have now reached a stage when this section of the House are able to demand whatever they like from the Government.

Mr. Thomson: I wish we could.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Country party had stood out against world's parity the Government would have refrained from fixing the price. When they stuck out for 9s. a bushel the Government said, "Very well, we shall give you 9s. a bushel." This is dictation by a party to the Government.

Mr. Johnston: Imaginitis.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Those members are in a happy position just at present. Sitting on the cross benches they have no responsibility for the government of the country, and yet they are able to steer the ship and direct the policy. The time is fast coming when all that stable section of thought in this State outside the ranks of the primary producers will have to combine for their own protection.

Mr. Maley: Public opinion is coming our way.

Mr. Willcock: Is it?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The opinion of those who are going to reap a reward by it might be coming the hon. member's way. That is all the interest that the country members have; their only concern is as how much they can put into the pockets of those who send them into Parliament.

The Premier: It is always a question of how much or how little.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The Premier has just woke up.

Mr. Thomson: The same question applied to the tributers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Mr. Prowse considered that 7s. 8d. a bushel was such a fair price that he would appeal to the wheat pool to sell our wheat to New South Wales at 7s. 8d. a bushel. Mr. Prowse never contended for a moment that this price would not be a payable one for the farmer.

Mr. Thomson: He was speaking for himself.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He had more wheat in the pool than the whole lot of those here who profess to speak for the farmers. They have not a pannikin full of wheat in the pool. The hon. member talks about the farmers and professes to defend them and says Mr. Prowse is only speaking for himself. Mr. Prowse was sneaking as a man who had 23,000 bushels in the wheat pool, and country members altogether have not 5,000 bushels in the pool. Yet these are the men who talk so much about the farmers.

Mr. Johnston: Why expose our poverty?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Every shilling added to the price of wheat would bring in to Mr.

Prowse an additional £1,120, and the increase from 7s. 8d. to 9s. a bushel would mean to Mr. Prowse alone an additional £1,500. On his own showing Mr. Prowse is prepared to sell his wheat to New South Wales at 7s. 8d. per bushel, but because the price this year has been fixed at 9s. Mr. Prowse will receive £1,500 more than he considered he was entitled to.

The Premier: How much wheat has he in the pool this year?

Hon. P. COLLIER: That does not matter.

Mr. O'Loughlen: A bigger lot.

Mr. Maley: You are basing your figures wrongly. He would contribute only a small proportion for local consumption at 9s.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; that is what he would get if the whole of his wheat was sold at that figure. I consider it an iniquity that the price of wheat to the consuming public of this State should have been fixed at 9s. a bushel. The Government have sacrificed the consumers in the interests of those who are maintaining them in office, and without whose support the Government could not remain in office for a single day.

Mr. Johnston: Why should wheat be sold more cheaply here than in the prosperous Eastern States?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Eastern States can decide for themselves; we control our own doings. I do not care what the Eastern States do or say; I hold that if the price of wheat is to be fixed at all, it should be fixed by the body appointed to fix prices of all other necessary commodities in this State. The price should not be fixed by those who are personally interested in getting as high a price as they can for their wheat. Such a method does not obtain with regard to any other commodity, and it should not obtain with regard to wheat. It only shows that those people who by virtue of the backing they got from this State, which enabled them to reap the advantage of prosperous years and profitable prices, are now profiteering at the expense of those who assisted them in that they are charging an excessive price for their wheat. If the Prices Regulation Commission said that 9s. a bushel was a fair price, I would not object, but I do object to the price being fixed by men who are directly interested. When the Bill reaches the Committee stage I propose to move an amendment to the effect that the price of wheat for local consumption should be fixed by the tribunal which has been fixing the prices for all other necessary commodities in this State for the last 12 months. I see no reason why we should depart from that principle in the case of wheat.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That is, after this year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, for the present season. I see no reason why the price should have been fixed at 9s. World's parity for a certainty will be much below 9s. before the season is out, notwithstanding any sales being made at the present time.

Mr. Maley: They have already fixed the price of flour.

Hon. P. COLLIER. If the price of wheat in London is now equal to 9s. 6d. f.o.b. Western Australia, it is almost a certainty that when the new season's wheat gets on the market the price will further decline; and that before the season is out, we shall have the consumers in Western Australia paying 9s. a bushel for wheat for local requirements, while the world's parity will be considerably below that figure. I support the second reading, but I propose to move amendments on the lines I have indicated when the Bill reaches the Committee stage.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [9.43]: We have heard a good deal from the leader of the Opposition with regard to the fixing of the price of wheat and the guarantee. This Bill seeks to re-enact the authority given to the State to enter into arrangements for acquiring and delivering the wheat of this State. The Government are acting in trust for the farmers with respect to their property, and this has been the position for a number of years past. From the remarks of the leader of the Opposition one would think that the wheat-growers of this State were taking an undue advantage of the consuming section of the community. He has not told us that in 1914-15, 1915-16, 1916-17, 1917-18 and again last year the price of wheat was about 4s. a bushel, and that only at the latter end of last year did we get a higher price on account of the operation of the law of supply and demand.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You would not have got it, but for the backing of the State.

Mr. HARRISON: At the latter end of last year we were able to get a higher price and the farmers received up to 8s. or 8s. 6d. for their wheat. Those men who have the wheat in trust for the various States of the Commonwealth, and have been appointed to boards to assist the Governments of the State to obtain the highest value they can for the commodities of those States, and who have said that the assets of the State should be increased to their export value, met in conference. The two consuming States were represented there. The conclusion arrived at was that a fair thing for both the consuming sections of the two States and the producing States, taking the values for the full year, 1920-21, would be 9s. per bushel. Our sales for the coming season have been much higher than that value up to date, and forward sales have been made. We have records from the Australian Wheat Board, which is composed of Ministers of the various States. This conclusion was arrived at by men who have had this responsibility placed upon their shoulders of looking after the wheat of all the producing States. The leader of the Opposition would have the public of Western Australia believe that we members on the cross-benches have been

using our influence with the Government, because we had the numbers, to obtain an excess price. That power has never been exerted by members on the cross-benches. We have never abused our power in this House. I am certain that the Premier, and the late Premier, will back me up in that statement. Neither did we use any undue influence when members opposite were on the Treasury benches.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You did not get the opportunity; you put us out.

Mr. HARRISON: In the past they talked about a guarantee to the farmers, and now they call it an excess price. The people of Australia have not paid up to date for home consumption the price that could have been obtained for the wheat if it had been exported.

Hon. P. Collier: What nonsense you are talking. The wheat could not have been exported but for the backing of Australia.

Mr. HARRISON: Australia could not have carried on had it not been for the asset which the farmers and wheat growers generally produced in Australia. The wages that are now given to the industrial sections of the community of this State would not have been maintained to-day if this asset had not been created by the men whom we represent here. We have not in this House abused our privileges in the direction of saying that certain sections of the community should not receive what was due to them. I intend to support this Bill because I believe it is in the best interests of the State—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You dare not do otherwise.

Mr. HARRISON: As well as the interests of the wheatgrower, the consumer, and the general public. I admit that the wheat pool has been a success for the whole of Australia, and that members opposite belong to the party who initiated it. We have no desire that it should go forth to the public of this State that we are here to get excessive profits, when nothing of the sort is the case. It is just, equitable and right that certain industrial sections of the State should get their true reward for their labour. They have not received it during the past few years. They are now, however, able to obtain a lift in this direction. The Industries Assistance Board was under discussion the other night. I would point out that there are many farmers who are not yet off the board, but we hope next year that they will be able to get off the board. It is through the production of wheat that Western Australia has been able to show the results it has shown. When members opposite occupied the Treasury benches, they stated in the preamble of the measure they introduced in 1916 that they were in favour of the farmers receiving the world's parity for their wheat for local consumption. The farmers of Western Australia would be satisfied with that to-day. By interjection I remarked that

during the year coming forward wheat would possibly be sold at less than 9s. per bushel. The leader of the Opposition endeavoured to make the House believe that I stated the export value would be less than 9s. The world's parity is as unstable as the waves of the sea.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is the London parity.

Mr. HARRISON: By that we understand the world's parity. It might even be the parity from hour to hour. A cable might arrive to-day at 9 o'clock closing for a cargo of wheat, and by 11 o'clock it might be possible either to obtain a higher value for it or the value might have gone down. A little while ago a gentleman in America stated that there would be a surplus of wheat. Ten days after a statement was made that Europe would be short of so many million loaves of bread. Statements are published both in the American and local papers that are inspired by vested interests.

Mr. Troy: Surely not.

Mr. HARRISON: Different quotations and figures are published that are intended as a guide for the public, but are the means by which certain people operate on the wheat market. Many persons are constantly making money out of the market fluctuations. I had intended to move a certain amendment to this Bill. This was to the effect that as the central wheat board was of such moment to the wheat-growers and consumers of Western Australia, our representative on that board should be chosen by the whole of the wheat-growers of the State. The conferences of wheat farmers have more than once desired to have a voice in electing the man who would represent them on the wheat board. Each man who is producing wheat should have a vote. I found, however, from inquiries I made of the Premier and the Minister controlling the wheat scheme, that this very scheme was about to be put into practice, and that a vote was to be taken as to the representative who would be elected. It will thus be open for any man to nominate for the position. He can be chosen by the growers provided he does not happen to be directly interested in some trading concern that is handling wheat. Now that the machinery has been started for putting this into effect, there is no need for me to move such an amendment. I only rose to refute the statement of the leader of the Opposition that the farmers have any desire to take an undue advantage of any section of the community.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.53]: I am sure the protest made by the member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) will have some weight in the House. He occupies a leading position in the primary producers' caucus, which consists of a large number of persons who do not belong to this Assembly.

Hon. P. Collier: And from whom hon. members take their instructions.

Mr. Thomson: That is not correct.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member will find from the "Primary Producer" whether I am correct or not. It is all very well for hon. members to say that they are entitled to the London parity or the world's parity. The farming community of Australia has had both ends of the stick in the wheat pool. At the commencement of the war it was impossible to sell wheat. No person would buy it at anything like its market value.

Mr. Johnston: We did not get the market value either.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If any person had bought it he could not take it away. Wheat was stacked here and was being rapidly destroyed. The people, however, guaranteed the farmers so much per bushel whether their wheat was destroyed or not.

Mr. Maley: Who represents the security of the country?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The people are the security of the country, and the best that can be obtained. Manhood has beaten everything else. Seeing that the people's credit was behind the farming community for several years, is it fair, now that shipping is released to a certain extent, for the farming community to endeavour to obtain an increase in the value of their product when the State is still at their back?

Mr. Maley: Shipping to-day is more tightly controlled than ever.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Had it not been for the credit of Australia, the farmers could not have sold their wheat to-day.

Mr. Thomson: And the credit of Australia was the product of the farmers.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It was not worth anything. Great Britain was begged to take it off their hands, but at the time it was impossible to do so. The farming community must realise that they are part and parcel of the community of Australia.

Mr. Thomson: They do realise it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: And that they are not on their farms as philanthropists.

Mr. Thomson: Neither are you.

Hon. P. Collier: How long will the hon. member be allowed to go on like this?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They are only there in their own interests. Were that not so they would not remain there.

Hon. P. Collier: What does the hon. member know about wheat? Let him rebuild the churches which have fallen down.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No one objects to the farmer being put on the same basis as any other person. If it is fair for the Prices Regulation Commission to fix the price for the manufacture of a pair of boots, it is equally fair that the Commission should fix the price of wheat.

Mr. Maley: They have fixed the price of flour.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course, because the wheat scheme, another independent body,

fixed the price of wheat. The Government have done that. The price of flour has been fixed in accordance with the price the miller has to pay for his wheat. The same thing does not apply in England. The British Government do not guarantee the English farmer a price for his wheat that it would cost England to import and land it there. I have here an extract from one of the leading English papers, containing a letter written by Mr. McCurdy, the British food controller, to a correspondent, in the course of which Mr. McCurdy states—

The guaranteed price of British wheat, as laid down in the Corn Production Act of 1917, was 45s. per quarter of 480lbs. The Government had, however, decided that so long as wheat was still controlled, and thereby deprived of a free market, the controlled price of home grown wheat of sound milling quality harvested in 1920 should be the monthly average c.i.f. price of imported wheat of similar or comparable quality; provided—

I want hon. members to listen to this particularly.

provided that the price so paid to the home grower should not exceed 95s. per quarter of 504 lbs.

There was a limitation so far as the British farmer was concerned. The British Government did not give him the world's parity. The price works out at about 11s. 10d. per bushel. If it is true that the price of wheat in England to-day, as hon. members opposite have tried to make out in order to make the parity price here 9s., is 14s., the British farmer should receive 14s. instead of 11s. 10d., which is his limit. I have here also a copy of the "Producers' Review," printed in Perth, and describing itself as the official organ of the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia. This paper ought to know something about wheat. Members of the Country party have told us that prices up to 17s. per bushel are obtainable. That was stated by the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston). Now, the "Producers' Review" says—

Mr. Hughes, in reply to a question, stated that it was not considered advisable to disclose particulars of the sale of wheat to Egypt; but a few days ago it was repeatedly published that the price received for 300,000 tons of wheat and flour from the Egyptian Government was 10s. 6d. If that is true, the world's parity is 14s. Then, once more, the farmer has dropped 3s. 6d. per bushel. But if 10s. 6d. is the best price obtainable, then the talk of 14s. is so much moonshine. In any event it does not seem reasonable to believe that the Australian farmer is offered 14s. while the American farmer can get only 8s.

This was published on the 8th. October, 1920. Since then we have found—we have learnt. it this week—that American wheat has gone down to about 5s. 4½d. per bushel.

Mr. Maley: Per quarter you mean, not per bushel.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The price has gone down to 129 cents per quarter.

Mr. Maley: And what is that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: A cent is about a halfpenny, and there are eight bushels to the quarter. The statement I have quoted was made in the Press only a few days ago.

Mr. Harrison: The price of American wheat is 129 cents per cental.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Press said "per quarter."

The Minister for Mines: Perhaps it was a misprint.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister can have it that way if he likes. I find that in to-night's paper Senator Russell, chairman of the Australian Wheat Board, is reported as saying—

that the Government had received no official notice of the reported reduction by the Wheat Commission of all imported wheats by 5s. per quarter. Pending further news, he was not prepared to comment upon the matter, but in a day or two he would issue a statement with regard to the effect of the action on the Commonwealth and on the chances of overseas sales. The reported fall in price in Britain represented a reduction of about 9d. per bushel for wheat for home consumption.

This shows conclusively that there is a prospect of a slump in wheat prices. Such being the case, it is wrong for any Government to fix a price of 9s. per bushel for 12 months.

Mr. Harrison: Wages are fixed for 12 months.

Hon. P. Collier: But a man does not fix his own wages.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Wages are fixed by the Arbitration Court. We are quite prepared to let the Prices Regulation Commission fix the price of wheat. Are members of the Country party afraid of that? Would hon. members of that party be content to let the Prices Regulation Commission fix the price of wheat at a certain figure, with the risk of wages going up 2s. per day next year?

Mr. Thomson: Will your side agree to remain at the same wages if the cost of living goes up?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have to remain at the same wages. There is no help for it: the Government will not give members of Parliament any more. There is no going to the Arbitration Court so far as we are concerned; and we have not the courage to fix a fair rate of pay for ourselves. A judge in New South Wales recently fixed the pay of legislators at double the rate we are receiving to-day. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we are not receiving anything like the increased pay we should have taking into account the rise in the price of wheat since 1914. I maintain that no reasonable man in this State, whether he be a farmer or a



wheat consumer, should raise any objection whatever to the price of wheat being fixed by the Prices Regulation Commission.

Mr. Thomson: How are the Commission going to arrive at the cost of production?

Hon. P. Collier: How do the Australian Wheat Board arrive at the cost?

Mr. Thomson: The board fix the selling price, not the cost.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is not only the consumer of bread who is affected by the price of wheat. Where does the poultry farmer stand, who has been charged up to 12s. per bushel for wheat? Wheat bought by the poultry farmer is not regarded as home consumption. We cannot get eggs to-day, because the poultry farmer of this State is being driven clean out of business by the farmers. Even a judge of the Arbitration Court said recently that he had had to reduce the number of his poultry. Then there is the dairy farmer. He also is materially affected by the increased prices of wheat and offal. The prices of his products are fixed by the Prices Regulation Commission; yet the products which he must buy in order to carry on his business are not controlled by the Prices Regulation Commission. Is that fair? It is unfair! The price of butter is fixed, the price of eggs is fixed, the price of bacon is fixed. Everything that the dairy farmer and the pig farmer and the poultry farmer have to sell is controlled by the Prices Regulation Commission. Nevertheless we find the Government becoming price fixers themselves as regards wheat and offal, which commodities they have taken entirely out of the hands of the Prices Regulation Commission. That is utterly wrong. All persons should be served fairly and straightly by the Government; all should be treated on a footing of equality. We do not ask for more than that.

Mr. Thomson: Are you willing to pay for wheat on the cost of production?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes.

Mr. Thomson: How are you going to arrive at the cost of production?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: How hon. members of the Country party have changed their attitude during the last year or two regarding the price of wheat! One hon. member representing a farming constituency was not so anxious to keep up the price of wheat when wheat was scarce here—not by any means. When it was necessary to get seed wheat, that hon. member considered it was a splendid thing for the State Government to fix the price of wheat below the world's parity, below the cost at which wheat could be imported into this State. He thought it was a splendid idea to let the farmer get seed wheat at lower rates. I will read a few of the hon. member's observations on the subject—

I think myself that the Bill shows that the Government had the welfare of the people at heart when they brought this Bill forward, and that they are attempt-

ing to deal generously with them. There is no doubt, as my friend said, that while a few people have a little wheat, there are many who have none. I was tackled on that question when leaving Brookton to come down here. A friend of mine who helped to put me in this position said to me, "What about the price of wheat?" I replied, "I do not know that it is going to be such an extraordinary price. I believe the Government are going to fix the price." Thereupon he said, "What nonsense! The idea of fixing the price of wheat! Those who have a little to sell will get nothing for it. Look at our losses!" I said, "Who do you think will suffer most—those who have a little to sell or those who have a lot to buy?" I think it is only right that we should deal as liberally as possible with those who are in want of seed. There are in Western Australia many farmers who have scarcely enough to eat, and they have to come to the Government to-day to ask to be assisted through the great difficulties arising out of the said conditions at present obtaining in our State. I am very pleased indeed to see the statesmanlike manner in which the Government are coming to the assistance of the farmer.

Thus it was quite right and proper for the Government to keep down the price of wheat when the farmers had to purchase wheat. And it is also quite right and proper, according to the farmers' representatives, for the Government to put up the price of wheat when only the consumer has to purchase, when the farmer has plenty of wheat to sell.

Mr. Thomson: It was only one member who spoke like that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That view was supported by every member of the party.

Mr. Thomson: Will you kindly quote what I said?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member interjecting opposed those views because at that time there was a mill operating in his district. The hon. member at that time was not under the influence of Monger and company, but rather under the influence of the Piesse company.

Mr. Thomson: That is a reflection on me. I was never under the influence of F. & C. Piesse. I ask the hon. member to withdraw that reflection on my honour and integrity.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Katanning has taken exception to the remark, and I ask the member for North-East Fremantle to withdraw it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I will do anything to oblige the hon. member. I withdraw. I did not wish to hurt his feelings.

Mr. Thomson: You have not hurt my feelings, but I cannot allow a statement like that to pass.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In my opinion, the member for Pingelly, whom I have quoted, was then speaking in the interests of the farmer; and the member for Katanning was at that time opposed to those interests.

Mr. Thomson: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The member for Katanning was then associated with another organisation than the Primary Producers' Association; and the natural consequence was that he did not then take the same interest as he takes now in the primary producers. He has changed his coat for one of many colours.

Mr. Thomson: I have not.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It has been proved conclusively by their own statements that as long as they keep the price down when the farmer wants to purchase something, it gives them every satisfaction. That was the statement by one man, supported by every Country party member in this State, according to their votes.

Mr. Thomson: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That being so, we are justified in coming to the conclusion that that was the attitude adopted by members of the Country party. The farmers want the price cut down for everything they want to purchase and the price kept up for everything they want to sell. It is known to-day that owing to the fact that Australia is not in a position to give credit, she cannot sell her wheat.

The Premier: She is selling it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is all bunkum.

The Premier: Oh, is it?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, and the Premier knows it.

Mr. Maley: They have sold more than half of it already.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If Australia is selling wheat for cash, why cannot she pay 5s. a bushel in accordance with her promise? It does not take till next April to get a ship to England. If the Commonwealth Government are getting cash for the wheat, there can be no reason for refusing to pay the 5s. advance.

The Premier: You know they cannot get cash until the wheat is on the ship.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is only making their case all the worse. They say they cannot get paid while the wheat is on the water. Now you say they cannot get cash for the wheat until it is in the ship. Why do not they pay the 5s. advance according to their promise?

Mr. Thomson: You know the Commonwealth Government cannot advance it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They get the cash, yet they cannot advance the 5s.. The hon. member knows that the credit of the people of this State is behind the farmers and yet they cannot get their money.

Mr. Maley: It is a poor sort of credit that is not good enough to pay 5s. on a 10s. proposition.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yet that is the position. The Premier has stated that it is the credit of the people which has kept up the price of wheat until now.

Mr. Maley: The credit is pretty poor, then.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The credit appears

pretty good, but perhaps it is the credit of others that is pretty poor. It is the people who have to pay the increased price, because the farmers are demanding that the Government shall keep up the price. Dealing with the Bill itself, it will be seen that an arrangement has been entered into again with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. One would have thought that in consequence of the leaflet which was scattered around begging for subscriptions for the Primary Producers' Association to cover the cost of the next election campaign, and in the course of which it was pointed out that it was through the influence of the few members the association had in Parliament that the handling of the wheat had again been handed over to the Westralian Farmers, the Government of the day would have shied clear of them and shown some independence. By so doing, the Government would have backed up the statement which has been made frequently in this Chamber and repeated again to-night, that no political influence has been exercised in this matter. The very action of the Government in handing over the wheat to the Westralian Farmers Ltd. shows that the same political pressure exists to-day which was in evidence formerly.

Mr. Thomson: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Otherwise some other arrangement would have been made this year.

Mr. Thomson: You are making a statement which is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. Johnston: No better arrangement could have been made than to hand over the control to the local co-operative societies.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I could prove that the statement I made is correct if I could quote "Hansard." The member for Menzies read the pamphlet in this Chamber and therein it was pointed out that, owing to the influence of the members of the Country party, they were again able to secure the handling of the wheat.

Mr. Johnston: That has not been done this year.

Mr. Thomson: You said it had been done this year.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The same political influence has been in evidence now as formerly. Had I been in the Government when this pamphlet was issued, I would have taken prompt action. I presume Ministers received copies of it.

The Premier: I did not get a copy.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They must have been frightened of you. I should say that the Minister for Works did not get a copy either. They would know that such a thing would get his back up and he would say: "I will see them damned first." There is no doubt about what the Government should have done when this circular was issued. There was a covering letter with the circular and the Government should have said, "We will have no more of this. You state we are under your influence and that it is your political pressure that has given the West-

ralian Farmers, Ltd., control of the wheat. We will prove that your statement is untrue."

The Premier: Who signed that statement?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Government should have refused to give this trading concern the control of the wheat in future and so shown some independence. He would then have shown that the Government were managing the affairs of the State in the interests of the people generally. No other honourable action could have been taken in the circumstances. The mere fact that the company have been given the handling of the wheat for another year shows that the statement made by that association was correct, and that their political influence was enough to secure their end.

The Premier: I never heard of that circular.

Mr. Troy: You cannot disguise it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I cannot say that the Premier was here when that circular was read.

Mr. Johnston: It is ridiculous.

Mr. Troy: It is a scandal, but it is certainly true.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course it is true. I was speaking to a gentleman about the circular, and mentioned the fact that no name was attached to it. He said that there was no necessity for it because it might fall into some hands, and in any case anyone would know who it came from. It was sent out under a covering letter asking for assistance in connection with the coming elections. The position to-day is that the Government are continuing to allow this political influence in connection with trading concerns and assisting one particular trading concern. Is that fair? Is it just to others who have to pay taxes? Is that not showing preference? I agree with the leader of the Opposition when he says that the time will come when the people of this State will have to band together for the purpose of protecting themselves against a group of persons who are mixing politics with business and controlling members of Parliament from outside the House.

Mr. Johnston: That is not true.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Members are driving the people in that direction now. The Labour party were given credit for interference with members of Parliament from outside, but they never did that.

Mr. Thomson: Oh, no, of course not!

Mr. Johnston: They did not do so in my time.

Hon. P. Collier: And the member for Katanning cannot show where it has happened so far as the Labour party are concerned.

Mr. Thomson: Do you say you never had the secretary of the Trades Hall up here?

Mr. Troy: Certainly not.

Mr. Johnston: There was no interference while I was with the party.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In the last "Primary Producer," members can see who were at the last meeting of the executive, and who the members of the Country party were.

Mr. Thomson: It cannot be a caucus if they publish the facts regarding the meeting.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They do not publish everything that has taken place. They only publish a little for the information of the public.

Mr. Thomson: They give the lot.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, they do not. They only give those things they think are good for the country.

Mr. Troy: Their whole policy is directed by the executive.

Mr. Thomson: You do not know what you are talking about.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I would like to issue a note of warning. The establishment of a monopoly in connection with the people's food is the most dangerous thing that can come into operation in any country. The food of the people should be free from monopolistic control, and the Government are to-day backed up by outside producers, who are represented by what was formerly known as the Farmers' and Settlers' Association.

Mr. Thomson: That is incorrect.

Mr. Lambert: Keep quiet! Cannot you let a member make a speech?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They are building up a big concern which is becoming a monopoly controlling the people's food.

Mr. Thomson: Is not the same thing in operation in the Eastern States?

Hon. P. Collier: [What latitude is the member for Katanning to have? Cannot he get up and make a speech? Must he be like a magpie all the time!]

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, order!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There is no necessity to answer him. He cannot throw me off the track. It is not the same in the Eastern States in any case. There is no monopoly in the handling of wheat in the Eastern States. They have kept to the agreement which was entered into on the formation of the wheat pool by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Thomson: How does the Sydney pool compare with ours?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not care how it compares.

Hon. P. Collier: On a point of order, how much latitude is the member for Katanning to be given this evening?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not mind him.

Hon. P. Collier: I do.

Mr. SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Hon. P. Collier: That the member for Katanning is out of order with his constant interjections.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Kataun-  
ning knows that interjections are disorderly  
at all times.

Hon. P. Collier: That is why I am ques-  
tioning his conduct.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have warned the hon.  
member and I hope I shall not have occasion  
to warn him again to-night.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: When the wheat  
pool was first started—this may be informa-  
tion to some members and it came to my  
knowledge as Chairman of the Commission  
which investigated this matter—there was no  
one who knew anything about this work, and  
an undertaking was given to the wheat buyers  
of Australia that if they gave the Govern-  
ment every assistance in the formation of  
the wheat pool, and brought to bear their  
business ability and acumen in furthering  
the interests of the pool, they would be al-  
lowed to carry on the wheat acquiring agen-  
cies on behalf of the Government, so as, when  
the war was over, they would be again able  
to drop into their business without any fur-  
ther interference. That was the undertaking  
given to the wheat buyers, those men who  
with their business training came in and ex-  
plained how to carry on the pooling and who  
assisted it as far as they could. Every State  
in Australia, except Western Australia, has  
honoured that undertaking given. Western  
Australia, through political influence, has  
broken that promise and handed over the  
work to one monopoly.

Mr. Johnston: To its own co-operative  
organisations.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I hope hon. mem-  
bers will realise that the time is not far  
distant when, if this continues, it will be  
necessary for the representatives of the peo-  
ple to band together to avert a food mono-  
poly which is likely to be inimical to the  
consumer.

Mr. BROWN (Subiaco) [10.31]: If there  
were a shortage of wheat in the world, I  
could understand high prices being obtained  
for it, but as there is ample for the require-  
ments of the whole world we must look for  
something other than a shortage to account  
for the high prices. The figures quoted by  
the leader of the Opposition from Broom-  
hall, a recognised authority, have shown  
conclusively that in addition to our require-  
ments we shall have more than 100 million  
bushels to carry over into 1922. Additional  
to those figures we find that in the Federal  
Parliament on the 18th November, Senator  
Russell, in reply to Senator Pratten, said  
the present stocks in the various wheat  
pools were as follows:—Victoria 1,954,000  
bushels of wheat and 208,000 bushels in the  
form of flour; South Australia 8,222,000  
bushels of wheat and 173,000 bushels in the  
form of flour; Western Australia 906,000  
bushels of wheat and 798,000 bushels in the  
form of flour. It was not known, the Sena-  
tor said, when the pools would be cleaned up  
and final payments made. In view of the  
personal information I have regarding the

stocks of flour held, the quantity given by  
Senator Russell would work out at about  
15,000 tons. I asked the Minister for Agri-  
culture whether that was correct. He said  
no, that we had in the State about 10,000  
tons of flour. As we use about 30,000 tons  
yearly, we have four months supply of flour  
already gristed, without taking into consid-  
eration anything of the new crop. Those fig-  
ures relating to the three States total  
12,250,000 bushels of wheat, or very nearly  
one-half of what we require for the season.  
But when we look at the West Australian  
stocks, about 1½ million bushels, it is seen  
that practically we could do without any  
crop at all this year, and still not get down  
to famine prices. A good deal has been said  
in regard to the price fixed in the Eastern  
States, and adopted here, namely, 9s. It must  
be remembered that the fixing of that price  
was done in a big hurry. Both New South  
Wales and Queensland, for political pur-  
poses gave, not only the 5s. guaranteed by  
the Commonwealth but, in New South Wales,  
an additional half crown, for purely politi-  
cal purposes, to curry favour and votes. In  
Queensland they offered even 8s. per bushel,  
again for political purposes. The result was  
that if anything less than 9s. per bushel for  
local consumption had been fixed those two  
States would have had to make up out of  
Consolidated Revenue the discrepancy be-  
tween the two prices. The other States did  
not want that, but wanted to see those two  
States come out about equal in regard to  
their guarantee. In connection with the fall  
in the price of wheat all the world over,  
everyone who takes an interest in the mar-  
kets of the world must realise that when  
there is a big supply it is difficult to obtain  
very high prices. The first intimation we have  
had of prices of wheat falling all the world  
over is from New York under date Novem-  
ber 23rd, as follows:—

A message from Fargo (Dakota) says  
that the refusal of the farmers to sell their  
grain in an attempt to increase the price  
to three dollars a bushel has caused nine  
banks to close within ten days. These in-  
stitutions had granted to the farmers heavy  
credits, and they could not realise on the  
loans when the grain remained unsold.

Immediately following that, it was found  
necessary to sell grain, and from New York  
under date November 27th we have the fol-  
lowing:—

The Chicago correspondent of the New  
York "Times" states that during the last  
three months grain prices have steadily  
fallen, wheat dropping from 252 cents  
bushel to 129, corn from 119 cents to 96,  
and oats from 70 cents to 43. Foreign  
interests have been buying heavily, taking  
advantage of the low figures. Several  
Kansas and Nebraska grain elevators or  
warehouses have failed as the result of the  
falling market.

That represents in cents a fall in the price  
of wheat from 10s. 6d. to 5s. 5d. From

London under date 29th November we have the following:—

The Wheat Commission has lowered the price of imported wheat by 5s. per quarter.

And in this evening's newspaper appears the following in addition to what was quoted by the member for North-East Fremantle:—

Senator Russell, chairman of the Australian Wheat Board, said last night that the Government had received no official notice of the reported reduction by the Wheat Commission of all imported wheats by 5s. per quarter. Pending further news, he was not prepared to comment upon the matter, but in a day or two he would issue a statement with regard to the effect of the action on the Commonwealth, and on the chances of overseas sales. The reported fall in price in Britain represents a reduction of about 9d. per bushel for wheat for home consumption.

So, if six weeks ago the price of 9s. was fixed in the Eastern State, to-day that 9s. has decreased to 8s. 3d.

The Premier: No, it is worth more than the previous price.

Mr. BROWN: The Premier may have information which the ordinary business man does not get, but I am convinced that over and above the 10 million bushels sold to the Egyptian Government, at a rumoured price of 10s. per bushel, there has not been another 10 million bushels sold in the Commonwealth. And in view of the fact that we have 100 million bushels to export from Australia during the next 12 months, which will require 3,000,000 tons of shipping, amounting to 60,000 tons of shipping for every week in the year, and seeing that shipping is being amalgamated the world over, certainly not to the advantage of Australia, everything supports the belief that we shall not be getting even the 7s. 8d. which we got last year.

The Premier: You are quite wrong.

Mr. BROWN: Everyone is entitled to his own opinion. Every month of the year throughout the world wheat is being gathered, and what might be a fair price to-day might be quite too little or too much in a month's time. We have to take the experience of the world with regard to production and the quantity produced, and base our judgment on the past. In London there is an Australia Wheat Selling Committee, and I give this body credit for doing its utmost to get the highest price possible for Australian wheat. But apart from the wheat committee there is another body which not only controls the wheat of Australia but the wheat of the world, and that is the Baltic Exchange. The Baltic Exchange controls the world's food requirements as regards wheat and flour. This is a nice little exchange comprising 2,500 members, and the bulk of them happen to be millionaires. They do not give one second's consideration to the value which they should give to the producers or to the value which should be charged to the consumers. They are purely

speculators, brokers and money changers; in my opinion they are gamblers pure and simple. They gamble all the time irrespective of whether they are dealing with food or anything else, but when gambling in food the chances are that some of them will overstep the mark and possibly lose their acquaintance with the Baltic Exchange. It might be well for the primary producers to know how the price of bread will be effected.

Mr. Maley: Hear, hear; go on.

Mr. BROWN: Before touching on that, the only thing which in my opinion is likely to lead to a reduction in the price of wheat in Australia is the harvesting of a new crop. When this takes place it will cause speculators to dispose of their accumulated stocks. Regarding the price of bread, the price of wheat for flour at the present time is £16 7s. 6d.

The Premier: The baker gets a good cut out of it.

Mr. BROWN: I am not interested in the baking trade at present so the Premier's remark does not apply to me. I understand that bread is being sold at Bunbury at 4d. a loaf.

The Premier: And 5½d. in Perth.

Mr. BROWN: I am not sure whether the fourpenny loaf at Bunbury is a 2lb. loaf, or a 1½lb. loaf, or a loaf of any particular weight, or whether the bakers there are able to pay their way by charging only 4d.

Mr. Money: The price is 3½d. for a 2lb. loaf.

Mr. BROWN: All I can say is that that is remarkable. If food can be obtained so cheaply there, most of the people of Perth should be transported to Bunbury, but I think that the men who are doing business at that price are nearly fit to transfer to Claremont, because I am certain that they cannot possibly balance their books by supplying bread at that price. A good deal has been said with regard to the quantity of flour which can be obtained from a given quantity of wheat. I would point out to the farmers particularly, and to consumers generally, that from every 49 bushels of wheat the miller gets 2,000 lbs. weight of flour and 940 lbs. of bran and pollard in about equal proportions. At 7s. 8d. a bushel the miller pays £18 15s. 8d. for his wheat. Then he sells a ton of flour at £16 7s. 6d., and 47/100ths of a ton of offal, which at £11 a ton represents £5 3s. 9d. and gives a total of £21 11s. 3d. return for the 49 bushels of wheat. For the wheat he has paid £18 15s. 8d., which leaves him £2 15s. 7d. to cover not only his profit, but the whole of his milling charges and interest on his plant and investment generally. I am satisfied that the millers' percentage value is almost negligible. For the proposed 9s. a bushel wheat, the miller will pay £22 1s. If he gets the same amount for milling and profit, namely £2 15s. 7d., it will make the value of the 49 bushels of wheat equal to £24 16s. 7d. If we allow for the price of offal remaining at £11 per ton as at present, it will then

be necessary to sell the flour at £19 12s. 10d. a ton. With flour at that price it will be impossible for bakers to sell bread at 6d. per 2lb. loaf, because despite the fact that bakers at Bunbury and elsewhere are giving bread away, the bakers in the metropolitan area are to-day hardly able to balance their books with bread at 5½d. per loaf. A difference of a ½d. on the loaf of bread represents £2 12s. 6d. to £2 13s. per ton of flour and members can reckon for themselves what this will mean with flour at £19 12s. 10d. as against £16 7s. 6d. a ton. The difference will represent more than a halfpenny on a loaf of bread, so that the bakers will be from 10s. to 15s. per ton of flour worse off than they are at present. Another point to be considered is that if flour is not sold at £19 a ton or less, bakers will not be able to sell their bread at 6d. per loaf, and the whole of the community will require an increase of wages to the extent of 10 to 15 per cent. to make up for the 10 per cent. which the halfpenny increase in the loaf of bread would mean. In view of the fact that the wages of workers generally have recently been fixed by the Arbitration Court and in various conferences largely on the basis that the price of bread would not be increased, the result, if it is increased, will be that new conditions will be created and wages will again have to be increased.

Mr. Thomson: Why expect the farmers to carry it?

Mr. BROWN: I am not expecting the farmers to carry anything. All I am expecting the farmers to do is to accept in Western Australia a price similar to what they could get in other parts of the world. I do not want the consumer in this State to pay more for flour than the consumer in other parts of the world has to pay for it. If the Government will assure me that they will not sell any wheat in Australia in 1921 under 9s. a bushel, which ought to be a fair proposition for the Government, for they say they have already sold more than half of it and the Country party think they can sell the rest, I would have no objection to the amendment. I know, however, that the advisers of the Government would say that this would be a most foolish thing to do. The result will be that the Australian Wheat Board will endeavour to induce the consumers of Western Australia, which has a great carry-over and a difficulty in getting rid of the quantity of wheat that it grows, to pay more than they are entitled to pay for their loaf. I am going to support the amendment that the Prices Regulation Commission should fix the price. That body should be able to get all the necessary data up to date, not the data of five or six weeks ago, for the position has completely altered as to the world's price. When that price was fixed stocks were perhaps not available. The Commission should be able, in a month's time, that is about the middle of January or at latest the beginning of February, to complete their investigations, and that will

suit the case quite well. The price is already fixed at 7s. 8d. until the 31st December. The farmers are anxious to know what they will get for the next season's crop. I would not blame them if they asked 10s. or 15s. a bushel if it was possible for the world to pay that price. They can only get the world's price after all, whether the wheat is sold in Australia or in New York. When the Bill is in Committee I will do my utmost to assist the leader of the Opposition in depriving the Government of the right to fix the price of wheat, even upon the advice of the wheat-selling committee. That committee is one which does not take into consideration the consumer, but has for its object the securing of the highest possible price for Australian flour.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [10.55]: I am surprised at the attitude of the leader of the Opposition, and at that of the member for North-East Fremantle and the member for Subiaco. Last evening the House discussed various measures whose object was the betterment of certain sections of the community. Hon. members rightly expressed their views and voiced their opinions, and did their utmost to secure special concessions for those they represented. When anything appertaining to the farming community comes up, however, the leader of the Opposition rises in all his fury and states that members on the cross benches are governed by an executive and caucus, and have to do what they are told. Such a statement is absurd and wrong. I have been a member of this party for the past three years. I say without fear of contradiction that never once in that time has the executive endeavoured to dictate to me as to what I should do in Parliament.

Hon. P. Collier: You sit at the executive meetings every month.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so, but the hon. member does not understand the position.

Hon. P. Collier: It is the only party in politics which has ever done this.

[Mr. Lutey took the Chair.]

Mr. THOMSON: The statement of the leader of the Opposition is absurd. We are not compelled to go there. We are invited to be present, and may take part in the deliberations if we so desire. We go there voluntarily, and of our own free will and accord.

Hon. P. Collier: You do not. It is in your constitution.

Mr. Johnston: It is not.

Mr. THOMSON: I shall be pleased to hand the leader of the Opposition a copy of the constitution. For political purposes he has made this statement.

Hon. P. Collier: I am speaking facts.

Mr. THOMSON: The statement is incorrect, as incorrect as many other statements he made in the course of his speech.

Hon. P. Collier: It is absolutely true.

Mr. THOMSON: It is incorrect. The leader of the Opposition opened his speech by claiming credit for the party to which he belongs for having introduced and inaugurated this wheat marketing scheme. He is justly entitled to that credit. Members of the cross benches have every desire to give the leader of the Opposition and his party every honour for what they have done. What a remarkable change has taken place in the attitude of the hon. member! It is distinctly stated in the preamble of the Bill, for which he has claimed credit, that for the marketing of the harvest on behalf of the growers the price shall be based on that obtainable on the London wheat market with certain deductions. He took credit for having saved the farmer from ruin and penury. Now, because the price is considered, in the opinion of a certain section, to be beyond what is said to be a fair thing from the consumer's point of view, the hon. member says he will see that we shall not get a fair price for our wheat.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not say anything of the kind.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member did make that statement.

Hon. P. Collier: I appeal to the Chair.

Mr. THOMSON: I withdraw the remark. Those were not exactly the words he used.

Hon. P. Collier: I said no such thing.

Mr. THOMSON: He said he would not allow the farmers to dictate to the House or to fix the price at which they could sell their commodity. The leader of the Opposition was very keen in advocating, as he did last night, that tributaries should have a just reward for their labours. It was right that they as working men should receive the ruling rate of wage in existence in any particular district before a mining company could claim any percentage from the tribute. He was successful in embodying an amendment to that effect in the Bill. I wonder whether he is willing to give the farming community the ruling rate of wages in existence in any district.

Hon. P. Collier: I have never said anything to the contrary.

Mr. THOMSON: Then why not let the farmers get a fair price for their wheat?

Hon. P. Collier: I am quite willing.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. THOMSON: It is the first time the leader of the Opposition has said the farming community are getting more than they are entitled to. He says they are not entitled to the market price of wheat to-day.

Hon. P. Collier: If you had listened to what I said and yapped less you would know the purport of my remarks.

Mr. THOMSON: He said that the farming community had been saved by the Government, and that the Government had guaranteed a price to them. I am prepared to give credit to the Government for the introduction of that measure, but I say it was

brought in to save Western Australia as well as the farming community. If the farmers had not been able to produce, the people of the State would have been in a very parlous position. Take the case of the guarantee. Did the farmers get the full price which was guaranteed? I wish to impress upon the leader of the Opposition, in case it has escaped his notice, that the price which was guaranteed was never more than the price that was in sight as regards the world's market.

Hon. P. Collier: The price was in sight? It was guaranteed 12 months ahead, guaranteed before the crops were put in. How can you say the price was in sight?

Mr. THOMSON: The price guaranteed was the price estimated as safe after a thorough deliberation by those who had a knowledge of the position. In their opinion the Commonwealth Government, backed by the Governments of the States, were justified in saying to the farmers of Australia, "Put in wheat and you shall receive a price of 4s. per bushel." I defy the hon. member to prove that a single one of the wheat pools of the Australian Commonwealth has cost either the Commonwealth Government or any State Government one brass farthing.

Hon. P. Collier: No one has alleged that.

Mr. THOMSON: The whole of the expense has been borne by the wheat pools, or rather the farming community. True, there was a written guarantee given by the various Governments in order to save a section of the community. The hon. member himself, when Minister for Mines, was responsible for guaranteeing a certain price for copper; and I think we all agreed with him that at that period it was essential to protect every industry.

Hon. P. Collier: I am not complaining about the guarantee for the wheat, and I never have complained about it.

Mr. THOMSON: The leader of the Opposition did complain that the farming community had been given a guarantee. He made a great point of that.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not, and I protest against the hon. member misrepresenting my statements. I have never expressed any sentiment whatever against the guarantee. I supported the guarantee before the war period.

Mr. Willcock: The guarantee was a good thing for the farmers.

Mr. THOMSON: It was also a good thing for Western Australia, and a good thing for the people whom hon. members opposite claim to represent. That guarantee meant a cheaper loaf in Western Australia than in any other part of the world, and it also meant that the people generally had work to do. The guarantee meant work for the railway employees, and for the lumpers first in stacking the wheat and then in putting it on board ship. As a matter of fact, all the business of this country depends on the staple industries of wheat and wool. Those

industries have supported the finances of Western Australia, and in fact the finances of the Commonwealth. The leader of the Opposition and the member for North-East Fremantle come along now, when they have an idea that the farming community are possibly going to reap some advantage, to reap their just due, and raise objections. I for one, as representative of a farming district, say that if the amendment indicated by the leader of the Opposition is carried and the price for wheat is fixed below the world's parity, while the Wheat Marketing Board of Australia have already decided that wheat for local consumption shall be sold at less than world's parity—

Hon. P. Collier: They have not.

Mr. THOMSON: If it is to be established as a principle that the farming community shall not get the full market price for their products at this stage, then the farming community will have every justification to come to Parliament and demand that, since Parliament has affirmed such a principle in an Act of Parliament, a higher price than world's parity shall be fixed for periods during which the world's parity is too low to enable the farmers to pay their way.

Hon. P. Collier: I shall be prepared to support any such proposal.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member may say that, but I doubt very much whether effect would ever be given to such a proposal. The leader of the Opposition has expressed his willingness that the farming community should receive for their wheat a price governed by the cost of production plus a reasonable profit.

Hon. P. Collier: A generous profit, I said.

Mr. THOMSON: Very well. When I asked the leader of the Opposition by way of interjection how he was going to arrive at the cost of production, he airily waved his hand and said that that matter could easily be adjusted.

Hon. P. Collier: Balderdash!

Mr. THOMSON: We have to bear in mind the fact that the same cost of production would apply to no two parcels of, say, 1,000 bushels each. One may see, side by side, a paddock cultivated by one farmer that is going to produce 14 to 20 bushels per acre, and another paddock, cultivated by another farmer under the same conditions and with the same manures and planted with the same seed, which by some strange freak of fortune will probably yield only three or four bushels per acre.

Hon. P. Collier: The whole of that argument applies to price-fixing to-day. While 9s. may be profitable to one farmer, it may not be profitable to another.

Mr. THOMSON: Is the hon. member prepared to give every farmer the cost of producing his wheat plus a reasonable profit?

Hon. P. Collier: Not to a farmer like you, but to a farmer who works; not to a farmer who builds a church that falls down.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member is indulging in flights of imagination. I never yet built a church that fell down.

Hon. P. Collier: Well, a church that cracked very badly, anyhow.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member thinks he has got hold of something very funny. If the rest of the statements made by the hon. member here are as true as that statement, then I say he has never made a correct statement in this Chamber. The member for North-East Fremantle had a good deal to say. He considered that the farmer was no philanthropist; but he added that he had no personal objection to the farmer being placed in a sound position. The hon. member said that he was willing to give the farmer a price based on the average cost of production. Suppose the wages demanded by the Australian Worker's Union, which wages the union are desirous of having made a common rule throughout Australia—

Hon. P. Collier: There is no attempt to apply that scale of wages outside New South Wales.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course not. If that scale of wages is imposed in New South Wales, we can rest assured that the farm workers of Western Australia will be quite content to accept £1 per week while similar workers in New South Wales are receiving £6 per week.

Hon. P. Collier: You are the most blithering idiot that ever got into this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. THOMSON: We know that an effort has been made in New South Wales to impose on the farming community a very high scale of wages indeed. If the production of wheat is ever governed by the conditions claimed in New South Wales by the Australian Workers' Union, the leader of the Opposition and the member for North-East Fremantle will be called upon to pay considerably more than 6d. for the 21b. loaf.

Hon. P. Collier: You are getting immigrants now to work for 25s. per week.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not think any immigrants work for 25s. per week. I have no desire to traverse the whole of the statements which have been made beyond challenging at once one which was made by the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin). Dealing with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., that hon. member stated that undue influence had been used by members on the cross benches to compel the Government to give the handling of the wheat to the Westralian Farmers. That statement is absolutely incorrect.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Members said that themselves.

Mr. THOMSON: Since I have been a member of the Country party I have never once been coerced by any single member of the executive of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, as it was formerly known, or by the Primary Producers' Association, as it is now known. Nor have I been approached by any representative of the Westralian



Farmers, Ltd., as to how I should vote on the Bill. The member for North-East Fremantle contended that the handling of the wheat by the Westralian Farmers constituted a monopoly and that it was very dangerous. I interjected that we had nothing to be ashamed of regarding the administration of the wheat scheme in Western Australia. Under any scheme such as the member for North-East Fremantle apparently desires to see in operation, the position might not be so satisfactory. At the present time there has been speculation and misappropriation in connection with the New South Wales scheme. Even Cabinet Ministers there are accused at the present time of having received £500 so that matters should develop in a certain way. No such accusation has ever been brought against any member of the local scheme.

The Premier: Neither do we know that it is true in the case of the New South Wales Ministers.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not say that the accusation is true, but we know that there has been an inquiry and I do not think that Mr. Georgeson has attended the court yet.

Hon. P. Collier: You are hard put to it.

Mr. THOMSON: Then we can look at the administration of the scheme in South Australia which has been by no means as satisfactory as the administration of the scheme in Western Australia. Yet the leader of the Opposition has accused the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., of being a monopolistic concern, operating in the interests of the farming community. Members must realise that it was essential that we should cut out the various agents at the sidings. The cost of handling wheat in Western Australia to-day is less than in any other State in the Commonwealth. The Westralian Farmers, Ltd., with the co-operative societies spread throughout the country, are able to handle the wheat at a lower charge than any other concern in Western Australia. Surely it is only just to give the company the work of handling the farmers' products.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you not receive it now?

Mr. THOMSON: It is economical handling at the present time.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: In this case, the Government carries the responsibility. In New South Wales, the people handling the wheat carry the responsibility.

Mr. THOMSON: They do not.

Hon. P. Collier: You will deny any statement.

Mr. THOMSON: I want to show that, in my opinion, it is desirable that the handling of the wheat should be vested in one company. Prior to the war, when various agents were handling wheat throughout the country, there are often three or four agents at one siding. The expenses of those agents had to come out of the proceeds from the farmers' wheat. To-day we have one acquiring agent and he is able to inform the

farmers that he will receive the wheat up to a certain date at the siding and that makes for cheaper handling which is of benefit to the farmers. The member for Subiaco said that we were gambling with food and that we were gambling with something which was dangerous. If there is one section of the community which gambles with its products, it is the farming community. In the case of a coal mine, for instance, the proprietors know to a fraction what it costs them to take out a ton of coal. The same thing applies with regard to timber, but I defy any man in or out of this House to prove to the satisfaction of any farmer the cost of the production of a bushel of wheat. Of course, we could take one given paddock of so many acres and we could fix the price per bushel for that small area, but taken over the whole harvest, it would be impossible to arrive at a satisfactory price. One man I know regarded his crop as a splendid one, and yet he could not strip three bushels to the acre. The leader of the Opposition had stated that that man was not entitled to 9s. a bushel.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not say he was not entitled to it.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member said that a little while ago.

Hon. P. Collier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I cannot allow the member for Katanning to continue to misrepresent me.

Mr. SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Hon. P. Collier: The member for Katanning said that I had stated that the farmer was not entitled to 9s. per bushel for his wheat. I made no such statement. The hon. member is apparently incapable of understanding.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Boulder has taken exception to the remarks made by the member for Katanning. I ask the hon. member to withdraw the statement.

Mr. THOMSON: I withdraw the statement. May I ask whether the member for Boulder is in order in stating that I am incapable of understanding? I ask that that statement should be withdrawn, too.

Hon. P. Collier: One is a statement of fact and the other is a matter of opinion.

Mr. SPEAKER: I did not hear the statement which the member for Katanning has asked should be withdrawn, but he has taken exception to it and I would ask the member for Boulder to withdraw.

Hon. P. Collier: Of course, the statement which the member for Katanning made was a question of fact. When I said that he was incapable of understanding, that was only a matter of opinion. However, if it is out of order, I withdraw it.

Mr. Troy: You did not get any change out of that.

Mr. THOMSON: It is a question of opinion as to whether the member for Boulder was misrepresented by me or not. However, I have no desire to continue the matter. The leader of the Opposition has been

anxious apparently to misrepresent me on more than one occasion.

Hon. P. Collier: Well, you can pull me up any time.

Mr. THOMSON: It is not worth it. If there is one section of the community which may be stated to gamble in connection with an industry it is the farming community. Although he may put in the best wheat under the most favourable circumstances, he is entirely dependent upon the weather as to whether he succeeds or not in securing a profitable crop in return. I was sorry to hear the member for Subiaco state that he will support an amendment of the measure as indicated during the evening. I am rather surprised when one considers the experience that hon. member has, that he should object to the farmer getting the world's parity for the wheat. If any such amendment be carried and the price of wheat is fixed at a lower rate here than exists in the Eastern States, we will have a curious anomaly under which the farmers in the East will be getting a higher price than the farmers in Western Australia. They get a higher average per acre than do we in Western Australia. The leader of the Opposition considers he is representing the consumers. I am representing both producers and consumers, and I want both to get a fair deal. I hope the hon. member will not persist in his amendment. I will support the second reading.

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [11.21]: It might be argued that but for the backing of the community our wheat producers could not have pulled through the stressful years of war. On the other hand it must be remembered that but for the wheat producers the consumers would have been in a fix. We seem to have drifted to the vexed question of the world's market value. The leader of the Opposition quoted Mr. Prowse as having said in the House of Representatives that he held so much in the pool that for every shilling increase in price over and above the 7s. 8d., he would receive £1,000. If Mr. Prowse is in that fortunate position he ought to have some sympathy for the poor unfortunate devil on the margin, for whom every increase of 1s. means the difference between profit and loss. I do not know whether Mr. Prowse was merely talking through his hat, with a view to showing what a big wheat-grower he is.

Hon. P. Collier: You know how he stood for the 7s. 8d. for the New South Wales supply.

Mr. MALEY: When the Australian Wheat Board fixed the price at 7s. 8d. it was generally felt that the price was a fair one. But that was fixed 12 months ahead on a rising market.

Hon. P. Collier: Which has since been converted into a falling market.

Mr. MALEY: It has never fallen.

Hon. P. Collier: It is falling now.

Mr. MALEY: Since the price was fixed at 7s. 8d. the market value has gone to a

considerably higher level, and it is still on that higher level. The basis on which the existing price of 9s. was fixed was this: in London the price was fixed on the basis of 96s. per quarter.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You mean 45s.

Mr. MALEY: I mean 96s. per quarter. That was the controlled price. Within the last few months wheat was released from control in the Old Country, and it immediately went to 120s. per quarter.

Hon. P. Collier: That always happens when first control is released.

Mr. MALEY: To-day it has eased a trifle, and is now standing at 115s.

Hon. P. Collier: For sellers. Buyers 110s.

Mr. MALEY: The price of 120s. per quarter works out at 15s. per bushel. Our present harvest has to be sold on a c.i.f. basis. For our previous pools the Imperial Government paid at f.o.b. rates, and paid the money before the wheat was on board, taking the risk of storage. But it has now been arranged that the wheat shall be sold c.i.f., which means that the seller has to do the chartering and has to arrange freights. In face of the huge accumulation of products held in Australia, the problem of obtaining shipping is as acute as ever. If there is anything at all operating against the producing interests of Australia, it is the shipping combine. Knowing that the wheat sellers in Australia would have to charter shipping, the shipping combine, immediately the wheat control was released, increased freights by a couple of pounds per ton, which brought the rate up to £7 10s. per ton, or 4s. per bushel. Therefore it will be seen that wheat at 15s. per bushel on the London market on a c.i.f. basis, does not much exceed the fair selling price of 10s. The railage to port, which is an additional charge on the seller, represents an average of 4d. per bushel. So, when I said that 9s. was about the world's parity, I was not very far wide of the mark. In the leading columns of the "West Australian" a little while ago, publicity was given to the astounding assertion that the price of the 2lb. loaf was likely to rise to a shilling. The leader writer of that journal, who has the responsibility of directing the public opinion, should not have made an assertion like that without having first assured himself of the facts.

Mr. Willcock: He said the world's parity was 13s. 4d.

Mr. MALEY: It has never been 13s. 4d.

Mr. Willcock: It was claimed so at that time.

Mr. MALEY: Yes, one man said we were getting 17s. per bushel. Some small parcels may have been sold on the basis of 17s. c.i.f. Before bread could reach the price of a shilling per 2lb. loaf, taking it on the basis of the present price of wheat which is fixed till the 31st of December next at 7s. 8d. a bushel, wheat would have to advance to approximately 22s. a bushel.

It has been stated on behalf of the Australian Wheat Board that for every 1s. 2d. advance in the price of wheat per bushel the baker would have to advance the price of his loaf by one halfpenny. If members work out the proportion on the basis of the present price of 5½d. per loaf, they will find that by the time bread reached 1s. a loaf wheat would have to be in the vicinity of 22s. a bushel. I sometimes think that many of these statements are made merely for political purposes. No more misleading or irresponsible statement has ever been made by a person charged with an important office than the statement made by the leader writer in the columns of the "West Australian." I wish to refer to the methods and cost of handling in this State as compared with the other States. It is to the credit of our wheat marketing scheme officials that we have secured such good results from the pooling system in this State. They are very creditable in comparison with the conditions which have existed in the Eastern States. The gross rate for the complete service in the present year, that is the price paid to the acquiring agents by the scheme in New South Wales, is 2½d. per bushel. The same work is done under the agency of the West-Australian Farmers, Ltd., at a cost of 1½d. per bushel, while in some instances where it is taken from the truck direct and then stacked the cost has been 1d. per bushel less than in New South Wales. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) interjected that the acquiring agents in the Eastern States were carrying the responsibility. After all we have heard about the condition of the wheat pools in the other States, even if the agents are held responsible for the awful loss and damage that has resulted, I do not think they will be able to meet the liability incurred by their slipshod methods.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That has expired.

Mr. MALEY: The losses could be charged up in different ways. If losses occur through mice, weevil or floods, there are ways by which the acquiring agents can wriggle out of their liabilities under their contracts. I should like to say to the member for Subiaco (Mr. Brown) and to the consuming public of this State that the cost of the 2lb. loaf here will not be too heavy, even on the basis of present prices. It is not likely to exceed 6d. per loaf, but if it does show signs of becoming expensive, the public can very well make their own bread, and by a little industry save themselves the supposed heavy costs. I have to provide for a family of eight.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You are lucky.

Mr. MALEY: I intend to give my experience regarding the provision of bread for my family for a year, and I have calculated on a pretty fair basis. I buy my flour by the 150lb. bag.

Mr. Willcock: Do not you grist it?

Mr. MALEY: I would sooner buy it fresh from the mill than grist it as provided under the scheme, and then have to stack it with the risk of it going mouldy or getting damaged by weevil. On an average I do not procure more than one 150lb. bag of flour every six weeks. The present price of a bag of flour in my district is 26s. If I procure twelve bags a year, that is a bag a month, it is far more than is ever used, and the cost of my flour for the 12 months for a household of eight would not be more than £16 or £17. This works out at a couple of pounds per head of the family per year.

Mr. Willcock: What do you pay for firewood? Nothing.

Mr. MALEY: I have to pay for it.

Mr. Willcock: If you were living in the town you would have to buy firewood or gas at a pretty high rate.

Mr. Hickmott: He is talking of bread, not of firewood.

Mr. Willcock: But the cost of firewood must be allowed for in the cost of the bread.

Mr. MALEY: To bake the bread at home would not take more than the quantity of firewood used for the ordinary household cooking, and it would involve very little extra trouble once the oven was hot. If the occasion arises when a section of the community can make a little sacrifice—

Mr. Willcock: Ask the member for Subiaco what proportion to cost his firewood represents.

Mr. MALEY: My firewood costs the value of a man's time to get it. The bread bill for my family therefore does not exceed £2 per head per year. While the other portions of the household menu are being cooked it is just as easy to bake a few loaves of bread at the same time.

Mr. Chesson: It costs too much for firewood.

Mr. MALEY: I presume the hon. member is getting his firewood to cook other articles of food. Whilst these are cooking in the oven it should not cost anything extra to bake a few loaves of bread.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You cannot bake bread and cook other articles at the same time.

Mr. Chesson: You do not know much about it.

Mr. MALEY: I hope the Bill will be passed, and that the amount proposed for the fixing of the price of wheat to be placed in the hands of the Prices Regulation Commission will not be passed. I do not know whether the gentlemen who form this Commission are omniscient.

Mr. SPEAKER: That question had better be discussed in Committee.

Mr. MALEY: I defy anyone to say that the cost of production of wheat is anything else than individual.

Hon. P. Collier: The wheat board must be made up of very clever people. They fixed it all right.

Mr. MALEY: That is the business for which they were appointed and for which they are qualified. It will be impossible for anyone to estimate the cost of production per bushel of wheat, and make that cost apply as between one district and another.

Hon. P. Collier: What was the guiding factor when they fixed the price of wheat at 6s. and 7s.9

Mr. MALEY: That was the market value.

Hon. P. Collier: It was below it.

Mr. MALEY: The leader of the Opposition has been out of the Chamber most of the time that I have been speaking. Of course I readily admit that he is one of the most assiduous in his duties as a member of the House.

Mr. TROY: I move--

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [11.45]: I support the motion so far as it provides for the marketing of this season's wheat. In Committee I shall support the amendment suggested by the leader of the Opposition fixing the price of wheat for local consumption at a lesser price than that fixed by the Wheat Board and the Government of Western Australia. The price fixed last season of 7s. 8d. per bushel constitutes a fair and reasonable return to the producer. I guarantee that if last season or this season the farmer in Western Australia had been assured that he would receive 7s. 8d. per bushel for his wheat, we would have had half as much again under wheat as we have to-day. Guarantee me 7s. 8d. per bushel for wheat for the next two years, and I will start clearing land as fast as it is possible in order to grow wheat.

Mr. Hickmott: If you were offered 7s. 8d. or 9s. which would you accept?

Mr. TROY: That is not the question. I am considering what is a fair and reasonable price. The wheat last year was sold at 7s. 8d. in Western Australia for local consumption, and the farmers of this State will receive for the whole of their wheat any amount up to 9s. Up to date they have received 8s. 6d. less freight, and there will be another 10d. or 1s. to come which will ensure the farmer receiving a clear 9s. per bushel for all his wheat placed in last season's pool. Any man who wants more than that is selfish. The farmer even on an average of 10 bushels at 9s. per bushel will receive a very good return for the labour entailed in the production of the wheat. I do not pretend to be more philanthropic than any other member of this Chamber. I resent the suggestion made by the farmers' representatives that the whole of the country depends upon them and the people they represent, that the bottom would fall out of the country were it not for them, and that their labours have won the war. We are told that all the farmers' sons went to the war and that all the farmers that were available also

went, and that at the same time they provided all the sustenance required by the people of this country and paid all the taxes. Truly they were a most remarkable body of men. One would imagine that such a marvellous set of people, capable of such wonderful achievements, would not be dependent at all upon this country to provide a 5s. guarantee, and yet they are rushing to the Commonwealth for a guarantee for the next three years. If the farmers are so independent, and if they require no help from the people of the country, why do they not stand on their own feet? Why do not they take over the marketing of their wheat whilst clamouring that they want nothing from anybody? They have standing behind them and their operations all the people of this country. Had the people of Australia, through their Governments, not guaranteed a payment of 5s. per bushel on the wheat production of this season, not half the wheat would have been produced that has been produced. Were it not for the accommodation provided by this country, were it not for the backing given to the farmers and for the nursing they and their production receive until a good market is found, then the farmers of this country could not carry on for one day. If the farmer is so independent and resents the suggestion that the country has stood to him, why does he not stand on his own? Why does not he say, "Our pool will pay for everything. We want no accommodation or backing from the country"? Then the country would want nothing from him, and would agree that he was entitled to get the best price he could in the world's markets for his products. My own view is that the real farmer is grateful, and that it is the squealing marionettes who pretend to represent him in this House that are ungrateful.

Mr. Griffiths: You are a wonder.

Mr. TROY: Nobody suggests that the hon. member interjecting is wonderful or even ordinary. He is regarded as a fussy little busy-body prepared to carry out the dictates of a body of men who sit as a council of farmers. They are St. George's-terrace farmers, men like McGibbon, who does not grow a bushel of wheat, men like Shallcross, one of the biggest mining humbugs in this country. They are the executive who, the late conference of farmers decided, should dictate the policy of the farmers' representatives in this House, should dictate whether those representatives must support this Government or that Government.

Mr. Griffiths: You are wonderful.

Mr. TROY: The hon. member is not even an ordinary character, and it is well known that as a farmer he was a failure.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. TROY: Mr. Monger is president of the council, and he is a farmer, but he is a grazier to a larger extent than he is a farmer. Moreover, though I have the highest respect for Mr. Monger, I think he is more interested in other pursuits than he is in

farming. Other members of the council are Mr. M. T. Padbury, Mr. T. S. Teesdale, Mr. E. H. Absolom—by the way, is Mr. Absolom a wheat-grower?

Mr. Johnston: He is a fruit-grower at Wagin.

Hon. P. Collier: He runs a newspaper at Wagin.

Mr. SPEAKER: What is the hon. member quoting? Is it anything in connection with the Bill?

Mr. TROY: I am quoting from the "Primary Producer."

Mr. SPEAKER: The "Primary Producer" is not under discussion.

Mr. TROY: I am quoting something connected with the Bill, because the Bill would never have been introduced and the price of 9s. now fixed would never have been the subject of debate in this House, were it not for the gentlemen whose names I am quoting from a list published in the "Primary Producer."

Mr. SPEAKER: We are not discussing what happened; we are discussing the Bill.

Mr. TROY: I am discussing the Bill, absolutely. There is no question about that. I have no intention of discussing anything else. I am discussing the gentlemen who are responsible for the price of wheat being fixed at 9s., which I consider is a defect in connection with the whole arrangement for the marketing of the next harvest. The people of this country can claim to have an interest in the wheat pool. That is the position. It is not as if the farmers were the only body interested. They would be that if they stood alone. If they had financed their own proposition from their own resources, and if they had provided their own guarantee, if they were not receiving the financial backing of this country, then the other taxpayers of Western Australia could not claim to be interested in the pool at all. Why do not the farmers go to the financial institutions and get from them the accommodation which they are now receiving from the citizens of Western Australia? If the farmers did go to the financial institutions, the general taxpayer of this country who stands behind the wheat pool, who has financed the pool and has nursed it, and is still nursing it until such time as the wheat shall have been sold, could not claim to be interested in the wheat pool as to-day he is undoubtedly interested in it by reason of the fact of his having financed it. It is all very well for the farmers to say that the pool pays for itself. I admit it has done that. But if the bottom fell out of the pool to-morrow and the wheat did not realise the price guaranteed, who would stand behind the pool then? The people of Western Australia, who are the guarantors. The people of Western Australia, having given that accommodation and that security, are entitled to have a voice in the price which is fixed for the food supply of Western Australia, anyhow.

Mr. Harrison: Possibly they are already covered by present sales.

Mr. TROY: We have no guarantee of that. Were it not for the accommodation provided by the Government of Western Australia and the Commonwealth Government, there would be such a panicky position in this country to-day that wheat would not bring 1s. per bushel, that wheat would be unsaleable. Take the present position in Canada. Canada has a panic to-day, and there is a demand by the Canadian farmers that the Government shall create a compulsory pool. That is an indication that the Canadian farmer, standing on his own, financing on his own, but has not been able to realise any satisfactory price for his wheat. It is an indication, too, that the price of wheat has fallen. Now the Canadian farmer is approaching the Government in that dominion and asking for accommodation. He is asking the Government to nurse him there until such time as arrangements can be made to ship his wheat away, so that he may be able to procure a better price for his commodity. When the Canadian farmer secures that accommodation from the Government—and the people there are behind him in his endeavour to get a fair price in the markets of the world—then the people of Canada can claim that they shall have a voice in fixing the price of wheat for local consumption. That is the only reason why the people in Western Australia should have a right to be considered when the price is being fixed for this commodity, the production of which they have guaranteed in the first instance.

Hon. P. Collier: The obligation is mutual. The State renders assistance to the farmer by guaranteeing him a fair price for his commodity and the farmer assists the rest of the people by growing the wheat and making it available at a fair price.

Mr. Griffiths: That is only reasonable.

Mr. TROY: We admit that. That is our point. We never sidestepped the obligation. There has not been one objection from this side of the House to the granting of a guarantee.

Hon. P. Collier: Or a fair price for the wheat, either.

The Premier: You are all wheat-growers on that side of the House.

Mr. TROY: Members of the Opposition can always claim that they have stood for that principle. The wheat scheme as it stands now would never have been in existence if it had not been for the initiative displayed by members of the Labour party. When it was a question of controlling wheat, however, the first to squeal were the farmers who said that the Government were using their money to finance their wheat. It was no such thing. The Government were carrying on the farmers with the finances of the people of the State. The Labour party can claim to have initiated the principle of wheat control and we always stood for a guarantee. The Labour Government in New South Wales has given a guarantee of 7s. 6d. per bushel, which was 2s. 6d. per bushel in addition to that promised by the

Prime Minister. During the last Federal election campaign the Federal Government guaranteed 5s. per bushel at the siding but they never carried out their promise. The New South Wales Government are giving their farmers, within a few months of their election to office, the extra guarantee of 7s. 6d. I do resent the insinuation that members of the Country party are the only representatives of the primary producers of Western Australia. They are not. That party represents a very small section and, unfortunately, a small section which is becoming one-eyed and selfish because of the attitude adopted by those members in this Chamber. I represent the primary producers just as much as the Country party members, and a section quite as important, if not more so, as the farmers.

Mr. Griffiths: You do not represent them any more than we do.

Mr. TROY: If the farmers dropped out to-morrow, the primary producers I refer to would carry on without them. The primary producers on the goldfields include the men who shear the sheep and the men who are working in the mines. Yet we are told by a little one-eyed coterie that they are the only primary producers in the country.

Mr. Griffiths: Don't talk nonsense.

Mr. TROY: If the world depended upon that little mob, there would not be a single bushel grown in Western Australia.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. TROY: I have held all along that the farmers will regret the advice given to them by their representatives in this House, to adopt a policy which is utterly selfish and which will do great injury to other industries in Western Australia, which they pretend their organisation now represents. If they are going to get the price for their commodity which they demand—

Mr. Johnston: It has been accepted right throughout the Commonwealth.

Mr. TROY: What will happen to the people in the remote areas who require to have their necessities carried some 600 or 700 miles on the railway? If they are to be asked to pay a price which is most unreasonable, and which the farmer knows is not reasonable, the time will come when the farmers will regret the step, because an agitation will be started which will affect them very much. The demand of the farmers in New South Wales for the biggest price they could get, has been responsible for much of their trouble there. If they stand out for the last shilling, then everyone else will do the same, and no body of men will be satisfied to refer any claim to the Arbitration Court when the farmer will refer his claim to no one, but have his production valued by virtue of such influence as he may possess in a Chamber such as this. Moreover, we cannot get away from this fact, as mentioned by the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) that a feeling is gaining ground that the

Country party and the Westralian Farmers Ltd., which organisation will receive the handling of the wheat under this Bill, are one and the same organisation. We know that they use their political influence in this Chamber to secure ends which they could not achieve otherwise.

Mr. Johnston: What is their political influence?

Mr. TROY: It has been apparent in the transactions of the Industries Assistance Board and of the Government during the past few years. Why did the Government the other day refuse to accept a discount of 9s. per ton on superphosphate supplied to farmers on the Industries Assistance Board and insist upon accepting a discount of 7s. per ton? Was it in the interests of the farmer or of the Westralian Farmers Ltd.? Unquestionably, it was in the interests of the latter. There is a feeling growing in this country—and resent it as they may, the proofs are unquestionably to be found in the transactions with the Government—that they are making use of their influence in this Chamber for ulterior purposes.

Mr. Johnston: That is unworthy of the hon. member.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in accusing members of ulterior motives.

Mr. TROY: I did not do so.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member accused the members on the cross benches of using their power in the House for ulterior purposes.

Mr. TROY: I did not.

Mr. SPEAKER: Then my hearing must be faulty.

Mr. TROY: I hope you will consult the "Hansard" notes.

Mr. SPEAKER: No, I will not refer to "Hansard"; it is not necessary.

Mr. TROY: What I said was that there is abroad the impression that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are endeavouring to use certain members of the House for ulterior purposes.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is very different.

Mr. TROY: That is the statement I made. There is that feeling abroad in the country. If that sort of thing can be done, the time will come when other parties will do it, and we shall have Tammany Hall in all its hatefulness.

Mr. Johnston: The Westralian Farmers Ltd. have never tried to do anything of the sort.

Mr. TROY: The hon. member is so good-natured that he would put the best possible construction on anything and everything; he is so pathetically innocent that such a thing would never occur to him. I will support the Bill because it would be a pity for the country if the wheat pool were abandoned.

Hon. P. Collier: We ought to keep it for all time.

The Premier: If we do, I hope the Bill will not have to be renewed every year.

Mr. TROY: I hope the people who produce the wheat will always have facilities for marketing it to the best advantage.

Hon. P. Collier: With the assistance of the Government, if necessary.

Mr. TROY: But so long as the farmers depend on the people generally for security, accommodation and guarantee, for so long must the farmers recognise that the whole of the people are entitled to a say in the price to be paid for the wheat. When the farmers can finance their own operations without any guarantee from the people, then the farmers will perhaps be justified in insisting upon getting the top price for local requirements.

Hon. P. Collier: If we have to stand behind them, we require a voice in the fixing of the price.

Mr. TROY: That is the position. I hope the pool continues, but so long as the Government guarantee a price for wheat and the people of the State are responsible for the guarantee, the people are all interested in the fixing of the price of wheat for local consumption.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [12.15]: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [12.16]: I agree with the member for North-East Fremantle that when first the wheat pool was introduced a definite promise was given to those concerned in the marketing of wheat that their existing rights would not be interfered with. That promise has not been fulfilled. The Westralian Farmers Ltd. were not then mixed up with wheat marketing.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There was no Westralian Farmers Ltd. then, or at least they had started only a few months previously.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The promise given to the wheat buyers has been broken, and political influence alone is responsible for the Westralian Farmers Ltd. getting the contract. I believe that, the people believe that, and the Press of the Eastern States believe that. It is generally believed throughout the country.

Mr. Griffiths: Go on believing it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I will. If they have not done it in this instance, they have done it in other instances.

Hon. P. Collier: And would do it here if they could.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The member for Katanning said it was impossible to arrive at the production cost of wheat. Yet the same hon. member is able to tell us exactly what wheat is going to bring in 12 months' time! If it is impossible to arrive at the production cost of wheat, how is it done in the case of sugar? The authorities have definitely fixed the price of sugar, basing it on production costs.

Mr. Harrison: The production cost of wheat varies on each farm.

Mr. WILLCOCK: So, too, in regard to sugar.

Mr. Griffiths: Quote anything but sugar; it is the biggest steal in Australia.

Mr. WILLCOCK: This present wheat steal eclipses it. The farmers are getting for their wheat three times as much as ever they previously got.

Mr. Hickmott: It might not cost anything to take it off, because you might get none.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The farmers are doing better now than they have ever done before or are ever likely to do.

Mr. Griffiths: At Bruce Rock recently the crops were ruined by hail.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But the farmer enjoys advantages which enable him to recover from his losses. The insurance companies are prepared to insure against fire and hail. If a man neglects to insure his house and the place is burnt down, it is his own fault. The farmers should insure against damage by hail. The member for Greenough (Mr. Maley) proved to his own satisfaction that the world's parity for wheat was about 9s. 6d. a bushel, and he found fault because the leader of the Opposition was not in the Chamber at the moment to hear him prove it. Everything that I have been able to read by world's authorities during the last few months goes to show that the price of wheat is bound to fall.

Hon. P. Collier: That was known and that is the reason why 9s. a bushel was fixed here.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Every authority I have been able to consult predicts a fall in the price of wheat, and when the fall does occur, the Government by fixing the price here at 9s. a bushel, will be robbing the people of this State. In my opinion the price will fall to considerably under 9s. If the farmers are going to continue to demand the last half-penny from our people for their wheat, we shall have to re-consider the policy of the State with regard to railway freights and advances.

Mr. Griffiths: Be fair! Have they received such prices during the war?

Mr. WILLCOCK: But for the fact that a fairy godmother came along and said, "Here is the money whether we dispose of your wheat or not," the farmers would have been nowhere. The farmers have done better out of the prices ruling for wheat than have the consumers, and if the farmers are going to insist upon receiving the last half-penny we shall have to consider whether they are entitled to receive that sympathetic treatment which has always been meted out to them by the Parliament of this country.

Mr. Hickmott: They are only taking what is offered to them.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, they are not. They have had a considerable say in the fixing of the price. The farmers themselves are not responsible.

Hon. P. Collier: It was recommended by a board, one half of whom were direct repre-

sentatives of the farmers, and the other half were Ministers for Agriculture.

Mr. Griffiths: They did not fix the world's price.

Hon. P. Collier: They fixed the 9s. a bushel.

Mr. WILLECOCK: No one can predict what the price of wheat will be in a year's time or even three months hence.

Mr. Hickmott: Is not the bulk of the wheat already sold for more than that?

Hon. P. Collier: No, that is a lie.

Mr. WILLECOCK: I would like to see the Act continued, but the Government have no right to charge during the next 12 months a price double that which has ever ruled in the history of Australian wheat growing, when they are positive that the price fixed will not be the export price in even six months' time. If they fixed the price on a quarterly basis, there would not be so much objection to the proposal, and three months would be a sufficiently long period. To fix a price which is to rule right into the middle of the next growing season, when we know nothing of the probable production of the world, is nothing short of a crime against the consumers of this State. The Government would be well advised to remember that the price to come into operation in a few weeks' time and to continue for 12 months will be tantamount to a crime against and a robbery of the consumers of this State.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [12.27]: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Mr. SPEAKER: Ten minutes have not elapsed since the adjournment of the debate was moved.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: As the Premier is not willing that the debate should be adjourned, I have a few things to say in reply to some of the remarks which have been made by hon. members.

Hon. P. Collier: Well, say them.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I intend to do so and pretty forcibly too. Since the outbreak of the war the wheat grower of this State has been practically the victim of a colossal confidence trick—

Hon. P. Collier: Who played it on him?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: And the consumer has been as great a sharer in the blunder as anyone else.

Hon. P. Collier: Tell us who organised the confidence trick.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I decline to be drawn off my argument by the interjections of the leader of the Opposition, even though I succeeded in drawing him off.

Hon. P. Collier: I succeeded in drawing you off your chair.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I wish to bring before members a new phase respecting dockage for inferior wheat. On a 10 million bushel basis Western Australia is docked £10,000 as compared with the Eastern States which are docked only £1,200 to £1,400. The crop in

the Eastern States, and particularly in New South Wales was a poor one, while ours is admittedly a good plump sample, and should therefore be liable to less dockage than that of the other States. I wish to know exactly how much is being docked. There has been a lot of talk of the country standing behind the farmer.

Mr. Willecock: Of course it has stood behind him, and you know it.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The banking people have really financed the whole business, which has cost the people of the Commonwealth not a two-penny piece. The whole business has been financed out of the proceeds of the crops grown by the farmers.

Mr. Willecock: You would not have grown the wheat but for the guarantee.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Then the land would have gone out of cultivation, and where would we have been then? If the country ceased to produce its crops of cereals, it would be a case of God help the cities of Australia. While the pool has been a blessing, it has not been altogether an unmixed blessing.

Hon. P. Collier: It would be an extraordinary thing if there were no complaints.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: In 1915 the cockey was imported on every hand to sow every possible acre. He was begged to save the State, to feed the fighting men, and to produce, produce, produce.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That came on since then.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That was the time when there was a big campaign in Canada, the United States and this country to induce the farmers to crop every acre they could.

Mr. Chesson: That is the time when the mice came along.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The cry then was for production, and it has been the same ever since. This encouraged the farmers of Australia to put in something like an extra three million acres of wheat, from which was reaped 170 million bushels, an excess of 75 million bushels over anything previously harvested, and placing Australia fifth on the list of wheat producing countries. Then things began to happen. The wheat was commandeered by shiftless and improvident Governments who were supposed to look after it. In spite of what has been said about the pools we did conduct things better in this State than they did in other parts of the Commonwealth. We know that shocking things happened in New South Wales and South Australia, where so much wheat was wasted. The wheat that was not consumed by mice and weevil was placed upon the world's market.

Mr. Willecock: It was sold to the Imperial Government.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The world's market was the British Government. They took our wheat and helped us out of the difficulty in which we were placed. The shipping arrangements were handled with the same ineptitude. Cargo freight was refused in Australia at



95s., while other countries, such as the Argentine, were glad to pay 140s. per ton of cargo space.

Mr. Johnston: And they got our wheat at half price.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: We then had to import wheat from Argentine, India, and other places, and pay more than the world's parity for what was only rubbish.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What has that to do with the Bill?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Everything. Members talk about what has been done in the past. The boot is on the other foot.

Hon. P. Collier: You are bringing an indictment against the pool.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The wheat grown in Australia realised for the four pools about 26½ million pounds. Had we been able to get the price which the Argentine was getting from the same people who were buying our wheat from the general pool, and which the United States and Canada were also getting, this country would have received an additional 30 million pounds.

Hon. P. Collier: You are now indicting the British Government.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Never mind about that.

Hon. P. Collier: And the whole world as well.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That 30 million pounds has really been a subsidy to the bread eater of Australia.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why? You could not get the ships to enable you to sell it.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That is what would have happened had we been able to get our wheat on the market as other countries, such as the Argentine, did. The people of the Commonwealth have received the advantage of this 30 million pounds and have been getting the cheapest loaf in the world. Members opposite will not recognise that.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you recognise that you got extra money because the State backed you when you could not get the ships?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I admit that, but hon. members will not admit that the people of this country have benefited far more than the wheat consumers of other countries, owing to the fact that our geographical position enabled this to come about.

Mr. Lutey: All the more reason for the pool.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The fact remains we were in that happy position. People talk about the ground going out of cultivation. It gets me down when members talk like that. If we are not going to give the growers something like the full value for their wheat, cultivation will go out. Why did the Commonwealth Government step in a year or two ago with the guarantee? It was because they found the acreage that had gone out of cultivation was enormous owing to the uncertainty on the part of the growers as to what the price would be.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Owing to the fact that the growers had no market.

Mr. Lutey: And to the fact that there were no ships to take their products to market.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I have here a statement made by Sir Joseph Carruthers in New South Wales. He is a farmer himself and says—

There were produced in five years 138 million bushels of wheat for an average return of 3s. 10d. per bushel. It did not pay the cost of production. I know it as one who has grown wheat under better conditions than those farmers. I got double and treble the price they did, and double and treble the yield, and I know 3s. 10d. did not return expenses.

In the United States, Canada and the Argentine the price paid to the wheat grower was 8s. per bushel. I have asserted to-night that a sum of 30 million pounds would in certain circumstances have come to the wheat growers of Australia, but that the consumers got the benefit of it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How could that amount have come to the farmers?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: To the wheat growers. It would have gone into their pockets had they obtained the price which prevailed in other parts of the world.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is nothing to go by.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The consumers here have been getting the cheapest loaf in the world.

Hon. P. Collier: The 30 million pounds was a patriotic contribution to the country.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: We have been patriotic to the extent of contributing this sum of money.

Hon. P. Collier: It was a good and noble patriotism.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I feel proud to be representing the farmers, notwithstanding that one hon. member opposite referred to me as a failure in farming. I sacrificed my farm and everything else to follow this calling, and I am sorry I did so. I mentioned just now that the Commonwealth increased what might be termed the wheat subsidy. They did so because the area under cultivation was rapidly decreasing. In 1916-17 there was a drop of nearly a million acres, and in 1917-18 a further fall of fully 1¼ million acres. By the following year the acreage had diminished to nearly 1¼ million below that of 1913-14, and was 4½ million acres below the total area cropped during the first complete war year. In effect, wheat growing had become a sweated industry, and thousands of farmers, completely fed up, gave it best. I will now quote from an article written some time ago by Sir Joseph Carruthers, of New South Wales. He points out that, despite all the talk about what the farmer is making, the wheat grower since the start of the war has been receiving practically not more than 3s. 10d. per bushel, an unpayable price. Sir Joseph Carruthers spoke from wide experience and

practical knowledge of the industry. He owns a farm, which he has worked thoroughly and successfully; and he has closely observed the farmers in his district. Farming operations, he has pointed out again and again, have not been paying in New South Wales. As soon as the farmers are getting a somewhat better price there is much talk about world's parity, but when wheat ruled at about half-a-crown per bushel there was no bull-rush for world's parity.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: One has to go back a long way in this State's history to find a price like 2s. 6d. per bushel.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I say there was no talk about world's parity then.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What you say refers to New South Wales. Here we have stuck to the farmers.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That is mere assertion.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is proved fact.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Farmers maintain that they are entitled to the world's price for their product. Something was said to-night about my "shrieking" concerning world's parity, but it was merely one of the ordinary inaccurate statements of the leader of the Opposition. I have never spoken about world's parity in this House. However, I have my own opinions on that subject. I did not speak on the motion which was moved in this connection, and that motion would not have gone through on the voices had I been in the Chamber at the time it was put. The proposal that the local price for 1920-21 wheat should be the same as export parity has been denounced as a swindle. But in the past I have listened to much talk, especially towards election time, about the right of the producer to receive the full product of his labour.

Mr. Jones: All producers should get that.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I am quite agreeable to that. The value of a product exported is the price offering, we will say, on the wharf at Fremantle.

Mr. Jones: Is not the Western Australian farm labourer the worst paid in the world?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: No. The hon. member should look up the figures.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Perhaps farm labourers might be worse off in India.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Professor Watt, of Sydney University, takes a very different view from that held by some hon. members here. The professor says—

Australia is the only country in the world where the effect of war was to reduce the price of agricultural products. During the war and at the present time the Australian has had the cheapest loaf in the world.

Incidentally, the Australian who grew the wheat has been harder hit by the war than any other member of the community; and, in the result, a situation has been created, "where a single mistake on the part of the politicians might give the industry a big setback." Australia, as was proved in 1915-

16, is capable of becoming one of the biggest wheat growers in the world; but "if the farmers are denied world's parity for their wheat, they will cease to produce." In other words, they will invade the cities, for there are few intrinsic attractions in toiling long hours for an uncertain reward outback, where heat, flies, drought, rust, hail, and Barcoo rot obtain.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [12.47 a.m.]: I rather regret that the second reading of this Bill has called forth so much criticism. I support the measure, and I do not know that there is much ground for complaint regarding the price which the farmer is obtaining for his wheat. Taking the parity of the seasons since I have had the privilege of being a resident of this State, the farmer has not had very much out of the prices he got for his wheat. Last year the price was payable, and probably we shall get a payable price for our grain this year. But previously the price of wheat did not cover the cost of production. I do not think it was for the benefit of the farmer himself that the Government came to his assistance.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But that was not what you said at the time. You then commended the Government for their statesman-like action.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I do not think it was for the farmer's benefit that the Government gave the guarantee, but for the benefit of the State and of the people of the State. Speaking for myself, I have never asked the Government, or anyone else, for a guarantee; I have always been able to paddle my own canoe. While doing so, I have always been willing to lend a helping hand to the man in need. I believe in giving the workingman, and generally the man who is struggling to earn a living for wife and children, a fair wage in return for his work. What the farmer wants is value for the money he pays for labour; but the tendency, as I have said here previously, is not to give that value. The working man, for whom my friends on the Opposition benches stick up so much, is clamouring for more wages, shorter hours, and less work. That is not the way we will lift the State or any other country out of difficulties such as we are in now.

Mr. Jones: You want longer hours and less wages.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I believe in eight hours a day. I believe in giving men a payable wage and have always given it. I believe in giving men what they earn. We have a great number of very good men and the rank and file of general labourers are good, honest toilers and willing to give a fair return for their money. It is agitators, like the member for Fremantle (Mr. Jones), who stir them up and cause trouble.

Mr. Jones: Is the hon. member in order in referring to me as an agitator?

Mr. Johnston: I think the hon. member is speaking the truth.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the member for Pingelly referred to the member for Fremantle as an agitator and exception is taken to it, I ask for a withdrawal of that statement.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Certainly I will withdraw. I did not intend to hurt the hon. member's feelings and do not desire to cause any bad feeling between other members and myself. I am sorry that I made that statement. I am not going to detain the House at this early hour of the morning by making a speech. I had intended to make references to several other matters. I support the second reading of the Bill. Regarding the price of wheat, we have not agitated for it. We are simply taking what is offered for a commodity which is grown by us, and the better the price the producer can get for his product, the better it must be for the general community. The producers do not hoard their money. They circulate it freely, and the more money that is circulated, the better it must be for both the producer and the consumer. We want to pull together and work more harmoniously instead of fighting each other all the time. We should work together for the benefit of each other and for the State as a whole.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## BILLS (2) RETURNED.

- 1, Licensing Act Amendment Continuance.
- 2, Sale of Liquor Regulation Act Continuance.

Without amendment.

House adjourned at 12.55 a.m. (Thursday).

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 2nd December, 1920.

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## QUESTION—MARLING SCHOOL.

Hon. H. STEWART asked the Minister for Education: With regard to the school at Marling, near Williams, 1, How long is it since the schoolmistress, Mrs. Woldridge, tendered her resignation? 2, Is he aware that the school has been closed for about six weeks owing to arrangements not having been made for another teacher? 3, Could the matter not have been more effectively dealt with?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, A letter was received on 16th October, tendering resignation from 31st October. 2, The late teacher had her own trap, and drove a distance of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles to school each day. She was at once asked about accommodation for a successor. She stated that a teacher could get accommodation  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the school, but said nothing about conveyance. A letter was then sent to the family with which it was proposed that the teacher should live, asking if she could be driven in. A reminder has been sent, but no answer has been received to either letter. Consequently the school has remained closed for nearly five weeks. 3, It is impossible for the Department to send a teacher to a home  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the school unless arrangements can be made for her to drive to the school. If letters remain unanswered for a month, it is impossible to make the necessary arrangements here.

## BILL—EARLY CLOSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Leave to introduce.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [4.35]: I move—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill for "an Act to amend the Early Closing Act, 1902, and for other relative purposes."

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

Ayes	..	..	..	11
Noes	..	..	..	10

Majority for .. 1

## AVES.

Hon. J. Ewing	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. A. Lovekin	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. C. McKenzie	Hon. J. Duffell
Hon. J. Mills	(Teller.)

## NOES.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. J. Cornell
Hon. E. H. Harris	(Teller.)
Hon. T. Moore	

Question thus passed.

Bill introduced and read a first time

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