

pocket for the purpose of placing it in another pocket. The larger proportion of the work done by the State Implement Works is done for other Government departments. On the 30th June last no less a sum than £34,000 was owing by Government departments to the State Implement Works for work done. If interest is to be charged on that amount, loan works would be debited, and the Consolidated Revenue correspondingly credited. Thus, nothing would be either gained or lost by charging interest as proposed.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 10 to 24—agreed to.

Clause 25—Power to dispose of assets:

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: This is an important clause, which cannot be agreed to in view of the divisions which have taken place. The very idea of the Minister for Works asking Parliament for power to dispose of the State trading concerns without consulting Parliament is too ridiculous for comment. The clause should be deleted. I shall vote against it.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 26 put and negatived.

Clauses 27, 28—agreed to.

Schedule put and negatived.

Title—agreed to.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 12.20 a.m. (Friday).

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 6th February, 1917.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Lands and Surveys Department: (a.) By-laws of Three Springs public cemetery; (b.) Wagin cemetery.—Statement of receipts and expenditure; (c.) Mount Barker cemetery.—By-laws; (d.) Fremantle public cemetery.—By-laws; (e.) Karrakatta public cemetery.—By-laws; (f.) Geraldton common reserve 2523.—By-laws; (h) Carnarvon commons.—Amendment of By-law No. 4; 2, State Brick Works.—Audit of Accounts for year ended 30th June, 1916. 3, Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery.—Report of the trustees for year ended 30th June, 1916. 4, Report of the Inspector General of the Insane for periods ending 31st December, 1915, and 30th June, 1916. 5, W.A. Government Tramways.—Returns of receipts and expenditure, quarter ended 31st December, 1916. 6, W.A. Government Railways.—Reports in accordance with Clauses 54 and 83. 7, Land Act, 1898.—Timber regulations.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Friendly Societies Act Amendment.

2, Ports and Harbours.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary.

MOTION—EXTENSION OF FRANCHISE TO RETURNED SOLDIERS.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [4.36]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the franchise for the Legislative Council should be extended to all returned sol-

diers entitled to be enrolled as voters for the Legislative Assembly.

I have purposely made the motion very brief, because I merely wish that it should be taken to assert the general principle. I hope it will be dissociated in the minds of hon. members from any effort towards the reform of this Chamber. There is no other subject which affects hon. members of the Council so much as the questions of its reform and of its status. There are amongst us those who consider that the Council may be regarded almost as the saviour of the country, whilst others consider it has outlived its usefulness. Still a third class contend that it should be reformed in respect to the franchise. Whatever view any of us may hold regarding the reforms or otherwise of this Chamber, there can be nothing in that view inconsistent with supporting the motion. It is brought forward solely for the purpose of recognising that men who voluntarily offer to pay the supreme sacrifice, if necessary, should be admitted to full citizenship rights. The Council plays a most important part in the legislative machinery for the government of the country. It can veto all the legislation of another place, and no Government which have not the support of the Council can be in power, notwithstanding that they are in office. Therefore, a man who has a vote for only the Assembly cannot be considered to possess full citizen rights, for he has practically only half the legislative power of the man who has votes for both Chambers. Let us consider the purpose for which a property franchise was fixed for the Council. I believe the reason why the framers of the Constitution fixed a property qualification for Council electors was to preserve the rights of property against attack.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: No.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: Well, what was the reason? I claim that the property vote for the Council was fixed upon with the intention of preserving property from the attacks of another place. If that were the reason, surely we cannot deny votes to men who, in this war, are fighting, not only for the protection of our lives and liberties, but for that also of our property. If they

are prepared to risk their lives in defence of property, how can we deny them the right to protect property at the ballot box? If we send them to the battlefield at the risk of their lives for the protection of our property, surely it is not too much to ask that we give them votes for this Chamber. Mr. Cullen may possibly be amongst those who say that the reason why the property qualification for the Council was fixed upon was the recognition of thrift. They say that the man who, by industry and thrift, acquires a certain amount of property, has a stake in the country, and so is entitled to a greater voice in the government of the country than he who has no property; in other words, that the vote is given in recognition of good citizenship. If that is the reason, I would ask, what better evidence of good citizenship can be supplied than that a man voluntarily risks his life in defence of his country, in defence of ourselves, our homes and liberties, and all that we hold most dear? Therefore, whether the property qualification was fixed upon the basis of protecting property from the attacks of those who have no property, or whether in recognition of good citizenship, we have an equally strong reason for extending it to the men who have gone to the Front, ready to sacrifice all that they have to save us from a great national danger. Take the case of a man who wins the Victoria Cross, a man like Martin O'Meara, of Collie. Such a man volunteers; he is not a pressed man. He risks his life in order to render magnificent service to his country. And yet when that man returns, he is, in all probability, not admitted to the full rights of citizenship in the country for which he has done so much.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: There are other men who have won the Victoria Cross, who would not be allowed to land in Australia.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I would be very much surprised to find that any man who had received the Victoria Cross was denied admittance to Australia. In no case has that occurred, and I doubt strongly whether any Government would have the courage to refuse admission to such a man.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Government cannot get behind the Immigration Restriction Act.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: The hon. member evidently knows little of that Act and of its administration, or he would not make a remark of that sort. There is no justification whatsoever for his assertion. Let us consider how national services are rewarded in a more conservative country than this, in England. After all, the extent to which national services may be rewarded is a matter of degree; but in England it has been a recognised practice for generations that men who render great national services should be at once promoted to the House of Lords. In many instances great generals—Marlborough, Wellesley, Gough, Wolseley, Roberts, Kitchener—have been made legislators because of services rendered to their country. And not only have they themselves been created legislators, but they have been made hereditary legislators, so that the eldest son of each generation, so long as representatives of the man originally rewarded survive, becomes a legislator. Each and every one of the men who have gone to the Front from Australia has gone voluntarily; not one has been compelled to go; they have rendered splendid services and surely it is not too much to ask that our soldiers, on their return, should be given votes not merely for one Chamber but for both Houses of the Legislature. The degree of the reward is commensurate with their services. To all of us cases are known of men in good positions selling their homes and giving up everything in order to go to the Front. By reason of the sacrifices they have made, those men on returning may find that they have forfeited their right to vote for the Legislative Council. On the other hand, there may be men who have taken the positions of those volunteers—shirkers, possibly, of their responsibilities to the State—and who, while the better type of citizen has been fighting at the Front, have been able to acquire sufficient to qualify them for votes for this House. By refusing votes for the second Chamber to returned soldiers, we shall in a large number of cases really be giving preference to those who have failed in their responsibility to their country during a grave crisis. I can well imagine that, no matter how members of this House may seek to avoid it, each one will look on this

motion with an eye to its possible results. But every member of each party considers that the men who have gone to the Front will come back with views more akin to the ideas represented by his particular party. Each party considers itself the representative of broad-mindedness and of all that is right. The average Liberal will say that the men returning from the Front will have travelled in other lands and become better educated by their experience, and thus will take broader views, views more in accord with those of the Liberal party. The Labour man, reasoning on the same lines, will say that our soldiers, having seen the sufferings of the poor in other countries, having seen the slums of the great cities, will return with a stronger sympathy for the man who is down, and with a firmer conviction that the whole fabric of society is raised by helping the man underneath. On the other hand, if the matter were discussed with a member of the Country party, he would be quite satisfied that our soldiers will return with a great appreciation of the value of the primary industries, and with a recognition that the primary industries are all-important to a nation's prosperity. Thus a member of the Country party would contend that the returned soldiers will be strongly sympathetic to the Country party and to those whose purpose it is to advance the interests of the primary industries as the basis of the nation's wealth.

Member: What about the independent party?

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: An independent will probably think that the soldiers, after risking their lives for their native land on European battle fields, after passing through the blood and horror of the whole thing, will return with an utter contempt for party politics, saying, "A plague on all your parties; we will support what we think is right irrespective of the party bringing it forward." But there is one thing absolutely certain, and on which all hon. members will be agreed—the men will come back very much better men than they went away, and come back with a higher sense of responsibility and with a greater determination to do their duty to their country. From every point of view, I think, the returned soldier will be more patriotic, and more worthy to

receive any political power we can place in his hands. It may be contended that some of the returned soldiers will say they do not want votes for the Legislative Council. Possibly some of them may take that view. Undoubtedly a large number of men who have votes, both for the Assembly and the Council, do not desire those votes. But that fact cannot be used as an argument against granting the vote to those men who do desire it. What one of us, suppose we were entitled to a vote because of services rendered at the Front, would not rather claim the vote on the ground of war services than on the ground of the possession of property? The two words "war services" after a man's name on the electoral roll would be very highly prized. No man but would value highly a right that was given to him by virtue of what he had done at the Front for his native land. To my mind, the case for granting full citizen rights to men who have offered to make the supreme sacrifice is quite unanswerable. I refuse to believe that this House will not recognise the unanswerable nature of the claim. Furthermore, to refuse the claim would be ungrateful. In addition, it would be unwise. I feel certain that the House will not refuse the claim. On the contrary, I am convinced that members will be glad of this opportunity of showing the returned soldier their appreciation of what he has done. There is one argument I have heard advanced why voters for the Legislative Council should not be granted to returned soldiers. It is the argument of strong opponents of militarism. The peace-at-any-price party fear that the returned soldier may be imbued with the spirit of militarism to an extent, and that he may want to ride roughshod over the people. For that reason they do not wish to entrust him with a power which he may misuse. I can scarcely think members of this House are likely to be influenced by any such fear. The man who volunteered to go from Australia to the Front went away in order to help to crush militarism. When our soldiers return triumphant, as I believe they will, they will have a horror of militarism. No doubt they will realise the truth of the saying that if one wants peace one must prepare for war. But they will view the question, not as swash-

bucklers, but as peaceful citizens who took up arms from a sense of national responsibility. I cannot conceive of any hon. member opposing the motion on the ground that he dreads the granting of increased political power to men of military spirit. I am utterly at a loss to discover a single reason why my proposal should not be carried unanimously, as I hope it will be. For the credit of the House I trust the motion will be carried unanimously, and, moreover, carried as soon as possible—if possible, this week. May I say that it offers members a golden opportunity to give another proof of Western Australia's patriotism. We are all proud of the part this State has hitherto taken in the war. In many respects it has led the way for the Commonwealth. The percentage of men who have gone to the Front from Western Australia compares favourably with that of any other State, and the recent vote which was taken excited the pardonable pride of the people. In fact, in all patriotic endeavours Western Australia has done well and has provided a shining example to other places. Therefore, why should she not also lead the way in the proposal I now bring forward. What a splendid thing it would be if the news went forward that in recognition of the services of her soldiers the Western Australian Legislative Council had resolved to give them the right to exercise the franchise of that Chamber. That is what I ask the House to do and if my request is agreed to, it will reflect credit on the Chamber and it will also reflect credit on Western Australia.

On motion by Hon. J. Duffell debate adjourned.

BILLS (5)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Footwear Regulation.
 - 2, Treasury Bonds Deficiency.
 - 3, Sale of Liquor and Tobacco.
 - 4, Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment.
 - 5, Agricultural Bank Act Amendment.
- Received from the Legislative Assembly.

RESOLUTION—WHEAT POOL, TO APPROVE ARRANGEMENTS.

Message received from the Legislative Assembly asking concurrence in a resolution

approving of a payment of three shillings per bushel as a minimum price for the purchase of wheat grown during the season 1917-18.

The Standing Orders having been suspended,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.19]: I move—

That the Prime Minister having agreed to advance the necessary money, this House approves of a payment of three shillings per bushel as a minimum price for the purchase of all f.a.g. wheat grown by the farmers during the season 1917-18 on delivery at a railway siding. Such wheat to be subject to the conditions applying to the present Wheat Pool, and to the provisions of the Wheat Marketing Act, 1916, and any amendment thereof.

This matter of the wheat harvest for the season 1917-18 was considered at some length at the recent conference between the Prime Minister and the Premiers of the different States held in Melbourne towards the end of last year. The Prime Minister brought the matter forward, and in emphasising its national importance he desired the people of Australia to assist the Empire as far as they could by growing the necessary food supplies of the Empire, and thereby relieving Great Britain and our Allies from a too complete dependence on neutral countries. All the Premiers agreed that it was desirable that whatever action was necessary to encourage a large production of wheat in the season 1917-18, it should be taken. The offer of the Prime Minister was that the Commonwealth Government would provide the necessary money by way of an advance to the States, and that the States should guarantee the Commonwealth the return of that money, of course, with interest.

Hon. J. Cornell: What rate of interest?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The rate has not been specified, but it is to be what it actually costs the Commonwealth to raise the money. The effect of this is to make the State responsible in the event of loss. The Premier of Western Australia raised the question that as it was a matter of national importance the Commonwealth might be inclined to take the whole of the responsibility and guarantee the loss. This proposition was not assented to by any of

the other States and it was opposed particularly by those States in which wheat is not grown, and after all said and done, I do not think that their opposition can be regarded as unreasonable. It may not be a reasonable proposition that the people of Queensland and Tasmania should join in a guarantee to the wheat-growing States. In the case of Western Australia, although we have only one-fifteenth of the population of Australia, we last season produced one-sixth of the wheat grown in the Commonwealth, so that had our Premier succeeded in inducing the Commonwealth as a whole to become responsible for this advance, it would have been an excellent deal for us, in fact, so good for us that we could hardly expect to have it carried into effect. Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, the three other wheat-growing States, at once accepted the Prime Minister's proposal. The Premier of Western Australia, whilst in complete agreement with the suggestion, took the view that it was a matter on which Parliament should first be consulted, and he promised to bring it forward on his return and secure an early decision. This resolution has already been agreed to by the Legislative Assembly and yesterday the Government received an urgent telegram from the Prime Minister pressing for a decision and pointing out that all the other States interested had given their undertaking. He therefore desired a reply from Western Australia so that the matter might be proceeded with. It is necessary that I should explain to hon. members the exact meaning of the resolution. Hon. members will see that the word "payment" is used and not "advance." If the word "advance" had been used, it might have been made to imply that in the event of the wheat realising less than 3s. the grower would be expected to return the amount that it fell below the 3s. That is not the intention at all. It is an actual payment of 3s. and in the event of the wheat realising less than the 3s. the State will become responsible for the loss.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: It is fixing a minimum price.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is so. In the event of the wheat realising more than 3s. the farmer will receive the

amount it brings above the payment made to him.

Hon. J. Cornell: Will the taxpayer pay the interest?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The interest will be debited to the pool. The only event in which the taxpayer would be called upon to pay anything is if the realisation fail to produce a sum equivalent to 3s. at the siding plus interest. From the farmers' point of view this advance is equal approximately to 3s. 8d. f.o.b. Fremantle. The advance is 3s. at the siding, agency charges amount to approximately 3d., the railage, of course, varies, but I think the average generally for the State would be about 4d., while there is approximately another 1d. in wharfage and other charges. Therefore, in advancing the farmer 3s. at the siding it is the equivalent of 3s. 8d. at the port of shipment. It is interesting to compare this payment of 3s. 8d. at the port of shipment with the average value of Australian wheat at the port of shipment during the 10 years immediately preceding the war. In 1905 the average value was 3s. 5d., in the following year 3s. 3d., the next year 3s. 4d., the next 4s. 1d., then 4s. 2d., 4s. 2d., 3s. 6d., 3s. 11d., 3s. 9d., and 3s. 9d. So that the general average over the ten years was about 3s. 8 $\frac{4}{5}$ d., that is to say, a little less than 1d. in advance of the payment proposed in this motion. That is the actual value at the port of shipment, which corresponds with the 3s. 8d. at the port of shipment to be advanced if this resolution be carried. In considering this question it must be remembered that during the past few years the cost of production has increased very materially, and it would not be solid argument to say because wheat has been sold over a period of 10 years at prices not exceeding that now guaranteed, that at this guaranteed price we are assuring the farmer a profit—that is such a profit as could be taken to induce for wheat growing as a new industry. The Government does not suggest that 3s. will secure to the farmer anything like a decent profit. What it will do is to protect him against loss. It is possible, in my opinion, that if the farmer gets only the 3s. advance, he will have given his season's work for nothing; but if we guarantee the

farmer against absolute loss, I think we may rely upon his energy and patriotism to take a risk so far as he may possibly do so. From the point of view of the Government, the carrying of this resolution is a division of risk between the farmer and the general community. I do not think many people would voluntarily embark on wheat growing as a new enterprise merely on a guarantee of 3s. I do not think they would consider it worth thinking of. But the established farmer will think it well worth while to continue to produce if he knows that when the next harvest comes in he will get at the worst 3s. per bushel for his wheat at the siding. We hope, and believe, that when the pool is cleared up there will still be a substantial sum over and above 3s. to pay to the farmers. There can be little doubt that, unless some guarantee of this kind is given, there will be a decrease in the wheat production. The wheat grower has to take so many other risks. The cost of everything he requires is constantly increasing, and in addition to the increased cost he may be faced with an insurmountable difficulty through not being able to get his requirements at all. Then again there is another difficulty in the scarcity of labour, due to the fact that the greater part of our agricultural labourers, in common with those engaged in every other industry, are otherwise engaged. If, on top of all this, we tell the farmer that when he has grown his wheat there will be no guarantee of his being able to sell it at a reasonable price, then there is grave danger that there will be a serious decrease in production. And the result would be disastrous, not only to the farmer, but to all sections of the community. In order to illustrate how necessary it is to maintain wheat production, from the State point of view, our own narrow point of view, if you will, excluding the larger issue of assisting towards providing what we can for the Empire's requirements, I may mention that the wheat yield this season may reach at 20 million bushels, which has been sold for 4s. 9d. per bushel. That would mean to this State a value at the port of shipment of £4,750,000. I do not intend using those figures by way of

showing that one industry is of greater value or importance than another. Our wool industry last year, which was a record, totalled in value £1,273,000, less than one-third and not much more than one-fourth the value of the wheat industry, and last year's yield of our great gold industry, which has been our stand-by for so many years, and which will be one of the greatest assets of the State for many years to come, was valued at £4,508,000. That is less than the value of the estimated wheat production for this season. I venture to say if it were necessary to keep that great gold industry going, no hon. member would hesitate to pledge the credit of the country in a similar direction to that proposed in the motion. But, happily, the gold industry is not dependent, in the same way as the wheat industry, on a fluctuating market, and is not liable to the same difficulties in the way of transport, because our total gold yield could be easily transported in a single ship. But if our gold industry, which, from the point of view of production, is approximately of equal value with the wheat, were in danger, similar to the danger which is confronting the wheat farmer, no section of the community would hesitate to pledge the credit of the State. With regard to the risk which the State takes under this motion, it is well that we should view the subject from all points. Assuming there will be a 20 million bushel harvest, any drop of 1s. below the 3s. guaranteed at the siding would mean a loss to the State of one million sterling. That, of course, can happen only in the event of something very unforeseen occurring, but we all recognise in these times that unforeseen things do happen. If we assume that the bottom drops out of the market, and that in the 1917-18 season the value of wheat at the port of shipment would be the lowest on record during the past 10 years, that is 3s. 3d. against the equivalent of 3s. 8d. proposed in the motion, it would mean a loss of 5d. per bushel to the State, or a total loss of £400,000. Personally, I think there is little danger of this; but even were it to happen, the position then would be that in producing wheat in Western Australia there had been a loss of a certain sum of money which, instead of being a burden on the

farming community, would be borne by the whole of the community. Not only from the point of view of the farming community, but of the State generally, I do not know that it would be wise not to do this, even if we had serious occasion for anticipating that position. I do not think we will be taking any undue risk in regard to the market. The Prime Minister has already been authorised to negotiate with the Imperial Government, in the hope that arrangements will be made for the sale of the wheat; and hon. members who are engaged in the agricultural industry will agree that the recent conference between the Prime Minister and the State Ministers, which resulted in the fixing of the price at 4s. 9d. for the current harvest, made a wonderfully good deal for the farmers of Australia. I trust hon. members will look at the motion from the point of view of the agricultural industry and the necessity for keeping that industry going by securing the largest production of wheat we can, and also from the higher point of view that we should join with the rest of the States in rendering what help we can to the Empire. The wheat production of Australia is a considerable item and it behoves us to see that Australia does the best it can in the way of producing. I have pleasure in moving the motion.

Hon. J. M. DREW (Central) [5.26]: I have very much pleasure in supporting the motion, which, I think, will not arouse very much criticism from members in this House. It is undoubted that alarm has been felt by some of the farmers in our wheat areas owing to the unsettled state of affairs at present, and it would be hardly fair to ask our agriculturists to increase the yield without affording them some guarantee of a return. From every quarter an appeal has been made to our farmers to increase the yield. Those who are making that appeal represent the State as a whole and they should take such action as would relieve the farmer from anxiety. I had the honour recently of being a member of a select committee which sat to consider matters connected with agriculture, and that committee was unanimous in agreeing that something should be done by the Government in the direction now proposed in the motion. There

may be some slight risk. If the Dardanelles were opened no doubt a great quantity of wheat would be released, but, even in that event I do not think there would be any great loss, and if there were a loss, I believe the people of Western Australia would gladly meet it, seeing that it had arisen from the farmers' desire to assist the production of the State. I do not think it is necessary that I should say more than that this motion has my heartiest support.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.29]: I realise this to be a most important motion, and that it has been moved very hurriedly in this House. I wish to point out to members the importance of the subject from a business point of view. We are asked to support a motion which is guaranteeing the Commonwealth against any loss which may be incurred by advancing a certain sum of money on the products of the State. We have to take into consideration the fact that the Commonwealth is the supreme power in regard to borrowing on the London market, and for anything we require we are in the position, fortunately or unfortunately, of having to get our requirements through the Commonwealth Government. The Colonial Secretary has told us that New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia readily acquiesced in the suggestion and accepted the responsibility of guaranteeing the amount that was being advanced. Against that, we have to bear in mind that the Government of New South Wales are standing aloof in regard to borrowing, and are not totally dependent on the Commonwealth, as we are. Tasmania and Queensland are not called upon to give any guarantee, because they are not producing wheat to any great extent. When we take into consideration the small population of Western Australia and the enormous responsibility involved it will be seen that we, as representatives of the people, should be chary of hurriedly passing the motion. Mr. Drew touched the weak spot: If the Dardanelles were to be opened, there would be a sudden drop in the price of wheat, and judging by the trend of events to-day, we can safely predict that the war will not last many more months. We are asked to guarantee the Commonwealth Government against an advance of 3s. per

bushel, and the Colonial Secretary has told us that a drop of 1s. a bushel on the estimated harvest would mean one million sterling to Western Australia. We are already two millions to the bad, and another million added to the burdens already on 300,000 people would bring us very close to breaking strain. It is not my intention to oppose the motion, but it is necessary that we should take a business view of it and realise the stern realities underlying it. I hope the motion will not be passed hurriedly, and that hon. members will give it full consideration.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [5.35]: I desire to extend my congratulations to the Colonial Secretary on his conversion to socialism. I understand the Prime Minister has asked that this guarantee be given, not for the purpose of inducing greater production, but in order to maintain existing production. It seems to me illogical that the leader of the House should advocate greater production. I am a member of a committee that advocates a greater number of recruits, and although I realise that the war has had some detrimental effect on the farming industry, by reason of the number of men who have gone to the Front, yet from personal observation I am convinced that the farming industry has not supplied its quota of men in proportion with other industries.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: A great deal more.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The district that, in proportion to population, has, of all the Commonwealth, supplied the greatest number of men, is the Golden Mile. Of course the war has resulted in some curtailment of production in the farming industry, but if we are to deal with production we should deal with it on broader lines than those of a mere guarantee. If sincere in dealing with agriculture and other industries, the Government should set out to organise those industries. Thus there might be transplanted into the farming industry men who, though unfit to bear arms, are perfectly fit to carry on farming operations, and thus others at present necessary to the farming industry, but who nevertheless are anxious to go to the Front, would be released for service abroad. The guarantee will not confer any great boon on the community un-

less, side by side with it, an endeavour is made to organise the industry.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: The farmers will organise it.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I have not seen much evidence of their intention. This Parliament was the first in Australia to pass a Bill for the control of prices in war time, and this House was the first in any Australian Parliament to repeal the Act. The arguments put up by the Colonial Secretary to-day in favour of the motion are in direct contradiction to the arguments he used for the repeal of the Control of Trade in War Time Act. The motion means that we are to ask the taxpayer to guarantee to the farmer 3s. 8d. per bushel f.o.b. Fremantle, for his wheat. Personally, I think the 1917-18 crop will realise that price, and therefore there will be no loss to the taxpayer. In asking the taxpayer to bear the possible loss, we should provide for his participation in any gain, or at the very least we should protect him against victimisation. In making a similar guarantee, the Legislatures of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia have taken power to fix the selling price to the home consumer. If that were done here I would have no objection to the motion.

Hon. J. A. Greig: The Federal Government have that power.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes, under the War Precautions Act, but if peace were declared to-morrow that Act would automatically expire, except the Federal Legislature otherwise decided. The point is that in the three States I have mentioned there is machinery for fixing the selling price, while in this State there is none, thanks to this House. I wish to enter my protest against this, and remind the dying of their sins. The Government have asked us to guarantee the farming industry. I ask the Colonial Secretary, is he prepared to guarantee the great mining industry?

Hon. J. F. Cullen: We did that long ago, in providing the water scheme.

Hon. J. CORNELL: You also did it long ago for the farmers through the Industries Assistance Board. The Colonial Secretary said that, if necessary, the credit of the State would be pledged in the interests of

the mining industry. I say the mining industry is in dire need to-day. For the last decade the gold yield has declined, and no new mines are being opened up. The death of the mining industry is gradual, but hon. members apparently are afraid that the death of the agricultural industry will be sudden, and they want to provide against it. I will support the motion for the reason that it is essential that we should produce as much as possible. It will also provide an incentive to some to again put in their crops, though I do not think we shall have as big an acreage in this year as we had last year. Further, it will be a guarantee that the farmers will get a reasonable return for their labour, and that is a doctrine I have subscribed to all my life. This is an instalment of something which is going to be conducive to good, so long as it is applied in a general sense and to all our primary industries. I hope that ere long the Prime Minister, with that statesmanship that is evident in him, for he has got practically the whole of the States in Australia to follow him, will in the interests of the Commonwealth endeavour to get the various State Governments to introduce a further instalment of what he thinks is right and best for the people of Australia.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [5.48]: I think it right to point out that this resolution is a departure from sound administration. It is entirely abnormal, but not more abnormal than the circumstances which render it necessary. The last speaker twitted the Colonial Secretary with having departed from his principles. It is the exception which proves the rule, and these circumstances are exceptional. The Empire and its Allies must be fed, and the farmers must produce the food. Our farmers are not able to produce the food without some such guarantee as this, and the State, therefore, in these abnormal circumstances, takes the abnormal course of guaranteeing a minimum price for the grain which is produced. On that guarantee the farmers can finance the seeding and harvesting of the crop. Without it they cannot do so. So it is that I hold that the circumstances justify this departure from normal administration. I have only just to add that long ago the country did

much more for the mining industry, and quite justifiably.

Hon. H. Millington: Not as much as the mining industry did for this country.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Quite so. Water had to be provided, and the country took enormous risks in making the necessary provision for this, and as year followed year suffered much harsh criticism because of the goldfields water scheme. Everyone sees now that it was right even in the light of the fact that deficits have to be met upon it.

Hon. H. Millington: Could not the same be said about our agricultural railways?

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: The agricultural industry will be kept going, and the future of that industry in this State depends upon it. I shall vote for the resolution with all my heart.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.50]: I would like to add a few words on behalf of those interested in the farming industry. I can assure the Colonial Secretary that the resolution will meet with hearty endorsement throughout the country districts. The remarks of the leader of the House are absolutely correct, namely, that we want something to support so many of those who are on the land at the present time. There are many who lost the whole of their crops in the year 1914. They financed their crops through to the following season, and the wheat produced in that year is still in the pool, and they were very uncertain as to whether they would ever realise the amount of the advance which they were led to expect, or whether they would be called upon to return some of that which was advanced. This season's crop, upon which they are now being advanced 2s. 6d. a bushel, is not bringing in a return that will pay the cost of producing it. In view of these facts, there is a number of the farmers whose intention was not to seed for the coming season, because there was great uncertainty as to what the crop might realise if it was ever possible to ship it from our shores. It was very necessary that our producers should be guaranteed some price that will relieve them from the anxiety consequent upon their putting in further crops. I do not agree with the Hon. J. Cornell that this is in the direction of fixing the price. This is something which was

not arranged for in the Bill which was passed by this Chamber some time ago. The complaint then was that it was the profits that were going to be fixed, that the producers would have a limit placed upon the price that might be rising to the top notch, and that they would have no guarantee in the event of their produce coming down to bedrock. This action on the part of the Federal Government is giving them that very necessary guarantee. Without it we will have the whole of our producers ceasing work. It would be a sorry day for Australia if our gold miners, our pastoralists, and our farmers ceased operations. The whole of our other industries are living upon these primary industries. It seems to me there is not sufficient interest manifested in these industries to give them an opportunity of making Australia the fair country it should be. They are hampered at every turn. I could mention various difficulties which now have to be faced, even when the farmers have produced the wheat. There are many farmers to-day who, when they have filled their bags of wheat and carted them to the siding, are told that this or that bag weighs over 200lbs., and that they must take out some of the grain and put it into another bag, otherwise the wharf lumper will not pass it into the vessel at Fremantle. This sort of thing is very hampering to an industry. We find these little troubles cropping up at every turn. I do hope that before another harvest the Government of the day will be able to relieve the farmer of the heavy impost with regard to bags. No better opportunity for any State Government or the Commonwealth Government has presented itself than the present one for entering upon the system of bulk handling. This wheat, which will probably stand at our ports for a year or two, will continue to be held in bags which are daily rotting away, but which have cost the farmer an enormous sum of money. I sincerely hope that this guarantee for the harvest 1917-18 will be an inducement to the Government to follow it up, and take very earnest action in that direction. I support the motion.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (East) [5.55]: I am pleased to see so favourable a reception accorded to the resolution in this Chamber. From the standpoint of the farmers

I say that the inducement held out by guaranteeing the price of 3s. will mean an increased acreage being put in under crop. I have heard it said that the whole of the land has been prepared for the coming season's crop. That is not correct. I wish it were so. I wish, too, for the sake of the State generally, that we were all operating on fallowed land. Unfortunately, however, the farmers in Western Australia who are pioneering have not been in a position to fallow their land, much as they would have liked to have done so and much as they favour the principle of fallowing. After listening to some of the speeches this afternoon, one would think the farmers were the only people who would benefit by the guaranteed price of 3s. a bushel. As a matter of fact, every branch of our industries and enterprises, in fact every citizen of the State, is going to enjoy the benefit of that guarantee. It is one of our systems of producing wealth in the State to keep our wheat ever coming forward.

Hon. J. Cornell: If there is a drop in the price the consumer will have to make good the loss.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am ready to admit that if a loss was made it would have to be borne by the general taxpayer. I say, however, that this will not be to the detriment of the general taxpayer. We shall be keeping our wheat lands under cultivation. If we do make a loss in one year it will be a very small one divided amongst the entire community, as compared with the gain to be derived from future harvests. Much has been said in regard to the opening of the Dardanelles and the release of Russian wheat. We all know that there is a tremendous amount of Russian wheat locked up through the Dardanelles being closed against traffic. There are also those who know that Australian wheat is needed to blend in with the Russian wheat and the Argentine wheat, and that in all other wheat producing parts of the world there is practically a shortage. Outside of Russia there is very little wheat being produced in Europe, where the whole country is being overrun by war conditions. There is no need, therefore, to be as pessimistic in the matter as some hon. members appear to be. The Hon. J. Duffell is wrong in his

statement that the Commonwealth are asking the State Government to guarantee them against loss. The Federal Government have come forward generously and said to the State Government, "We will find the money for you if you guarantee 3s. a bushel for the wheat produced in your State." I think they should be commended for that. The State is in the position of taking practically all the gains from the growing of wheat. The Commonwealth Government do not gain anything like that which is gained by the State, although they are assisting the State in lending this money. Again, the hon. member raises objection from the commercial standpoint. As to this, I would point out that the very people whose objections he is voicing are those who will benefit most from the guarantee. I have not met one commercial man who has not spoken of the position as if with pleasure. In the farming areas, too, every one is thoroughly satisfied with the arrangement. I feel sure that it is a good thing from every standpoint. With regard to the point which has been raised as to the loss which will occur if there is a drop of 1s. a bushel in the price of wheat, I would ask if there is any hon. member in the Chamber who knows of any time when the wheat market was down to as low as 2s. a bushel.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: I do.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I do not recollect it. Such a position is, at all events, not likely to occur now, owing to the shortage of the world's wheat supplies and to so large an area being thrown out of cultivation through the lack of labour facilities. I feel sure the price will not be anything like as low as 3s. 8d. per bushel f.o.b. I cannot allow Mr. Cornell's statement, that the farming industry has not sent a fair proportion of men to the Front, to go unchallenged. The farming industry has sent a larger proportion of men than any other community in the State. In the farming areas to-day not an eligible single man is to be found but has been turned down by the military authorities—in some cases, three or four times. Indeed, some of the farmers' sons have even gone to the Eastern States in the hope of being accepted for service. While Mr. Cornell objects to the guaranteeing of a year's wages, and meagre wages, to the farming

community, yet the class which that hon. member represents are protected by the Arbitration Act, which guarantees them a decent wage. I do not object to that; but I appeal to hon. members representing the class I refer to, to look at this matter from a fair and reasonable standpoint and assist the farmer to get a living wage. The 3s. per bushel guaranteed to the farmer will not cover cost of production, as it would have done a little time ago. Wages have risen by 100 per cent., and the price of machinery has increased enormously. There is no need to take up the time of the House in further debating this motion, which is good from every aspect and has my hearty support.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South) [6.4]: I wish to point out to Mr. Cullen, and to one or two other members, that the country was at war when the Control of Trade in War Time Bill was thrown out. It is all very well to say that we are now in exceptional times. We know that. Mr. Cullen says the exception proves the rule. But that was not the attitude adopted by the hon. member in connection with the Control of Trade in War Time Bill. The weak point of this motion is that no provision has been made for the protection of the consumer. There is also the point raised by Mr. Drew as to the opening of the Dardanelles. I fully endorse Mr. Cornell's statements on this motion. Parliament is asked to guarantee the Commonwealth Government against any loss in connection with the payment to the farmer of 3s. per bushel. If wheat goes to 7s. per bushel, the farmer scores; and we hope that he will score. None of us is so utterly selfish as to wish to see the farmer obtain anything less than the highest price. But, in that case where will the consumer come in? Will the Government later bring forward some motion or a measure to protect the consumer, if this motion is carried? Those are points which it is just as well for us to consider. With regard to the opening of the Dardanelles, I share Mr. Duffell's opinion that this war will end very soon. We are faced with the proposition that freights are going up every day. The longer the war lasts, the higher freights will go. Thus there is a grave risk that the amount of 3s. per bushel may not be realised. I pointed this out to the Government with whom I was associated, as a rea-

son for not guaranteeing too much. I would not mind betting—though I am not a betting man—that if the Dardanelles were opened to-morrow wheat would drop very low indeed. It should be understood that in supporting this motion, we are supporting something for the benefit of the farmer, while the consumer is getting very little protection indeed. I support the motion. I do not think any member of the House will oppose it; but it is well that attention should be called to these points.

Hon. C. SOMMERS (Metropolitan) [6.7]: I am delighted to learn that the war is to end soon, and I trust this may be realised. But I should like to have some better evidence than the statement of hon. members as to the enormous quantities of wheat in Russia which are to come through the Dardanelles. I have followed this matter as closely as most public men have, but I have never seen evidence of such huge accumulations of wheat, nor do I believe they exist.

The Colonial Secretary: They have been eaten up long ago.

Hon. C. SOMMERS: I presume that wheat in Russia, when held for long periods, becomes discoloured, black, and mildewy, and deteriorates, in the same way as wheat does in this State. It appears to me that we are not taking the slightest risk in guaranteeing the farmer 3s. per bushel. In my opinion, the farmer is likely to get 4s. or more. But this must also be considered—unless we encourage the farmer to grow wheat what is to become of our State railways? We have many millions of money invested in our railways, and we know already what is the result of a short crop—that there is not enough work for the railways. The Midland Railway Company's line is one of which I know a good deal, and the manager, Mr. Stead, has made the statement that, running full time, it will take him more than six months to move the wheat already stacked on the Midland sidings. What applies to the Midland Railway, applies in even a greater degree to our State railways. In giving the farmer this guarantee, we are doing something for the Railway Department and all other State departments, and for the general community as well. Therefore I have not the slightest hesitation, nor do I think

there is any risk whatever involved, in guaranteeing the amount of 3s. per bushel.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [6.10]: There appears to be an impression that a benevolent Government are about to guarantee the Western Australian farmer a certain price for his wheat. I wish to point out, however, that this is not being done by a benevolent Government, either Federal or State, but by the whole of the people of Western Australia, who are guaranteeing a certain section of our community a certain price for that section's product. Some of those hon. members who advocate the proposal—and more particularly the Colonial Secretary—I remember getting quite put out, last session, at the idea of interference with the sacred law of supply and demand. However, it appears that the weight of responsibility has prepared the Colonial Secretary for the dropping of any such quibbles. The present proposal is to interfere not merely with the law of supply and demand in Western Australia. The hon. gentleman who said that we should not interfere with the law of supply and demand here for Australian grown products now coolly proposes to regulate the world's markets. It is a pretty tall proposition. Let me explain. If this proposal means anything, it means that under certain circumstances we shall guarantee the farmer of Western Australia something over and above the world's market price for wheat. That is what the motion means, if it means anything. If it does not mean that, the motion is not worth carrying. We all hope that unfortunate circumstances affecting the price of wheat will not eventuate; but, if they do, there is the guarantee. Still, I am pleased to see that the Government are coming along to such an extent. Not only are they prepared to fix prices in the interests of that particular section of the community who are their pets, but they are prepared to tinker with the markets of the world. When responsibility is cast upon an individual, there is always a chance, so it appears, of his adopting any particular attitude that suits the day. The Colonial Secretary has quoted the average prices obtained for wheat in Australia, showing that they are slightly over 3s. 8d. per bushel f.o.b. That argument, however, does not apply in the present

case. I am sorry to have to say this, but it is just as well to point it out; because the disparity between the f.o.b. price of wheat in Western Australia and that ruling in the world's markets was never so great as at present. And that fact represents a special disadvantage to Australia by reason of the distance over which our wheat has to be shipped. Therefore, although in former times the 3s. 8d. average obtained, we shall be at a great disadvantage in realising 3s. 8d. at present, in view of the enormous sea freights. Wheat producing countries situated nearer to the markets of the world are much more favourably circumstanced in this respect. Thus danger lurks in that fact. According to my experience, the farmer does not seem to realise when he is getting a fair deal. Therefore it is as well to point out, also, that the people of Western Australia are guaranteeing the Western Australian farmer a certain price. In my opinion, we as legislators are called upon to consider not only the section who are guaranteed a price, but also those who sign the guarantee. For instance, no mention has been made of the fruit grower. Not only has the fruit grower to accept whatever price he can get for his product—an unpayable price in many instances—but, independently of that, he has to stand by the farmer, and guarantee him a certain price for his product. Again, the wage earners throughout the State are now receiving lower wages, having regard to the increase in the cost of living, than ever before in my experience. And yet they also have to guarantee the farmer a certain price. Therefore, it is just as well for the farmer to recognise that he is getting a fair deal, and that there are other sections of the community entitled to consideration, or at all events to justice. It is well to bear these points in mind in view of the continual complaints made here as to the manner in which the farmer is treated. The man who goes on the land does so not for the benefit of the general health of the community, or for the prosperity of others, but as a business proposition; and he puts in his spare time crying out about the way in which he is treated. In my opinion, if, instead of guaranteeing the farmer a fictitious price for his product, the Government set

about teaching the farmer how to farm practically and thereby decrease his cost of production, it would do him more good. At the present time, the guaranteeing of even 4s. to the farmer would merely mean that the Chamber of Commerce, which Mr. Duffell represents, would get the 4s. out of the farmer before it had a chance of going far. No wonder the Chamber of Commerce approve of the proposal. I can see how it comes about that the motion meets with such general support. I hope no one will suffer as the result of the passing of this motion; but, if anyone suffers, it will be the general taxpayer; and, so far as I see, the consumer will derive no advantage at all from this proposal. I hope the farmer will remember that on this occasion, as well as on many others, he has been given a pretty fair deal, and that the general community cannot always be expected to stand by silently giving benefits—we call them benefits, and the farmer calls them acts of simple justice—and listening to the continual railing of the farmer against the general public. I hope that in future there will not be this continual wailing about the treatment of the farmer. While I have been in this House, there has been very little legislation except such as was in the interests of the farmer; and I am beginning to think some of my constituents will want to know whether I have joined the Country party. I want the farmers' representatives to bear in mind who are the people standing behind the guarantee; and I want the farmers' representatives to give those people some credit for their action.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.16 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 6th February, 1917.

Adjournment: Dissolution asked for Page 1660

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

ADJOURNMENT—DISSOLUTION ASKED FOR.

The PREMIER (Hon. Frank Wilson—Sussex) [4.31]: Mr. Speaker, in view of the adverse vote given against the Government on Thursday evening last, I have considered the position, and waited upon His Excellency the Governor this morning, upon his return from Albany, and made the request that he would be good enough to grant a dissolution of the Assembly. His Excellency is considering my request, and I hope to have a reply in due course. In the meantime, I am of the opinion that we should not proceed with the business of the House, and therefore, move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question passed.

House adjourned at 4.33 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 7th February, 1917.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Health Act; Boulder Municipal Council, amended