

Minister, who will be in charge of the Bill next session, will be able to speak to it when it comes forward again. I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

On motion by Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom, debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6 p.m. to 8.55 p.m.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

COMPLIMENTARY REMARKS, CLOSE OF SESSION.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [8.56]: It is my intention to move that the House at its rising adjourn until Wednesday, the 19th June. Between now and that date a proclamation will be issued proroguing Parliament. Before submitting the motion, I would like to express my deep indebtedness to hon. members for the kindness, consideration, and assistance that I have received from all sides of the House during what has been a long, and I am sure, a very trying session for all. Perhaps it would not be out of place if at this moment of great crisis I should express the hope that it will not be long before those members of this Chamber, who are serving the Empire on active service, having completed their task will be back amongst us, and on behalf of the House I express to you, Sir, the hope that the brief period of rest and refreshment will be both pleasant and beneficial. I move—

“That the House at its rising adjourn until Wednesday, the 19th June.”

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [8.57]: I should like to support the remarks of the leader of the House by congratulating him upon the capable way in which he has laid the business of the House before hon. members, more especially when we consider the trying nature of the task which he has had in a session, which began so long ago that the beginning of it seems to be lost in the dimness of ages. I confess that I utterly forget when this session did begin, and I am only happy to remember that it ends to-night. I might now be allowed to wish you, Sir, in the brief holiday that we are to have, good health, and express the hope that you may return to preside over us invigorated by the rest even though it may be a brief one. I have pleasure in supporting the motion, and in echoing the wishes of the Colonial Secretary that those who have gone from among us in this Council, in common with all our brave soldiers, may come back to us as soon as possible, victorious after this fearful battle they are now engaged in.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [8.59]: With other hon. members I also appreciate the kindly remarks of the leader of the House. I am not in the habit of indulging in undue laudation of my fellows, but at the same time I think we all agree that honour should be given where honour is due. Politically, the Colonial Secretary and I do not agree, but that does not prevent me from realising the heavy

task he has to carry in presenting the business from practically all departments to this House. I was wont to sympathise with Mr. Drew. During his term of office he had a particularly hard lot, and this must also be realised by the present Colonial Secretary. As a matter of fact, that hon. gentleman did not make it easier for Mr. Drew. At the same time, although on practically all occasions the leader of the House and myself are opposed politically, speaking personally we are friends. I also think that we realise the particularly hard task that the Government have had in carrying on the affairs of the country under present conditions. I do not think there has been during this session any carping criticism. It is necessary, of course, to keep every Government up to the scratch. Such criticism as has been offered from my little corner has, I maintain, been intended to be of a helpful nature. It may not have been received in that way, but I assure the Colonial Secretary that this was our object, and that none of our criticism has been of a personal nature, particularly so far as the Colonial Secretary and his departments are concerned. I have much pleasure in acknowledging the kindly remarks of the leader of the House.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.4 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 30th May, 1918.

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

[For “Questions on Notice” and “Papers Presented” see “Votes and Proceedings.”]

QUESTION — AGRICULTURAL ROYAL COMMISSION, DISTRIBUTION OF REPORT AND EVIDENCE.

Mr. HARRISON (without notice) asked the Premier: It seems that numbers of copies of the report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, which has been somewhat costly, have been issued to members of Parliament and departmental officers. Would the Premier supply any surplus of these copies to mechanics' institute and libraries through the country districts? Will the evidence given in that report be accessible to people in the country?

The PREMIER replied: I shall have pleasure in acceding to the hon. member's request. It is only right that this report should be in the hands of all those who are primarily interested in the matter. I shall be pleased to have any surplus copies distributed in the manner requested by the hon. member.

QUESTION—RETURNED SOLDIERS.

Court Cases—Special Tribunal.

Mr. THOMSON (without notice) asked the Attorney General: Has the attention of the Attorney General been drawn to the case of Charles Edward Rooney, a returned soldier, who was charged at to-day's Police Court with stealing a ring valued at 10s.? The soldier was not defended. He has served three years at the Front, has lost one eye, his right arm is paralysed and he has been suffering from shell shock. According to the police evidence there was no record against him, but he was sentenced to one month's imprisonment with hard labour.

Hon. P. Collier: What is going wrong with our Police Magistrates? There seems to be a vendetta against our returned soldiers.

Mr. THOMSON: Will the Attorney General take steps to have this offender let off under the First Offenders' Act, and, secondly, will he appoint a special tribunal to deal with soldiers composed of a Magistrate and a medical officer, and see that in future these men are provided with counsel?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: In answer to the hon. member, I may say I have not heard of the case before as it only occurred to-day. I shall be glad to inquire into it first thing in the morning and investigate it, and do that which is right.

Mr. Thomson: Will the Attorney General see that this man gets off under the First Offenders' Act?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I cannot tell the hon. member that until I have seen the evidence. He may depend that I will look at the matter in a reasonable way. Regarding the second part of the hon. member's question as to whether a special tribunal could be constituted to try returned soldiers' offences, I do not think I can hold out any hope of agreeing to such a course.

Mr. Thomson: There should be one.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I may say that in all soldiers' cases, where there is the slightest indication of shell shock or derangement by reason of the war, the course I have adopted is this, that after the Magistrate has dealt with the soldier and he has been convicted for an offence, after the case has gone through my department, it is referred to the Colonial Secretary's department where the soldier is examined by the medical authorities. On their report I then base the decision that I arrive at. That practically meets the case set out in the second part of the question asked by the hon. member.

QUESTION—FREEZING WORKS,
FREMANTLE.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (without notice) asked the Premier: Can the Premier inform the House whether freezing works will be erected at Fremantle forthwith or not?

The PREMIER: The word "forthwith" is rather sudden. The Government are fully alive to the need of freezing works being established at a central port, such as Fremantle, for the encouragement of production in this

State, and as soon as arrangements can be made for doing so, these freezing works will be started.

QUESTION—PROFESSOR PATERSON.

Mr. HICKMOTT (without notice) asked the Premier: Is Professor Paterson a servant of the Government? If so, is it a fact that he charged the Government £100 for analysing the Esperance soils?

The PREMIER replied: Professor Paterson is not directly a servant of the Government, but he did receive an honorarium for analysing the Esperance soils. What the amount was I do not remember.

Hon. P. Collier: It was £100.

QUESTION—FREEZING WORKS,
ALBANY.

Mr. THOMSON (without notice) asked the Premier: In view of the reply just given by the Premier regarding freezing works at Fremantle, seeing that facilities are already provided so far as cool stores at Albany are concerned, do the Government propose forthwith to establish abattoirs and provide facilities for the export of lambs at Albany?

The PREMIER replied: I am not in a position to answer the question at present. I had no intimation that this question would be asked.

BILL—LAND TAX ADJUSTMENT.

All Stages.

Introduced by the Colonial Treasurer and read a first time.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner—Irwini) [4.45]: I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Colonial Treasurer in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Adjustment of land tax:

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It is within the knowledge of the Committee that we did away with the super tax. The object of this clause is to put the man paying land tax in the same position with the others. We have been collecting from that man 12 months' tax on the six months; and the purpose of the Bill is that the excess paid shall be credited against any land or income tax which the man may have to pay under the Bill we purpose passing this afternoon. As Treasurer, I naturally regret having to surrender any revenue.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This is something new. We were told definitely by the acting Treasurer and legal adviser of the Government that the tax was not being paid twice. Now the Colonial Treasurer, acting no doubt

on legal advice, informs us that the tax has been paid twice.

The Attorney General: Of course it was paid only once.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But double the amount was paid; and that is paying twice.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Seeing that the Government are hard up for money and that the tax has already been paid, it would not do much harm if the Treasurer retained it. No individual will feel much benefit from the passing of this Bill.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am glad that the Treasurer is rendering justice to the people by this Bill. They have been taxed double owing to an error of this Committee, and that obvious injustice should be remedied. The amendment which I moved in this connection the other day, and which the Attorney General opposed, would have effected the same object in a very much better way. Parliament, having made a mistake, should rectify that mistake.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

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

BILL—LAND AND INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Amendment.

Bill returned from the Legislative Council with a schedule of two requested amendments, which were now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

No. 1.—Clause 7, Paragraph (d)—Strike out in line 2 the word "twenty" and insert "twenty six" in lieu:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Colonial Treasurer, who has now returned from the Eastern States, has nevertheless asked me to take these amendments for him as I have become familiar with the passage of the Bill. This amendment deals with allowances or deductions to be made for children. I do not propose to repeat the many arguments used for and against this particular proposal in this Committee a few days ago. Under the Bill presented by the Treasurer the allowance was £10 per child. This Committee increased that to £20, and the Council have now increased it to £26. I told hon. members previously that the exemption of £10 per child meant a loss of £5,000 to the Treasurer, and that if it were increased to £20 it would mean a loss of £12,000 to the Treasurer. If we are to accept the amendment from another place it will represent a further loss to the Treasurer of from £3,000 to £4,000. I think we have whittled away the Bill quite far enough. I appeal to hon. members to support the decision of this Committee and not agree to the amendment made by the Council. The Treasurer objected to the increase from £10 to £20,

and he much more strongly objects to the further increase to £26. In another place this was carried with a majority of one. I move—

"That the amendment be not made."

Hon. P. COLLIER: We previously had a full and exhaustive discussion on this question, and there is not much to be gained by again debating it at length. Still, I do not think any argument has yet been advanced to shake the justification for this deduction of £26. It will give relief to a highly deserving section of the community whom it is the duty of Parliament to assist and encourage, particularly at this time; I refer to the married men bringing up families. It is all the more necessary when we remember that the exemption provided in the Bill has been greatly reduced. There are other important considerations besides that of revenue. During the passage of the Bill the Government have given away from the originally estimated revenue to be derived under the Bill considerably larger sums than is represented by this amendment. I am very glad that the members of another Chamber have set us so commendable an example in this amendment. I appeal to the Committee to adopt the higher view taken by another place and agree to the amendment. It is remarkable, where the workers are concerned, the Government are prepared to stand firm. There is no vacillating, no elasticity, and we do not hear of the Government throwing the Bill on the Table and saying, "Do as you like with it." They stand firm as a rock. The only provision in the Income Tax Bill on which there was any determination shown was in the clause that affected the workers of the country. It is most significant. When it came to giving away a charge to the pastoralists the Government fell over themselves in their eagerness to do so.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Whilst the hon. member has been speaking we have been considering the effect of the position. As the Premier pointed out to me, after all it does not make much difference, and as far as hon. members opposite are concerned, they need not run away with the idea that they are getting or giving anything. I have said all along the man who earns £4 a week and has three children pays no tax, the man who earns £5 a week and has five children pays no tax, and the man who earns £6 a week and has seven children pays no tax. The Treasurer tells me that he would advise the Committee to let this particular provision go. Therefore, I ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I now move—

"That the amendment be made."

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment made.

No. 2, Clause 7, paragraph (f)—Strike out proposed Subsection 12:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not propose to oppose this amendment. I move—

"That the amendment be made."

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What does it mean?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is merely a machinery method of dealing with the Commissioner's work. Of the interest paid by the

taxpayer to his bank on a mortgage, the Commissioner allocates so much to the business, so much to the premises and so much to another business, and so on. That is what he does every day of the week. It is ordinary routine, whether expressed in a Statute or not. This amendment has been put in to more clearly express what is now done.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I gather from the remarks of the Attorney General that the Commissioner has been doing something wrong in the past and he now seeks for authority.

The Attorney General: I did not say that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Attention has been drawn to it now and in the future it cannot be done unless we pass this amendment. This practically has been done without legal authority.

The Attorney General: There is legal authority but it was not clearly expressed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: As there is authority, I do not object.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment made.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Resolutions reported, the report adopted, and a Message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Council's Amendment.

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Colonial Treasurer in charge of the Bill.

Clause 3, Subclause 2—Strike out "and from no other source" and insert after the word "person," in the first line, the words "not in receipt of any income chargeable."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Members will remember that we passed what were called two equalising subclauses in Clause 3 of the Bill, so that a person who had income chargeable, apart from companies, and received income from companies as well, should pay a greater tax on the whole of his income, receiving credit for that for which he had paid dividend duty in his company. That was No. 1. No. 2 is designed to meet the case of a man who had income from a company only and from no other source. That is to say, No. 1 dealt with the case of a man who has an income, say, of £5,000 from a company and £3,000 from other sources. No. 2 is designed to meet the case of a man with an income drawn entirely from a company and from no other source, so that the man who had £5,000 would still be taxable under the increase. These provisions were drafted by the Solicitor General and myself and we used the words "from no other source." That is, having no chargeable income at all. In effect the amendment of another place is to use the words "having no chargeable income" instead. I have discussed this matter with my colleagues as to whether it made any difference in regard to the revenue.

I do not think it does. It simply expresses the same thing in another way.

Hon. P. Collier: I think so too.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If a man had income from a company and came under the increases, he is entitled to be treated as a person who had that income apart from the company and that income would be subject to the usual deductions, that any person would have. The desire of the Commissioner is to place the man with an income from companies on the same footing as the man receiving income from other sources. We have always referred to it as "income chargeable" and that has evidently been in the minds of members of another place, who think that these words will improve the Bill. I therefore move—

"That the amendment be made."

Question put and passed; Council's amendment made.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

All Stages.

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy-Moore) [5.33] in moving the second reading said: I desire to remind hon. member that a Wheat Marketing Act to confer certain powers on the Government with regard to the marketing of the wheat harvested during the season 1916-17 was passed in 1916. The desire of the Government was to extend the operation of the measure until the harvest of 1918-19, but another place amended the Bill so as to provide that it should only apply to the wheat harvested during the season 1917-18. That wheat has to a great extent been banded. The Bill was referred to a select committee and that select committee taking into consideration the criticisms which had been levelled at the management of the wheat scheme, and the general dissatisfaction as they stated, which had been expressed therewith by all parties, and recognising their inability to take evidence on the subject prior to the close of the session, recommended the House to pass the Bill amended by the deletion of the words, "applying the operation of the Bill to the 1918-19 harvest" as provided in Clause 2, on the understanding that the Government would forthwith appoint a Royal Commission consisting of members of both Houses of Parliament, acting without remuneration, to inquire into all matters connected with the control of the wheat scheme since its inception, and to advise as to its future operation and control. We have not been informed yet as to whether any resolution has been passed in the Legislative Council with regard to the Royal Commission being appointed, but I take it we will be informed in due course. It may be that the Bill was passed by the House in its present

form on an understanding that a Royal Commission would be appointed to inquire during the recess into the operations of the Wheat Marketing Scheme.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The Minister's assurance will take the place of a resolution.

The PREMIER: I am not aware that he has given that assurance.

Mr. O'Loughlen: If he has given that assurance a resolution will be unnecessary.

The PREMIER: Certainly, I have no doubt that if he has given the assurance, a Royal Commission will be appointed on the understanding that it will carry out its duties without remuneration.

Hon. P. Collier: Is it the intention of the Government to appoint such a Commission?

The PREMIER: I take it the Government are not averse to the appointment of a Royal Commission. A great deal of criticism has been levelled at the operations of the scheme. The Government feel certain that any inquiry that may be held will show that much of the criticism has been wrongly levelled at the administration, and that the work of the scheme is not in the condition some people wish to represent. When I was in the Eastern States I heard that it was considered by the representative of the Imperial Government in Australia that the working of the scheme in Western Australia was more satisfactory than it was in the Eastern States, so much so that the representative of the Imperial Government did not think it would be necessary in any way for him to visit Western Australia.

Hon. P. Collier: Was it at a luncheon you heard it?

The PREMIER: I heard it in cold blood.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The Honorary Minister had been over there and I suppose he told them.

Mr. Broun: How would they know if they made no investigations?

The PREMIER: They would know from reports. It has to be remembered that this wheat belongs to the Imperial Government and they have to see that the wheat is properly protected.

Hon. P. Collier: Not the last harvest.

The PREMIER: I think it will be an advantage if this matter is inquired into by a Royal Commission, and I am quite sure it will be found when the Commission meets, that the wheat marketing scheme has not been carried out in the way some people endeavour to make out.

Mr. O'Loughlen: A lot of the objection is against the price in comparison with the American price.

The PREMIER: A farmer can only receive the amount that is guaranteed less the expense in getting the wheat on board ship.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It has never been explained why the American price is twice as high as ours.

The PREMIER: That price is for their own wheat, and there is a very big population in America, over 80,000,000. I believe that if the war ceased and shipping was released, the price of Australian wheat would go up considerably. I have been told that on the best authority. Farmers can therefore

look forward with every confidence to obtaining a better market in the future. With regard to the Bill itself, there is very little in it except the agreement between the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and the Government with regard to the acquiring of the wheat. The Bill ratifies that agreement. The work of acquiring is now pretty well completed. Of course I know whoever takes on a business such as this which affects so many people, will be criticised. Taking all in all, however, the work has been carried out in a satisfactory manner. Certainly there have been little hitches at times, which might have occasioned friction and annoyance to those who have to deal with the matter. Taking it all in all, I do not think there is very much to complain of in Western Australia.

Hon. P. Collier: The farmers think so.

The PREMIER: This Bill only extends the operation of the Wheat Marketing Act to the harvest which has just been brought in, and when Parliament meets again the operations of the Wheat Marketing measure will have to be again extended. It was desired to extend the operations of this Bill for a further period, but the Legislative Council considered in its wisdom that it would be better to allow the Bill to extend to the operations in connection with the harvest which has just been reaped, and consequently it comes to us in this way. The further matters contained in the Bill will be more for the Committee stage than for the second reading. One could enlarge upon the great advantages of wheat growing and of the difficulties which the farmer has to contend with in the growing of cereals, but I do not intend to do that at present. The farmer, although he may have many difficulties to contend with, has at all times a feeling of hope. I believe the future lot of those engaged in these operations will be better than it has been in the past. I am sure that hon. members who sit opposite are just as anxious to see the farmer successful in Western Australia as we on this side are.

Hon. P. Collier: We are the real representatives of the farmers.

The PREMIER: I am sure the farmers will at all times receive sympathetic treatment at the hands of hon. members. I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

Mr. BROUN (Beverley) [5.47]: I am disappointed and surprised that such an important measure as this is being brought in to this Chamber at the dying hour of the session. I feel certain that had we been afforded an opportunity for discussing this measure fully, it would have taken us a considerable time to do so.

Hon. P. Collier: Days.

Mr. BROUN: It would have taken us a considerable time to effect the drastic amendments which we would have endeavoured to bring about.

Hon. P. Collier: Time is on the side of the Government.

Mr. BROUN: I understand from the Premier that the Government are in favour of the appointment of a Royal Commission to

inquire into the whole question of the handling and acquiring of this wheat. If that is the case I should like to know from the Premier how long that Royal Commission is going to sit.

Hon. J. Mitchell: In recess.

Mr. BROWN: There is nothing to prevent the Commission from sitting any length of time that is desired. The Commission could sit on for 12 months, with the result that we shall have the Wheat Marketing Bill held up so long that we shall not be able to consider it before the next harvest comes in.

Hon. P. Collier: Do you think the bungling has been so bad that it will take such a long time to reveal it all?

Mr. BROWN: Undoubtedly. I hear that in the case of this Royal Commission the members are not to receive any remuneration for their work. In all probability they will, therefore, hurry in their duties, because it will not pay them to loiter. That being so, we may have the recommendations of the Royal Commission to go on with when Parliament meets again. It is highly essential that we should have the measure brought down to this House as early as possible after the new session opens. I want an assurance from the Premier, that the Wheat Marketing Bill next year will be one of the first introduced into the Chamber, so that we shall have an opportunity of exposing the faults that are in the present measure, and endeavour to rectify them. The Bill now before us is absolutely worthless to the farmer. The agreement with the millers is most disastrous, and a number of amendments are required in the Act to make it equitable. Unless we have an opportunity of getting those amendments into the Bill we are going to meet with the same disaster with our coming harvest that we had with the previous harvest. The agreement of course, is only for the year 1917-18.

The Premier: We shall have a Bill early next session.

Mr. BROWN: So long as I have that assurance from the Premier—

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): You know it has to come in. How are you going to handle the harvest?

Mr. BROWN: The position will be the same then as it is now, unless the Bill is brought in early. Here is a Bill brought before us in connection with the acquiring of the 1917-18 harvest, and we are asked to ratify that agreement when the work in connection with it is almost completed.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a bad business.

Mr. BROWN: It is a rotten business. I want the Bill brought in early in order to prevent any agreement being signed before the next harvest is handled. I also want to see the Government ready to handle the harvest when the harvest is ready for them. Last year the farmers had to hold up their wheat until January, and cart it out from their fields under cover, and to the siding long after it was taken off the fields.

The Premier: We did not have anything of the sort.

Hon. T. Walker: Oh yes, we did.

Mr. BROWN: Certainly we did. There have been hundreds of bags of wheat served in that way. Hundreds of bags had to be left in the stubble fields waiting for the agents to take delivery of them.

Hon. P. Collier: All lying out in the rain.

Mr. BROWN: The farmers received word that the agents would take delivery in the first week in January, but they did not do so until the 15th January. As a rule most farmers have to take off this crop as speedily as possible, to protect them from unnecessary risk, such as fire and hail. When the harvest is taken off, I want the Government to remember that every day that passes after that harvest is off means a loss to the farmer, because he is prevented from putting his stock in while the wheat bags are stacked on the fields. He has been unable to feed his stock in the past, and sheep have been going back in condition while the farmer has been waiting to shift his wheat. After that, he had to wait until the middle of February to remove it, when he should have been doing something else on the farm. We want the Bill in time to be able to deal with the harvest straight away.

Hon. T. Walker: Off scratch.

Mr. BROWN: We desire that the Government should make all preparations, and be ready for the handling of the harvest when it is fit to be handled. I do not want a repetition of what has already taken place in this State. The statement I have made has been contradicted. I say again now, that it cannot be contradicted. I am absolutely confident that when a quantity of our wheat is removed it will be as black as ink in the centre of the stacks.

Hon. P. Collier: They are putting the weevily wheat in with the clean wheat.

Mr. BROWN: I have been given an assurance that this is not so.

Hon. P. Collier: Some men on the stacks have assured me that it is so.

Mr. BROWN: I have myself inspected a stack of old wheat at a siding where both new wheat and old wheat had been stacked. At the time I inspected it at this particular siding the old stack was partly taken down. It was impossible to obtain trucks in order to carry the wheat at the time, and the new wheat was stacked a short distance away from the old stack. Over an inch of rain fell with the result that the rain drove thousands of weevils out of the old stack on to the new stack. When I inspected the new stack the corners of the bags were red with weevil. The weevils penetrated the bags on the new stack, and when the bags were received by the agent at the depot it is not likely that they would see any weevils unless they opened the bags in order to try and find them. They would not come across the weevils in sampling, except by chance, for the weevils had worked their way into the centre of the wheat. The dampness of the wheat itself will breed weevil without the weevil being there already. We want to overcome that position. The Government should decide what they are going to do with the

wheat, and how they are going to store it. They must think about it now, and ought to have been able to say a month ago to the farmers of the State "We are going to guarantee you 3s. a bushel on trucks. We guarantee you 4s., and 3s. on delivery."—

Mr. SPEAKER: Does this Bill deal with the next harvest? I think it merely affects the last harvest.

Mr. BROWN: That is the position that has been announced quite recently, for no sale has yet been made. The Commonwealth Government and our Government have not decided what is going to be paid for the next harvest.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Their troubles about the farmer.

Mr. BROWN: The result is that hundreds of farmers will not worry about putting in any crops, because they possibly will not get anything for the wheat when it is grown. We expect the Government to get on with the handling of the wheat, and to make preparations in ample time, so that we shall have none of the waste which has taken place in the past. I regret that we have not been able to pull this measure to pieces as we should have done, as the session is almost closing. The Premier has given his assurance that there will be a Royal Commission appointed, and that we shall have an opportunity of making amendments to the next Bill. I will offer no further opposition to this measure going through, as after all it only concerns the harvest for 1917-18. If it were not for that fact, I would say that it would take at least three days to get the measure through this House. Unless an alteration is made in the next measure which comes before the House it will meet with most strenuous opposition from members on the Country party benches.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [6.0]: I should prefer to have given way to my friends who are more directly representative of the farmers upon this matter than we on this side of the House are, as I recognise that they are more intimately concerned with this Bill, and all that appertains thereto. I should like to compliment the member for Beverley (Mr. Brown) upon the tone of the speech which he has just delivered.

Hon. J. Mitchell: A good Opposition speech.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not a good Opposition speech, but a speech such as the occasion calls for. With the member for Beverley, I protest against the late introduction of this Bill. We have presented for our consideration at this late hour, practically within an hour or two of the closing of the session, and this although we have been sitting since November of last year, a Bill the importance of which could scarcely be exaggerated. It is upon the wheat growing in this country and upon the handling of the harvests that the State has to rely for pulling through the years ahead of us. It is altogether too important a measure for these dying moments. I think I am justified in asking the Government for some explanation as to why the Bill has not been presented here earlier. So far as I know, there is no excuse

for the delay. The House is entitled to be informed whether the delay is due to some hitch between the Government and the Westralian Farmers Ltd. in regard to the signing of the agreement? Is it a fact that the company who contracted for the acquiring of last year's harvest refused to sign the agreement till the last moment, and that that is why this measure has been hung up? If it is so, the House is entitled to know it. Certainly, it is a fact that in December of last year or early in the present year we passed the measure extending the Wheat Marketing Act of 1916, and consequently gave the Government power to enter into an agreement with this company for the handling of the harvest. So far as I can see, there is no reason whatever why the present Bill should have been withheld until the very last hour. An explanation of the delay is due from the Government to the House and to the country. The member for Beverley (Mr. Brown) says he will be satisfied with an assurance from the Government that before any agreement is made for the handling of the next harvest, Parliament shall be consulted and shall have an opportunity of discussing the terms and conditions.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Parliament has to be consulted.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has not to be consulted. What power has Parliament over this present measure? It is a perfect farce for us to be discussing it at all, when almost the whole of the work has been completed. In ordinary circumstances the work ought to have been completed before now—I refer to the collecting of the harvest. But it does not matter whether the House approves or disapproves of any one line of this Bill; we have no power to alter the measure. The agreement has been signed by a representative of the Government, and it is a binding legal agreement irrespective of any attitude this House may take.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It is silly to ask us to ratify the agreement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Assuredly. By the Bill we passed last year we gave the Government power to make the agreement, and therefore it is quite unnecessary for this House to ratify the agreement. The only thing that is new in the Bill, and that does require ratifying, is the gristing arrangement with the millers.

Mr. Pickering: What can we do as regards that?

Hon. P. COLLIER: That was signed in March last, and there is the end of that too. We are perfectly helpless. Here we are, dealing with a matter of such great importance to such a large section of the community and to the State in general, and dealing with it at this hour. The whole proceeding is a complete farce and an utter waste of time. So far as the collecting of the wheat is concerned, the work is practically done; but that is not so as regards the millers. I do not know whether or not I would be justified in assuming that the delay in bringing forward this important measure is in some degree due to the fact that the Minister who controls the wheat scheme is, apparently, carrying the whole burden of the Government as regards important matters of administration. As I protested earlier in the session, so I protest now, against

the manner in which all the big, important questions affecting the very existence and the future of this State are being administered by an Honorary Minister. Is the Minister breaking down under the burden placed on his shoulders? As showing the work which must be involved in the administration of the wheat scheme, I have only to point to the fact that the Honorary Minister in charge of it has had to visit Melbourne twice within the past six months for the purpose of attending conferences. In addition to having the responsibility of administering this scheme, and controlling the whole of the harvest of this State, worth millions of pounds, the Honorary Minister has other important duties. He is charged with coping with the great problem that has recently come upon this State in the form of the rabbit pest, besides discharging all the multifarious duties attaching to the office of Minister for Agriculture. It is time that some of the responsible Ministers, holding portfolios, took over the important work of this State and relieved the Honorary Minister of the heavy burden he is carrying. I attach a great deal of importance to this point, and therefore I am stressing it. This is the first time, in my knowledge of the administration of the affairs of this State, that several big and important questions affecting the very life and welfare of the country have been handed over to the charge of Honorary Ministers, while the minor sub-departments are being administered by responsible Ministers holding portfolios. I think a stage has been reached when an alteration should be made in that respect. In my opinion, this measure now before us should be administered by a responsible Minister sitting in the people's House, where he would be subject to criticism from time to time. It is almost as important that this measure should be administered by a Minister sitting in this House, as it is that the portfolio of the Treasury should be held in this House. The two matters are of almost equal importance. The administration of the Treasurer will depend largely upon the manner in which this measure is administered, and upon the handling of the harvests. I do not know what has caused the delay in connection with this Bill, but probably the Government will offer some explanation later. So far as the limited opportunities I have had of gaining information in regard to the handling of the harvest enable me to judge, I agree with the member for Beverley. Although it was promised that the entire harvest would be in by the middle of April, it is not all in yet; not by a considerable amount, I understand.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It is very nearly all in.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are now at the end of May, and not in the middle of April; and this delay of six weeks, I would remind hon. members, covers a period when the climatic conditions here are fraught with grave consequences to the harvest. Within the last few weeks there has been a break in the weather, and a considerable amount of rain has fallen. It was of the utmost importance and consequence to the country that the harvest should have been all in before the recent rains commenced. I am led to believe that a consid-

erable proportion of the harvest is still at various sidings, exposed to the weather and the rain; and we know what the result will be, and in the near future too. Moreover, whilst the principal Act gives power to appoint an advisory committee, that provision has proved largely a dead letter. There has been an advisory committee, some members of which have felt impelled to resign because of the treatment they received. But even whilst it may be true that the committee are still in existence, I understand they are to a great extent ignored in important phases of the administration of this legislation. Important steps have been taken affecting the management and control of the harvest, without reference to or consultation with the advisory committee. In view of this fact—and the House ought to know whether it is a fact—it is time that a change was made. I think that Parliament, in inserting that provision in the principal Act, expressed a desire that the advisory committee should be entrusted with such duties as would make them helpful in the administration of the scheme. That result cannot be achieved if the committee are to be ignored from time to time, as I understand has been the case during the past 12 months.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As I understand members of another place are now awaiting our pleasure, and also as I fully recognise that any time occupied in the discussing of this measure at this stage is more or less futile, having regard to the fact that we cannot alter anything, and that the work of the contract which this Bill authorises has already been carried out, I have no desire to occupy the time of the House any further. I only desire to say that I am sorry that we have not had an opportunity of discussing effectively this gristing agreement with the millers. The agreement so far as it relates to the acquiring and handling of the harvest has been discussed more or less from all its aspects on previous occasions, and I do not think there is anything new in it. It is mostly along the lines under which the harvest has been handled for the past few years, but the gristing agreement with the millers as outlined in the second schedule of the Bill is new, and having some knowledge of the millers of this State, and having some appreciation of the keen manner in which they are able to protect their own interests, I was apprehensive during the past month or two that the agreement was perhaps not as good as it might have been from the State point of view. I was apprehensive because of the significant silence which has prevailed in milling circles. When the millers of this State are carrying on operations which are not entirely to their own advantage, they are a class of the community who very quickly make themselves heard and felt, and the silence on their part during the past two or three months indicated to me that they had secured an excellent agreement from their point of view. I think a perusal of the Bill confirms that assumption. Here again we may complain, but not with any effect because

it is too late. The agreement is signed and will have to go on. The gisting allowance of 7d. per bushel is $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel in advance of that which it was contemplated to pay earlier in the year. On the other hand, the Minister in charge of the Bill in another place claims that there were some other concessions in the agreement which compensate for the increase in the gisting allowance. It will be for those intimately acquainted with the business to say whether that is so or not. So far as my knowledge goes it is not so. That will be a matter for the consideration of those particularly concerned, but the whole agreement seems to be drawn along those lines which are characteristic of the millers. I have no doubt whatever that if the Honorary Minister, assuming that he was solely responsible for the agreement, had sat around a table with representatives of the millers, the combat of wits and intellect would have been an unequal one because these men, the millers, have no equal in driving a bargain where their own interests are concerned, and this agreement indicates that they have succeeded to a considerable extent. I think I am voicing the opinion of every hon. member, when I say that so far as the handling of the coming harvest is concerned, Parliament should have an opportunity of considering every phase of the question and that the agreement should be placed before Parliament before any binding contract is made. It is the least that can be expected that the representatives of the people shall have an opportunity of considering in detail every phase of the next agreement which the Government may desire to enter into for the handling or the gisting of the coming harvest. Whilst the Premier says he believes there are very few genuine grounds for complaint in regard to the manner in which the harvest has been handled, I can only say that another place by their attitude have not endorsed that sentiment, because they have refused to give the Government power to make an agreement for the next harvest. They have limited the operations of this Bill to the harvest now being handled and they have also only agreed to allow this Bill to pass on condition that a Royal Commission is appointed to investigate and report upon the whole of the scheme since its inception. That indicates, at any rate, that members of another place—and many of them have an intimate knowledge of the question, being directly affected—are not satisfied with the manner in which the whole business has been handled in the past. I take it that the Government have agreed to the appointment of a Royal Commission; and whilst ordinarily I have very little faith in Royal Commissions or the result of their labours, I hope that the one which will be appointed in this instance will be an exception to the rule, that they will be able to evolve order out of seething chaos, and that when Parliament meets we shall have an opportunity of dealing with the whole matter of the agreements proposed to be entered into before anything is done.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [7.40]: There is no need to discuss the Bill at great length, because the Bill means nothing at all.

It is simply confirming an agreement which has been entered into, signed, sealed, and delivered. The Government have agreed to appoint a Royal Commission and when that Commission reports to this House, the whole business can be fully discussed. We who come from the wheat growing districts are specially interested in this question. We realise that all costs of every sort, all waste, or loss, are debited against the farmer. We realise that if the wheat is badly handled there must be a loss. We were told that notwithstanding there might be some loss in connection with the handling, the increased weight would make that loss good. But we are entitled to the increased weight. Every grain lost is a loss against the farmer.

Hon. P. Collier: That is like the milkman who spills his milk and makes it up by watering it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I wish to point out that all costs are debited against the farmer. Farmers' representatives should show keen interest in this matter. I know that the Honorary Minister in charge of this scheme has had considerable trouble, but I am afraid he has brought a good deal of it on himself. The inquiry which is to be made will have to be very tolerant. There must be criticism. The Premier has pointed out that this is a very big scheme and there will always be a great deal of dissatisfaction and criticism. There is no doubt about the fact that the Honorary Minister made a serious mistake when he said he would not receive the wheat until January. That meant a considerable loss. There was the insurance to pay on the wheat in the field; there was the loss in weight and the loss of interest, because the money to be advanced against this wheat should have been in the hands of the farmer six weeks before it was paid. The delay was due to the late building of the sheds. The Minister for Works erected the sheds within the time specified but he got his instructions three months too late. There will be a loss also because wheat has been left in the country uncovered.

Hon. P. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): There is plenty of iron about.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: A considerable quantity of iron might have been obtained. There is no doubt, too, that even if the iron were available, the timber was not available. The woodwork of the shed was only recently completed. The Minister himself will admit that he made a mistake in not having the sheds erected three months earlier. The consequent loss falls on the farmers, and they have a right to enter a protest. Then, too, there will be the weevil trouble, because weevilly trucks have been used to carry the wheat to the depot. Something has been said about the agreement. We have no power to alter the agreement. The passing of the clause ratifying the agreement will be merely an empty action, because we are not given any option, we cannot vary the agreement. Naturally the millers' agreement is favourable to the millers. It must be remembered that the millers do not pay anything for their wheat. They are milling weevilly wheat and, conse-

quently, they have to go to more trouble than would be the case if they were milling ordinary wheat. On the other hand, they have not to put one penny of capital into this business this year, as they would have to do under normal circumstances. Moreover, they will get an excellent price, a price altogether too high, and they have very favourable terms of sale. At the same time, of course, they have to look for markets in the Far East. Notwithstanding that it is the scheme's flour which is sold, if the miller does not pay his account to the pool within seven days, he has to pay only five per cent., which, in the circumstances, is a very low rate of interest, for the scheme's money is worth more than that. There are some strange clauses in the agreement. The acquiring agents take very little responsibility. The wheat is merely passed on by them. As far as I know, the principal complaint against the acquiring agents has been in regard to docking. It is quite wrong to unnecessarily dock a farmer a farthing. When we are simply dealing with fair average quality wheat, all that we can expect of the farmer is fair average quality wheat. I could enumerate cases of considerable dockings having been made by the acquiring agents. We must endeavour to provide against that next year. One thing, the question will be fully inquired into by the Royal Commission. There is a point which I desire to refer to once more, namely, the composition of the advisory committee. That committee should be composed of men wholly independent of the Government. I hope the Premier will make a note of that. He knows that I object to any official of the Government being on the committee. The committee should be independent and free to criticise the Minister or the management, and free also to offer advice on any point.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Then you do not think Mr. Sutton should be on the committee?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am perfectly certain that no official of the Government should be on the committee. This wheat is being handled for the farmer by the Minister. The farmer's protection lies in that advisory committee. Mr. Sutton was on the committee when I went to the department in 1916, but Mr. Sutton then went back to his work. This left a committee of independent men, and in no case had I to refuse to accept their advice.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Were they pleased when you were there?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: They were just as pleased with me as the House is with the Honorary Minister. The committee were satisfied with me, I think. One member of the committee was not satisfied with me, but then he never would be in accord with anybody. I ask the Government to see that the farmers are represented on the advisory committee, and that that committee shall be absolutely independent. In my time the advisory committee dealt fully with the agreement.

Hon. T. Walker: Then, how did they let all these privileges to millers pass?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I know nothing of the drafting of the agreement before us tonight. I contend that the advisory committee must be entirely free to act against the Minister if necessary. I will not offer any opposition to the Bill. Still, I do not approve of it, for the reason that, in the first place, it does not mean anything, and, in the second place, the Royal Commission will report on it early next session, when we shall have an opportunity for discussing the whole question. The State's liability in this matter requires close scrutiny by every member of the House. While the State is responsible to the farmer for the care and realisation of his wheat, the State is responsible to the Commonwealth for every penny we owe in respect of the wheat, and the State is responsible to the farmer for the full amount of the guarantee. No matter what happens to the wheat, we are still responsible to the farmer. Thus, it will be seen that this question of the handling of the wheat concerns every member. It is a great national question, for the British Government are anxious that wheat should be produced, and if we are to do national work we must go on with wheat production. It does not seem to me at all right to ask the House to ratify an agreement which the House cannot alter.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Extension to wheat harvested in 1917-18:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The leader of the Opposition asked the Premier the reason why the Bill was not dealt with earlier in the session. The Premier has not replied. For my part I would like to ask the Premier how he accounts for the insertion of Clause 18 of the agreement, seeing that it was not contained in any of the previous agreements. Under this agreement the liability of the acquiring agents is very much less than it has previously been.

Mr. PICKERING: Is the Premier prepared to make a definite statement as to what he is going to do regarding the on-coming season?

The PREMIER: There is really no need for this clause at all, as we have already decided that the principal Act shall apply to the wheat harvest for the season 1917-18. It is the intention of the Government to bring down at the earliest possible moment next session a Bill to deal with the forthcoming harvest. In view of the fact that another place has passed a motion requesting the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the wheat marketing scheme, the Government have decided to appoint this Commission. Upon the report of that Commission the arrangements for next year's harvest will be completed and brought be-

fore the House. I regret that this Bill has been brought down at this late stage. This is largely due to some difference of opinion which existed between the various parties. An agreement of this kind should have been brought before Parliament earlier. I will do my best to ensure that the House is placed in full possession of matters such as this at an earlier stage in the future. As to the time which has elapsed between the first and second readings of the measure in another place, this is due to the fact that the Honorary Minister was away attending a meeting of the wheat board in the Eastern States.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Ratification of agreement in first schedule:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I should like to hear from the Premier why it was though the Westralian Farmers Ltd. have had to put up a bond of £20,000, they have only been liable for one farthing per bushel on the wheat handled; and why paragraph 18 of the agreement was inserted here, when it has never been inserted in previous agreements of the kind? It is of course true that the responsibility of the contractors is not so great under this agreement as it has been under past agreements, and that the Government are liable for more than they have been in the past.

The PREMIER: I cannot exactly say why this paragraph 18 was inserted in the agreement.

Hon. T. Walker: Were any of your present Ministers members of the contracting company when this agreement was drafted?

The PREMIER: I cannot say.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): I believe I was, because I had six shares in the Producers' Union, which Mr. Harper had. These shares are valued at 6s. 9d. I am afraid I have forfeited them now.

The PREMIER: There may be some members of the Ministry who had an interest in the Westralian Mercantile Company.

Hon. T. Walker: Did Hon. C. F. Baxter hold an interest in it?

The PREMIER: I do not know.

Mr. Pickering: He could not hold more than 250 shares.

Mr. Johnston: If he had any it would not have interfered with his action.

The PREMIER: I do not think the hon. member believes that any Minister would, even if he had shares in the company, do anything that would favour that company.

Hon. T. Walker: No pecuniary interest perhaps.

Mr. Johnston: The Honorary Minister has driven some hard bargains with the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): A very just one.

The PREMIER: The Hon. Minister has indeed driven some hard bargains with this company. He has been looking after the interests of the State throughout his negotiations, and has at the same time conserved the interests of the farmers. I know that he

has put a great deal of energy into the matter, and that his whole desire has been to conserve the interests of the State and protect the farmers. When the scheme was drawn up, I understand it was considered that, although a bond was required for £20,000, if there was such a small amount of wheat handled as not really to require such a big bond, the agent would then be liable to the farthing per bushel. If the number of bushels which passed through an agent was 16 million, a bond for £20,000 would be justified. But if, on the other hand, the quantity of wheat handled was only 6,000 or 7,000 bushels, the bond would be too much; and in that case the agent is to be liable only according to the quantity of wheat handled by him; and $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per bushel was considered a fair and reasonable rate. Twenty millions of bushels at $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per bushel would represent £20,833. The agreement was based on a larger harvest than was actually obtained. I think this provision is only fair.

Hon. T. WALKER: The explanation of the Premier, and the agreement itself, bring into prominence that, notwithstanding the hard bargain driven by the Honorary Minister, the contracting company receives an advantage never previously given to any buyer of wheat. Prior to the present arrangement, the buyers were in competition, and each individual buyer had to put up a deposit of £20,000.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): But the conditions were so entirely different.

Hon. T. WALKER: Never mind. I am pointing out that each of the six companies in the field had to put up a guarantee of £20,000, making a security of £120,000 to everybody concerned that the business would be conducted in an honourable manner.

Hon. J. Mitchell: But that is for 12 months' liability for the care of the wheat.

Hon. T. WALKER: I know that. But as regards this particular company, which receives an absolute monopoly and has no competitors whatever, it is stipulated in one clause of the agreement that the company shall be treated like other companies and put up a deposit of £20,000, but the very next clause of the agreement takes away that liability. It is extraordinary to me that this monopoly should have its liability reduced to one-half, or less than one-half. What influence has been at work? I quite agree with the Premier that it would be absolutely wrong for any of us to infer that because Ministers had shares in that particular company they had pecuniary motives for giving the company a special favour. It is not that, and I am not inferring that. But there is the liability that those interested in a company of this kind, which is more or less associated with a definite political force in this country, might allow their politics to influence their favouritism, and thus might be led to assent to a clause in the agreement allowing this company some particular privilege or immunity which they would not

grant to any other company. That is a liability this House and the country have to guard against. It is necessary that we should have not only the assurance of the Premier, but the determination of the whole Cabinet, to bring down early in the next session a Bill dealing with the whole subject, before the terms of the agreement are definitely settled. The House should take part in framing the agreement.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think the guarantee of £20,000 is quite sufficient.

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not know that it is; I do not like the limitation. Another feature which renders it imperative that the House should have an opportunity to deal with the agreement, is the wonderful and extraordinary concession that has been made to the millers. The farmers have not been so thoroughly considered as the millers have been and as the contracting company has been considered. It is the farmers who will have to suffer.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not profess to have any special knowledge of this matter, but I wish to submit a point for the Committee's consideration. Objection has been raised to the guarantee of £20,000 as not being sufficient for any damage that may occur.

Hon. T. Walker: No. It is the next clause that we object to.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Twenty thousand pounds would be a guarantee for 20 million bushels of wheat; and the amount of money for which, on the present harvest, the agents would be liable is, at $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per bushel, cover for 75,000 bushels of wheat, or 25,000 bags. I wish to ask the farmers' representatives, who understand the matter, whether that 25,000 bags would be more or would be less than is likely to be damaged. If it is more, then the £20,000 guarantee is fully justified.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If any good purpose could be served or any result achieved by voting out this cause altogether, I would gladly do so. As I said on a measure which was before us earlier in the session, the manner in which the agreement was made was iniquitous—that is not too strong a term. The agreement was made without any regard for the equitable claims of the other acquiring agents, and it was made in the manner it was made because the men who control the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are the same men who control the organisation responsible for the existence of the Honorary Minister who made the agreement.

Mr. Harrison: You are wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not wrong. The directors of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are also members of the political organisation which controls the political life of the Honorary Minister who made the agreement.

Mr. Harrison: They all withdrew.

Hon. P. COLLIER: All the more reason why no agreement should be made with this body by any Minister who is a shareholder, in however small a degree, in a company with which he is making an agreement, until this House has had an opportunity of discussing

the agreement, and of ratifying it before any final terms are arranged. The principle is wrong. The Honorary Minister concerned holds some shares in the company.

Mr. PICKERING: I do not think his interest exceeds £10.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not care if it does not exceed ten pence. I do not think the pecuniary interest comes into it at all; the Honorary Minister is not interested in the company to that extent. But—what is of equal importance—the other interest, the political interest, comes into it. Some of the controlling personalities in the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are also controlling individuals on the executive of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): You are wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They are associated in some way.

Mr. Harrison: You are quite wrong.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (Honorary Minister): They may be associated; but you must not say that they are on the executive of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This agreement was made behind the backs of other acquiring agents last year and it was made in a manner that was not straightforward. After the Honorary Minister got all the information he could from other acquiring agents, and after leading them along the road a certain distance he took a turn and made this agreement with the Westralian Farmers. I hope there will be no more of that in the future. I believe the strongest critics of the Ministers are the men who pushed him into it. I say that the Minister is trying to do justice to the State; where I see the Minister being attacked the more convinced am I that the Honorary Minister is standing up against undue pressure.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The statement which the hon. member is making has been denied over and over again. It is absolutely untrue, but if the hon. member keeps on repeating it he will convince himself that it is true. So far as the Westralian Farmers are concerned, if the member was to have a little conversation with them he would find that they do not look on Mr. Baxter as their particular friend. They are up against him and have been from the outset. So far as the gentleman who has made the agreement is concerned, I have heard great complaints and I am not satisfied with the scheme. There have been great causes for complaint. The member controlling the scheme has had great difficulties to contend with. For instance, there was a strike. At the time he took over he had a manager who was not assisting him and a board that brought about a great deal of the chaos that existed.

THE CHAIRMAN: We are not dealing with the manager or the inside working of the scheme, but with the ratification of the agreement.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I am glad of the assurance that we are going to have an agreement brought down early next session, so that the scheme can be handled in a business-like way. So far as the whole thing is concerned, I am delighted that we are going to have a Royal

Commission to inquire into the scheme to place it on a proper footing for the future.

Mr. HARRISON: This agreement has come down for ratification when 90 per cent. of the work has been done. A good deal has been said about the waste and the Minister has been blamed, but there are more than the Minister handling the scheme. There is the Advisory Board, the acquiring agents, and the Railway Department. One of the largest contributors to the waste has been the Railway Department, for not covering up the trucks, and if we could get the report from the gentleman who is now in the Eastern States reporting for the Imperial Government, we should find that most of the waste was due to the Railway Department. We have had recent rains; nearly all the wheat coming down to the various centres in trucks is uncovered. The bags get wet and they are then put into the centre of the stack and generate heat. The bags become rotted, the wheat becomes perished. I want the Minister to use his influence with the Railway Department to see that next season there will be covered trucks.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister for Works misunderstood me entirely. The agents are responsible for the wheat in transit. If this is lost they have to pay for it. In all previous agreements agents were responsible. They had to put up a guarantee. In this agreement £20,000 has to be put up and the Minister said that represents 20 million bushels of wheat. There never has yet been in the State anything like 20 million bushels.

Mr. Brown: In proportion their guarantee is greater than the other agents ever put up.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The year before last this company handled more than half the wheat.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Authority for agreement in second schedule:

Mr. JOHNSTON: I wish to draw attention to paragraph 22 of the agreement with the millers under which it is provided that the millers shall pay interest at the rate of five per cent. The interest which the clients of the Agricultural Bank and the assisted settlers are called upon to pay has been raised to seven per cent., and I want the Government to make the interest similar in both cases.

Hon. P. Collier: This is another way of discussing the rate of interest to Agricultural Bank clients. It is rather astute on the part of the hon. member, but it is out of order.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I want an assurance as to whether this rate of five per cent. is to be adopted in the future, and why it is five per cent. here when it is seven per cent. in other Government departments at the present time.

The PREMIER: This clause deals with the amount of interest which shall be paid by the millers. When the proper time comes I shall be glad to inform the hon. member with regard to the interest paid by clients of the Agricultural Bank. I will see that attention is given to the matter, and I am obliged to the hon. member for bringing it under notice.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—agreed to.

Schedules 1, 2, 3—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Read a third time and passed.

COMPLIMENTARY REMARKS — CLOSE OF SESSION.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [8.56]: It is my intention to move that the House at its rising adjourn until the 19th June. This will be following out the usual custom and then Parliament will be prorogued by Proclamation. I recognise that we have had a strenuous two years of Parliamentary life and all hon. members must have felt the strain to a considerable extent. Whilst they have been engaged in their Parliamentary duties other matters of great importance have also demanded their attention. There was the conscription referendum which took place, and that was followed by the general elections, and during the periods of these two events Parliament stood adjourned. Then there were important conferences in the Eastern States which had to be attended. Altogether I am afraid that we have not been able to get through our business in that satisfactory way which we would have desired. We have all had a strenuous time and I desire to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for upholding the dignity of the Chair and for the impartiality of your decisions. On behalf of hon. members, I also desire to express my appreciation to the officers of the House and to the "Hansard" reporters for the work that they have performed, and also the patience which they exercised in carrying out the onerous duties entrusted to them. The staff have ministered to all our requirements with that courtesy for which they are proverbial and I feel that, in common with hon. members, they will be pleased to be relieved of the strain of Parliamentary work for a period. I thank hon. members who sit opposite for the courtesy they have extended to me as leader of the Government. I feel that they have done their duty to the country, and the hon. gentleman who sits immediately opposite to me has at all times endeavoured to carry out his duty without being unduly factious. He feels with me, I know, that we are at present passing through the most critical period in the history of the nation, and that it is our duty to refrain, as far as we can, from anything of a factious nature. I thank hon. members for the courtesy they have extended to me, whilst at the same time throwing their efforts strenuously into seeing that all the measures brought before the House were thoroughly thrashed out before becoming law. I hope hon. members will have a pleasant recess. I know that the duties of members of Parliament never cease. At the same time I hope that when we meet again we shall meet feeling that there is a brighter future for us. In respect of seasons in Western Australia, things never looked better. If only we had

peace without as we have peace within our borders, I am sure that Western Australia would be able to go forward on the road of progress. I ask your pardon, Sir, for having indulged at so great a length in moving the motion, but I should not like to see the House adjourn without having expressed my feelings in regard to the manner in which their duties have been carried out by the staff. I wish to offer to you, Sir, my respects, and my acknowledgments to hon. members who sit opposite, and with whom, although we may be opposed to politics, we may mutually go forward in endeavouring to do the best we can in the interests of the country. I move—

“That the House at its rising adjourn until Wednesday, the 19th June.”

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [9.3]: Perhaps I may be allowed to second the motion submitted by the Premier. In doing so I should like to say I join with the Premier in the expressions of goodwill to which he has given utterance. I suppose every member of the House will be pleased to be released from the somewhat long and trying session through which we have passed. It has been long, because of circumstances over which no member of the House has control. Since I have been a member we have not previously been sitting in May, and I hope, now that some of the disturbing elements and influences which contributed to the lateness of the session have passed away, we shall be able to meet in the new session at a reasonable time, and rise at the customary date prior to the Christmas holidays. I think I, too, can say that the business of the House, having regard to all the circumstances, has been conducted in a fairly amicable and friendly spirit. The outward influences of war and other abnormalities have had their effect also in this Chamber, and whilst we have differed strongly on matters of political principle which had to be discussed, we nevertheless have been able to maintain that difference in a friendly way, and I hope we shall be able to continue in that spirit to the end of this Parliament. In the first session of a new Parliament the Government have been in the happy position of being backed up by an overwhelming majority, which sometimes makes the path of a Government easy, although, as I know from past experience, it sometimes makes the path of a Government somewhat stony. But, taking all in all, I think the Government have not much to complain of in regard to the large following on that side. May I express the hope, too, that the comparatively small number on this side have fulfilled their duties in a manner not unworthy of

His Majesty's Opposition. I would like to join with the Premier in expressing thanks to you, Sir, for your utmost kindness and consideration at all times in debate. To the Chairman of Committees and the officers of the House also, I think our thanks are due for assistance and consideration on very many occasions. I hope that members will enjoy a brief respite from their labours, although it promises to be short, having regard to the undertaking of the Treasurer to bring down his Budget in July. However, I suppose most members will excuse the Treasurer even if he finds himself unable to comply to the full with that promise. But I hope that in the intervening period between the present and the opening of the next session, members will be able to enjoy a little rest, and that we shall meet with renewed vigour to carry on our work and face the many undoubtedly difficult problems confronting the State. In conclusion I should like to say that, above all, and beyond everything we hope, as indeed the whole civilised world is hoping at present, that peace will once more reign upon the earth.

Mr. SPEAKER [9.8]: Permit me, Mr. Premier and Mr. Collier, to thank you for the kind expressions you have made towards myself and the officers of the House. I realise that we have had indeed a very strenuous session, covering a period of seven months, and, as the Premier has pointed out, interrupted by important issues affecting not only the State but the Empire. Let me express the hope that hon. members will return next session after their rest—we have been reminded by the leader of the Opposition that in view of the Estimates coming down in July it will be but a brief rest—with that vigour and strength necessary to carry out the functions of Parliament in the manner expected of them by their constituents and the State at large. I wish to thank the Chairman of Committees and the Deputy Chairmen for the services they have rendered. I thank members generally for the kindness they have extended to me as Speaker. They have assisted me in every way; indeed I feel it would be hopeless for me to attempt to carry out my functions without that courtesy and kindly support invariably extended to me by members of both sides of the House.

Question put and passed.

BILL—LAND TAX ADJUSTMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 9.10 p.m.

Parliament was prorogued by Proclamation issued in the *Government Gazette* published on Friday, 14th June, 1918.