

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I considered it my duty to draw attention to the difficulties which would arise under the Bill. Irrespective of what the leader of the House may think, I am here with a duty to perform. In conclusion, I may remark it has been said that "some men are born for great things, some for small, and of some it is not recorded why they were born at all," and I think this applies to the gentlemen opposite.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: The Committee has entered a sufficient protest against the principle embodied in the clause, a protest that will entitle us at any future time, when a principle of this kind comes before us, to oppose it without leaving it open to the Government or any party to say that we accepted the principle at another time, for the circumstances under which it was done will acquit us of establishing a precedent. In view of this I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and *passed*.

QUESTION—WONGAN HILLS— MULLEWA RAILWAY.

Hon. H. CARSON asked the Colonial Secretary: On what date do the Government intend handing over the Wongan Hills-Mullewa Railway to the Commissioner of Railways?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: It was expected to hand over this railway in January next, but owing to existing conditions which have since arisen the date of completion is uncertain.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: By-laws of Municipality of Claremont.

House adjourned at 9.4 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 6th August, 1914.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—WONGAN HILLS— MULLEWA RAILWAY.

To hand over to Railway Department.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to hand over to the Working Railways any portions of the Wongan-Mullewa line during the present year? 2, If so, what sections is it intended to hand over, and when is it intended to do so?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1 and 2, It is not proposed to hand this line over in sections, but it was expected to place the whole railway under the control of the Working Railways in January next, but under existing circumstances since arisen the date of completion is uncertain.

Roads to Sidings.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY asked the Minister for Works: In order to assist the settlers on the Wongan-Mullewa railway line, will he open up the roads leading to the various sidings during the present year and, in view of the shortness of the burning season, start the work of clearing at an early date?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: Instructions have been issued to do road clearing leading to all sidings, but under existing circumstances since arisen the date of completion is uncertain.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Ivanhoe) moved—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as to admit of the introduction of Bills without notice, and of the passing of the same through all their stages in one day.

Question passed.

BILL—CONTROL OF TRADE IN WAR TIME.

All stages.

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Seaddan—Ivanhoe) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: May I at once explain to the House that this Bill has not been introduced for the purpose of causing any alarm, but from the opposite point of view, that is, for the purpose of reassuring the people of the State that it is our desire to protect their interests during this period of national calamity. I recognise that up to the present time there has not been much in the nature of a move to increase the prices of food supplies, although, in some directions, to some extent there have been advances. I had placed in my hands this morning a copy of a circular issued by one of the wholesale houses to its travellers, giving them the prices they were to quote for this particular week. This circular, too, was issued on Monday, before war was actually declared. On cocoa, all lines, the advance is a penny per lb.; on flour, 20s. per ton; on meats, all lines, 3d. per dozen, and the circular also mentions in regard to lines controlled by other houses that prices are not to be quoted. If evidence be required that a move is being made in the direction of advancing the prices of food supplies, we have it there, and it is considered that in order to protect the public, the Government should have the necessary power to prevent a set of individuals taking advantage of a period such as this for their personal benefit. Unfortunately also there has been experienced a general desire on the part of a great number of

the public to get in large quantities of stores, as though we were actually at the moment being assailed by some foreign power on our own shores, and it were necessary in consequence to make provision for a long siege. The effect of that is that those who have the cash have been able to lay in big stocks at existing prices, and unless some action is taken those who are situated in a less fortunate position may have to pay exorbitant prices for the necessities of life. At a time such as this we require to take action to prevent anyone making profits out of the position as it exists, and, as a matter of fact, everyone will be required to make some sacrifice if the crisis is to exist over any period. We cannot permit one section to make sacrifices and someone else to derive an advantage from the sacrifices of the others. I have received quite a number of letters and telegrams urging the introduction of a measure such as this, and this morning I was kept pretty busy on the telephone answering the calls of housewives who told me that they had made application for many necessities of life and had been refused them at the stores, while in other cases a fairly serious rise in prices had taken place. I have been assured from authoritative quarters that we have quite sufficient food supplies in Australia for all purposes, and even of those supplies which come from overseas. Of the latter we have, I have been assured, at least twelve months' supplies in the Commonwealth, while of others the supplies are said to be sufficient for four months, so that if we got nothing further for some time, there need be no cause for a panic. Then we boast that Australia is a self-contained continent, where we can produce almost anything we require. As a matter of fact, most of those articles we do import are such as we can do without. Therefore, there is really no need or justification for increases to what are known as war or famine prices. The authorities in Kalgoorlie telegraphed to me this morning that the goldfields local bodies desired the Government to protect the public by measures to restrain the undue rise in the price of

foodstuffs. I have also a letter from a prominent public man in Perth who is interested in a number of farms and who would probably be affected if we did not take action. He writes: "I suggest that to prevent victimisation you get from all the wholesale houses, flour millers and pastoralists all their present supplies of necessities and pass a short Act through the House enabling you, if any attempt is made to take advantage of the present position by charging exorbitant prices, to have the power of confiscation." Then again I am assured with regard to sugar that to-day one cannot obtain even a single pound in Perth, and yet we are told that there is a large supply held by some of the wholesale houses, for what purpose we are not clear at this stage. I am not accusing them of holding it for increased prices eventually; there may be other reasons, but it is wrong that we should permit them to hold it except to conserve supplies to carry us over the period when we might not be able to get further supplies. It is regrettable that such action is necessary, but it is the first step that must be taken for the State's welfare. We might easily allow the position to go on and first prove that the increases are taking place in a more extensive way than has actually happened, but I think that prevention is better than cure, and it is in the nature of preventing anything in the shape of a panic occurring, and to reassure the public, that this Bill is being introduced. Under the circumstances, every member of the House will appreciate the necessity for passing the measure. All that the Bill really provides is that we shall appoint a Royal Commission which shall have the power to call for papers and take evidence and obtain information from all persons from whom they think it necessary information should be obtained with regard to stocks on hand, and they may also recommend to the Government the action that should be taken if necessary. After all, the Bill does not anticipate action of any description being taken, much less drastic action, but if the necessity arises the power is therein contained. The fact that Parliament has

given this power will probably make it unnecessary for any action to be taken, because those who are holding supplies must accept the position as they find it. The fact will be appreciated, as I stated yesterday, that so far as we as a State are concerned, we are in a different position from the other States of the Commonwealth. A great number of our industries are carried on with the assistance of outside capital, as for instance, the mining and the timber industries, and there are possibilities which we hope will not arise, but which may arise, and we must be in the position to face them. If, therefore, we have to face a position that may arise under these circumstances, due to lack of cash available in Western Australia or in Australia, and due to the fact that these people who are working through the medium of outside capital, not being able to place their products on the market, with the result that operations may cease, we do not desire to find ourselves unable to meet the position that will arise under such circumstances, and so we are taking this power and making other provisions to meet an emergency. I have consulted the leader of the Opposition in connection with this matter, and before the Royal Commission is appointed we propose to ask the leader of the Opposition to consult with us in order that we may remove any idea which might possibly be in the minds of members, or of the public, that this Commission will be of a party nature. It will be appointed merely for the purposes of this measure.

Mr. Male: How many will be on the Commission?

The PREMIER: We propose at present only three, but there is nothing to prevent our adding to the number at a later stage, in case it should be found desirable that some members should travel. At present three will be sufficient. We have made the penalties fairly severe, but, after all, even the penalty we propose will not adequately meet the case, if it should arise, for a man who would deliberately hold stocks of food supplies on such an occasion is as much an enemy

to the people as he who would attempt to invade our shores.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The Guildford storekeepers say they could get no flour from the mill there this morning.

The PREMIER: That may be so, but there is no real difficulty in connection with flour. We have sufficient wheat supplies for the purpose of gristing all the flour that will be required, and more, and the stocks cannot be shipped. The most remarkable thing is this rise of 20s. a ton on flour. It has been stated on behalf of the millers that their object in making the rise was simply in the interests of the public. I do not quite see how they can maintain that, but they say it was to prevent speculators coming in and buying up large stocks at the present prices, with a view to selling them at an inflated price.

Mr. S. Stubbs: Does that £1 increase carry this £1,000 penalty?

The PREMIER: If the Royal Commission fix the price, it will. The Royal Commission will get all the particulars, and when they fix the price the £1,000 penalty will apply, but only on conviction; there is nothing in the nature of martial law about this. The courts will have to be moved, and that can be done only by permission of the Attorney General. Following on conviction action will be taken by the Colonial Treasurer, with the approval of the Governor-in-Council. So it will be seen we have provided all possible safeguards for the citizens, that we take the power for the purpose of safeguarding the community as a whole. It is not necessary to say more, I think, except that I noticed this morning that the Premier of Victoria has asserted that the Government of that State will not allow any one to unduly raise the price of necessities of life and so make profits out of the unfortunate position the people find themselves in. It is pointed out that Great Britain and France are doing much the same thing; but of course they are in a very different position from that in which we find ourselves. They will be forced to do it for, in all probability, there will there be a shortage of supplies.

There is no shortage here, and no grounds for raising prices. It may be found that no serious attempt will be made to raise the prices here, and I hope such will be the case. The Bill is rather in the nature of a measure to restrain action that might be taken but for the passing of the Bill. I believe it will not be necessary to put the Bill into operation.

Mr. Taylor: The passage of the Bill will be quite sufficient.

The PREMIER: Yes, I think it will be sufficient for the purpose. If not, then the powers are there and we can exercise them. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [4.50]: I have been in consultation with the Premier and the members of the Government in connection with this proposed legislation, and I am in accord with the principles of the measure we are asked to pass. It goes without saying that at times such as we are experiencing we must expect some inflation of prices, not only of necessities but of all other commodities. When there is a doubt as to whether further supplies of goods that have to be imported will reach our shores, naturally those who hold stocks inflate their prices. That, I take it, is to be expected, and so long as it is kept within reasonable bounds, no one would object to it. The object of the Bill is that we shall see that those reasonable bounds are maintained in regard to all food-stuffs, everything that is necessary to our people's subsistence. The Royal Commission will be appointed from the best available men who, under the powers conferred on them by His Excellency the Governor, and on the advice of Ministers, will sit and, I suppose, inquire as to what prices are to be charged from time to time. These prices will be gazetted, and those who hold stocks will have to conform to the prices so fixed. It is wise that we should step in early and not leave legislation of this description until we are in a state of chaos, until people do not know where to look for necessities, until supplies have been all

bought up and an undue value placed thereon. I do not think the Bill is calculated to cause any alarm. The intention certainly is to allay alarm so that the people of Western Australia may know that the Administration and the Parliament are determined to use the full power which they will be granted under this and similar legislation to see that the people are dealt fairly by. It is not an unwise proceeding, perhaps, for any citizen or housewife to look ahead and lay in a reasonable stock of everyday supplies. I do not hold for one moment that an action of that sort would be detrimental, so long as it is within reasonable bounds. Such action would not be taken from fear of invasion—because I do not think Western Australia is likely to attract the attention of the Powers with which Great Britain is at war, nor do I think they are likely to come as far as our shores to injure us—but there is an undoubted apprehension that there may be a shortage of supplies, and in regard to certain lines for which we depend upon foreign countries we must have a shortage to a considerable extent. Australia can undoubtedly supply her own requirements. That is something we have to be very grateful for indeed. Australia can support all her people. So long as she has plenty of meat and flour, in other words, wheat, which she has, her people cannot suffer actual starvation. Therefore, it rests with the Governments of the several States, and the Federal Government, to see that those supplies are so controlled that no one individual having stocks can refuse to mete out what is necessary for the requirements of the people. The personnel of the Royal Commission is a question of considerable moment, and I am happy to think that the Government are quite prepared to receive suggestions from this side of the House. It is in keeping with the conferences we have had up to the present and the pledges given that we will work together in this time of trouble and endeavour by all means to get the best solution of our difficulties and troubles as they arise. We will have, we

must have, more trouble month by month, as time goes on. I feel sure the Government will meet those troubles and solve them as they come along. We are bound to have stoppage of operations in some of our industries to a considerable extent. We might just as well face that position. It is not necessary to worry about the capital already invested in those industries, because that does not matter. It does not matter where that capital has come from, so long as the capital is here in our industries; it does not matter even if it belonged to the Czar of Russia or the German Emperor himself. But it does matter in regard to the export markets, for those of our industries which export their produce, such as our timber industry, cannot possibly continue operations, because they cannot get to their markets. The same thing obtains in regard to our copper mines, one of which has had to dispense with a number of hands.

Mr. Bolton: Two of them.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, two of them. The only way we can obviate that sort of thing to some degree, and I am sure it will in the near future receive the earliest attention of the Government, is to see whether the Government cannot arrange some method of financing the production. If our industries are to go on at their full output, or a considerable proportion of it, they must of necessity receive some advances against those outputs. That is a matter which will have to be considered. In regard to food supplies, the wherewithal to purchase food is what the worker can earn by his labour, and our object within the next few weeks will be to endeavour, as far as possible, to keep our people employed, at any rate sufficiently to pay for the necessities of life, which the Government propose under this measure shall be supplied to them at reasonable rates. I commend the Bill in principle to the House. I am sure hon members will give it their careful consideration. I would suggest to the Premier that, perhaps, it would be wise, if when we passed the second reading, the Bill was at once referred to a select com-

mittee. The sitting of the House might be suspended for a half hour, so that the select committee could go through the Bill clause by clause. It would save a lot of trouble, and possibly debate in Committee, if half-a-dozen members sat on this measure as a select committee and came back and reported to the House. We could then pass the Bill through all its stages.

Mr. S. STUBBS (Wagin) [4.58:] I commend the Government for their action in this matter, and I also agree with the leader of the Opposition that much valuable time would be saved if a small committee were appointed to go into this question. My chief desire in rising is to say that, although it may at first seem to the House a little bit harsh if merchants have increased their prices, yet in justice to those merchants it should be pointed out that were members in the position of the merchants of Western Australia, they would look at the question, not altogether from the point of view of the man in the street. I want to be perfectly fair. I abhor the conduct of any man who desires to make capital out of the present condition of affairs. But take the case of a merchant carrying large stocks of stuff imported from overseas, and who has been in the habit of distributing those stocks to many storekeepers in various parts of the State. If a storekeeper sent an order for double the quantity of goods, believing that the merchant would only have a certain quantity of stuff to supply, the merchant has to be very careful regarding his prices; because he cannot replace that stock for the money he originally paid for it. My point is this. When he sells out of certain lines, he has to apply to the Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide markets for more of the same article. He is faced with this difficulty over there, that if the merchant who holds this class of goods in the Eastern States sells it to come to Western Australia, he has to replace it, and naturally puts a little additional price on to recoup himself for the extra expense he has been put to in doing so.

Mr. Taylor: This Bill will not affect that.

The Premier: What justification has he for putting up the cost for something for which he himself has not had to pay an increased price?

Mr. S. STUBBS: My point is that at the end of a war nearly all his stocks can be replaced at 10 per cent. or 20 per cent. less than they cost during a war; for, in nineteen cases out of twenty, at the end of a war, prices go down flog. The merchant, therefore, stands to lose considerably at such a time. It appears to me that hon. members lose sight of that fact. I have been connected with trade for some twenty years, and I have seen how at the end of the Boer war the prices came down with a flog, and how the merchant who had stocked fairly large supplies when the prices were high found himself the loser of a large sum of money when the war came to an end. I hope the Commission, whoever it is composed of, will not lose sight of that fact. I am not holding any brief for the merchants, but I am only pointing out that there are difficulties that merchants and traders have to contend with which hon. members are not quite conversant with. I commend the Bill to the House, and I think that a measure such as this will do incalculable good.

Mr. LANDER (East Perth) [5.4]: I certainly think that this measure will allay a lot of misapprehension which exists in the city of Perth. A number of people have spoken to me in reference to the alleged rise in the price of food stuffs, and I believe that the effect of this Bill will be to satisfy people that some action is being taken by the Government. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member who has just sat down (Mr. S. Stubbs), in reference to what the merchants will have to pay, I notice that he does not say a word about the merchants who purchased hay this year at £3 per ton, and who are now getting £7 per ton out of the farmer for chaff.

Mr. S. Stubbs: That is not so.

Mr. LANDER: As a matter of fact I believe they are all doing this.

Mr. S. Stubbs: They are not.

Mr. LANDER: We can certainly see the necessity for bringing in this Bill. We have exploiters in this country, and we have to fight them. Our children have to fight to protect their country. These are not the men who send their children forward, but it is the children of the working man who do the fighting; and it is our duty therefore to see that the working man and his children get their food.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [5.6]: Whilst not indulging in the heroics of the hon. member who has just spoken, I wish to say that I entirely approve of a measure of this kind. It is absolutely wrong that the people should be exploited on occasions of this sort, but I think we will require to be very careful with legislation of this kind. I notice that something is set up in this Bill in the interpretation of "personal requirements" that would render it impossible for a farmer to keep a supply of food for his horse sufficient to last for over three months, or to keep any seed with which to sow his land.

Mr. Price: These are not necessities of life; neither is seed wheat a necessity of life.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The wheat is a necessity of life; but not the seed wheat.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am personally anxious to have the Bill passed, and hope to see it an effective measure. I am just pointing out, however, where the Bill is weak. Wheat is certainly food, and the interpretation referring to "personal requirements" restricts the quantity which can be kept to requirements not exceeding three months.

The Premier: It gives the power, but it does not say that supplies are going to be restricted to that extent. Do you think the Government are such fools as to prevent a man from getting seed wheat in?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier will see that Clause 5 does not limit the right to the Government to demand any produce, but says that any person may make such a demand. I think we will have to be very careful. I believe that

the Minister for Lands will agree that our wheat fields ought to be sown next year.

The Minister for Works: They will reap their next harvest before then.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think the farmers ought to be allowed to keep seed by for their crops, and it appears to me that Ministers have a great difficulty in understanding the matter. I merely wish to point out that whilst the Bill is necessary we require this safeguard to ensure that producers may be certain that they will be able to put in their crops during the coming year. I think that the Attorney General will admit that this is an original Bill, and that it is not based on any other Bill which has been in operation anywhere else or any that he could draft from. It is probably the best Bill that could be brought down in the circumstances, but it does seem to me that the limitations in regard to the primary producer carry things a little too far. When it comes to the question of the supplies of flour I admit that there is no reason why this food stuff should be any higher in price. We have ample flour in this country, probably enough to last us for a whole year, and I know that to-day it cannot be exported from Western Australia. But I do not take the pessimistic view that the Premier does in the matter. I believe that when our fleet meets the German fleet the seas will once more become open to British commerce, and that we shall be able to recommence our exportations. There is no reason why flour should be a penny higher in price than it was before. I agree with the leader of the Opposition when he says that we want people not only to have an opportunity of buying bread and meat at reasonable prices, but that we want people to have employment. There is no occasion, in my opinion, when the collective credit of the people can be used to greater advantage than at the present time. I recognise that if the industries are to be kept going, if the pastoralists are to get something against their wool, if the timber people are to get something

against their sleepers, if the wheat growers are to get something against their wheat when the harvest comes round again, the Government will have to use the credit of the country in order that something may be done to help them. It is not for me, of course, to say how this should be done, but the matter will have to be taken into consideration. I hope that the Government will keep in mind the fact that these industries are absolutely essential to the working man. There is no need for a scare, and no need for a panic. I merely want to say that unless something is done to keep going our big industries that are really dependent upon the export of their produce, there may be considerable trouble. I do not wish to debate that matter now. I merely wish to point out that this Bill is not perfect, and to support the suggestion of the leader of the Opposition that the Bill should be referred for a few minutes to a select committee, which could consider one or two points, and if necessary make recommendations to the House, so as to save a considerable amount of time.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS (Subiaco) [5.10]: I think the great majority of the people will endorse the action of the Government in bringing down this Bill. There is, however, another direction in which I think the Government should take some action. It is anticipated that we are going to have a dearth of employment, and that a great many workmen may be thrown entirely out of work, or else they may have only a very little work to do. It is generally recognised that there is a large number of workmen who are buying their own houses, and I think it is necessary for the Government to take steps to prevent any foreclosure upon any of these properties if the workers cannot keep up their payments. Many of these workmen are buying their houses on the weekly rental system, and have paid a certain amount of deposit. It is true we may have to be careful in dealing with such cases. But even if a little injustice is inflicted by reason of a person who is in a position to do so paying no rent during this time of stress, it would

be better that that should take place rather than that one individual should lose his home. I am not suggesting that action should be taken in this direction straight away. I merely suggest that this matter should be kept in view in case of any contingency of this sort. We are forced to recognise that there are individuals in the country who will take every opportunity of enriching themselves at the expense of others. I trust that when any knowledge of this kind comes before the Government they will immediately take action. It would be a pity if in such a time of stress people should lose their homes upon which they have paid a large amount.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore) [5.11]: Whilst I am thoroughly in accord with the action of the Government in introducing this measure I think it is incumbent upon one not to remain silent if one can see a weak point in it. I think myself that the hon. member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) has certainly placed his finger upon the weak point in this Bill. It is desired, certainly, that people should not be able, at the present juncture, to store up an amount of produce which they do not want, so that they would be able to deprive others of being able to obtain it, but I think that the Government seem to have lost sight of the fact that in the country districts farmers have in the ordinary course of events to provide themselves with produce to carry them over a long period. They require, for instance, large supplies of oats and hay, but, in this Bill, no doubt these things will be considered to be "personal requirements." Consequently no person is expected to hold more than a three months' supply of such produce.

The Minister for Lands: I think that is a reasonable interpretation of the clause.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I do not think so. Farmers are accustomed to hold supplies for at least twelve months.

Mr. S. Stubbs: And two years' supply of oats and hay.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: Because some people have not had sufficient foresight

to provide for themselves, or who have been too lazy to devote their attention to this matter, or have shown a want of business capacity by not keeping these things in stock, under one of the clauses of the Bill these persons will be able to go to any other more thoughtful person and say that they want a bag or two of oats, and take advantage of the Bill so as to be able to provide themselves with what they did not take the trouble to lay in even in ordinary circumstances when things were normal. I do not think that that is the position which the Government desire to arise. There are many instances where the farmers out in the backblocks, and the squatters in the North, and others, provide themselves with supplies to last as long as six or 12 months, but, under this Bill, any man can come along and demand that he shall have so much flour or something else out of the man's home. Although the man may not require the same for his own use, he can make the demand if he considers that the man holding the goods has more than a three months' supply on hand, and can take the goods away.

Mr. Bolton: Not if he himself has more than a three months' supply.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: Yes. he could.

Mr. Bolton: It is absurd.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I do not think it was ever intended by the Bill that hardships should be suffered such as those I have pointed out. I hope that there will be some means of preventing this. I am quite sure that hon. members will consider it an injustice in the case of persons who have had the foresight to supply themselves with these necessities, such as oats and bran, for these to be taken away from them by any person who likes to make a demand for them. I hope that before the Bill is finally dealt with this difficulty will be got over.

Mr. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [5.15]: One would not expect anything but support for a measure of this kind after hearing the Government being congratulated on bringing in the Bill, and the leader of the Opposition being

thanked by the Premier for his co-operation during the crisis, and learning also of the concurrence of that hon. member on the presentation of the Bill to the Chamber. I was surprised to hear the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) setting up the argument that the Bill would militate against farmers holding seed wheat. I venture to submit that the farmers for this season, so far as seed wheat is concerned, have been provided for, and that they will provide for their next season's seed from that which is now being grown. There is no necessity for the member for Northam to worry in that respect. The hon. member who has just resumed his seat supported the contention raised by the member for Northam, and he extended the objections somewhat further. He said that the Bill would affect suppliers in the way of fodder stored for carrying the farmers over perhaps a period of twelve months. There is nothing in the Bill which will make that an offence. It will be possible to store up as much as one likes, but if it is the opinion of those who are administering the measure that it should be sold, then it will be an offence if it is not sold. The prices are to be fixed by the commission. Storing will not be affected until the time arrives to sell. It will be an offence if one refuses to sell. When the commission is appointed they will regulate the prices from time to time as circumstances may arise.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The man who has to sell will sell as speedily as possible because he will not get a higher price.

Mr. TAYLOR: The commission will regulate the prices. Supposing there be a dearth in any particular line, and it costs more to bring that to the consumer, does the hon. member mean to tell me that there is anything in the measure which will make the price of that commodity such that the vendor will lose? The object of the measure is clear, and I congratulate the draftsman on having made it so that it will not be possible to drive the usual coach and four through it, as is so often the case in regard to measures which have been passed by Par-

liament. Why are hon. members opposing the Bill?

Hon. J. Mitchell: We are not.

Mr. Price: Of course you are.

Mr. TAYLOR: I hope the measure will go to a select committee and that it will come back to this Chamber and be passed on the recommendation of the select committee without further discussion. But one must feel that there is some opposition to it.

Hon. H. B. Lefroy: No, no.

Mr. TAYLOR: And when that opposition is advanced it is necessary to reply to it, and one is justified in pointing out that it is due to the fact that the Bill expresses what is intended. It is necessary that we should have this measure passed, and I am in favour of a select committee being appointed if it is desired that one should sit in regard to the Bill, and the matter can then go through without further discussion. It is idle for hon. members to say that we have not in our communities, no matter what language we speak, people in the commercial world who will not take advantage of a position which may arise, even to the detriment of the public generally. That is an instinct of commerce, and if one does not possess that instinct he will not be a successful man. Everybody knows that the Bill is absolutely necessary, and I congratulate the Government on having brought it down when the necessity arose for it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. T. Bath—Avon) [5.22]: I think we want as far as possible to avoid reexamination.

Members: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At the same time in discussing the Bill, we want to be sure that at a time when it may be necessary—and I hope it will not—to utilise it, that it is sufficient for the purpose. Although the Standing Orders have been suspended in order to permit of the speedy passage of the Bill, it has not been hastily drafted or hastily submitted to the House. Great consideration has been given to it. Personally I see no danger whatever in Clause 5, to which some exception has been taken.

I am in the position of having supplies to which hon. members have referred, necessary for working stock utilised on farms, and I have no fear whatever that those supplies necessary for the carrying on of operations are going to be attacked in a provision of this kind. The selection of gentlemen entrusted with this work presupposes that they are chosen for the purpose of preventing anyone from cornering supplies, and putting them up in price, and thus taking advantage of the public necessity. So far as I can see at the present juncture, in regard to the main articles of food required in Western Australia, there is no justification for any increase in prices. As has been already pointed out, the two main staples are bread and meat, and we produce these within our own borders, but in regard to butter and other products, these are imported from the Eastern States, and unless the producers in the Eastern States put up their prices there is no reason for the prices to be raised in this State, and it is merely for the purpose of reassuring those who will be content with the profits of the past that the measure is being introduced. It will act rather as a warning to those who control supplies that if certain action is taken in the future the Government possess the necessary power to step in, but I hope it will not be necessary to exercise that power. It is essential, however, that we should have it in the event of the necessity arising. I hope hon. members will realise that and will accord their support to the Bill.

Mr. MALE (Kimberley) [5.26]: We have had only comparatively few minutes to give consideration to the measure, and in that time it has only been possible to glance through it. The measure has not appealed to me as it has appealed to the member for Northam. It appealed to me as regards supplies for the northern portion of the State. In the North we are not connected with the metropolis by rail, as is the district represented by the hon. member. We are connected by sea, and we are further away from Perth than New York is from Liverpool, and

I would wish the Premier to recognise that. Every year, before what we call the willy-willy season sets in, it is necessary for the people in the North to lay in stocks, and the minimum supply they take in is intended to cover a period of six months. If they did not do this, they would stand a chance of running out of supplies altogether. I am perfectly in accord with the Bill, but I want the Premier and others to recognise that in the North, where we are always more or less isolated, and in case we may be isolated entirely, it will not be possible for shipping to go up the coast, and I want the provision in Clause 5 of the Bill to cover that contingency. The leader of the Opposition referred to the fact that we must anticipate that considerable trouble may yet come upon us. We have already an instance of mines closing down, and I regret to say that the industry I represent will perhaps be more affected than any other in Australia—I refer to pearling. It is a big industry and it employs a large number of people. Already information has been received from the outside world where our product was sent, that the trade is entirely paralysed. What does that mean? It means that for the present our product is unsaleable, or nearly so. I hope it may not occur that I may have to come to the Premier and ask him to do something to assist us. I am not anticipating it, and I hope the occasion will not arise.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: I hope they will send the Japs back.

Mr. MALE: We will leave that to another and a more fitting occasion. But should it be necessary for us to do anything for our own people, and at the same time see that other people are willing to assist us and to assist the Empire, I am certain that the Premier will do his duty. On further going through the Bill I find there is another clause which refers to the exports of the necessities of life. I would draw the attention of the Premier to the fact that at the present time necessities of life are being exported from Australia. There is a regular trade

to Java, Singapore, and Manila of live stock. Under one of the clauses of this Bill it will be necessary to get the consent in writing of the Treasurer before that stock can be exported from this State. The destination of the stock may be worth the Premier's consideration, over and above the fact whether it is advisable to ship it at all. Perhaps it will be the duty of the Premier to see that if the stock is exported from the State it goes into channels which we desire it to. Any surplus foods we have, whether wheat, fruit, or meat may be required for some other portion of the Empire. This is a point the Premier should consider, and if the Bill is to be submitted to a select committee it might be decided whether it is advisable to export at all. In this connection, we must remember that in preventing export at the present time, we are interfering with the regular trade and this trade is worthy of consideration because it is worth conserving. The other point is as to what should be the destination of the stock which is shipped. These are the only points which appeal to me after glancing through the Bill, but others might occur when the measure comes to be applied. The Bill has my entire sympathy and the Premier is doing the right thing in introducing it. We must protect the foodstuffs of our people.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [5.31]: There is just one point—

The Premier: I want to get the Bill up to the Council.

Mr. FOLEY: If the Council have not sufficient interest at this crisis to wait, it is another good reason why the Upper House should be abolished. This pandering to the Council is no good to me.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair.

Mr. FOLEY: There is one matter I would like the Premier to clear up. The measure aims at preventing panic, and this is a time in the history of Australia when one should keep cool. Many phases of the question have been put before the House, but one question I would like the Premier to answer in connection with the clause appointing a Royal Commission to

regulate the prices of food, is whether they will regulate them in every portion of the State.

The PREMIER: If the need arises, yes.

Mr. FOLEY: If not the Commission may regulate the prices only in the City of Perth or between the producer and the merchant who distributes the goods. If the Commission is not wide enough in its scope or if its intended members have not sufficient knowledge of the country, I would like others to be appointed so that the local features of the various centres will be taken into consideration and the retailers in these places after having purchased from the merchant will not be able to extort money from those who are in a more parlous position than the people in the metropolitan area, if war comes about. It is only because of the likelihood of war that this measure has been introduced.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Ivanhoe—in reply) [5.33]: I am pleased that hon. members have accepted this measure, though I regret that it is one of necessity. There may be differences of opinion with regard to the effect of the clauses, but I want to explain that evidently hon. members have not been able to apply themselves to the Bill sufficiently long to recognise exactly what it means. The hon. member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) made reference to seed wheat held by a farmer. A farmer may be holding some to-day for next season, but his intention in reality may be extremely doubtful. In Clause 2, the definition of "necessaries of life" is—

Such products, goods, chattels, and things as the Governor may by proclamation declare to be necessaries of life for the purposes of this Act.
We are not likely to declare seed wheat a necessary of life.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You will declare wheat, probably.

The PREMIER: We may not declare wheat. So long as there is plenty of flour and plenty of wheat stored in our mills we will not.

Mr. Wisdom: That is the most likely thing to be cornered.

The PREMIER: I do not think there is likely to be a corner in wheat.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: They are buying it up wholesale to-day.

The PREMIER: I do not mind that.

Mr. Munsie: If so, it will be in a confined area for the Government to get at later on.

The PREMIER: That is so.

Mr. Dwyer interjected.

The PREMIER: We do not pledge ourselves not to declare wheat among the necessities of life, but even if we declare every article as a necessary of life under Clause 2, Clause 5 could not work the hardship which some hon. members seem to imagine. We have to take the Bill as a whole and not any one clause of it. No action can be taken under the measure except with the permission of the Attorney General. If Parliament is prepared to give such powers—powers which would not have to be asked for under ordinary circumstances, for the Executive Council, of which the Attorney General is a member—it should be prepared to allow the Attorney General to use common sense when such a matter is submitted to him for his consideration. If we are not prepared to concede that the Attorney General would use common sense, but would permit a prosecution which would be persecution, we should not pass the Bill, but it is essential to have these powers, and are we likely to exercise them without due common sense? It is necessary to have them in such form as the hon. member for Mount Margaret (Mr. Taylor) pointed out, that a coach and four cannot be driven through the measure. We do not want to have to come to Parliament every week to rectify oversights through having too many points and terms in the measure. We want something definite and strict, and there should be no fear so long as we have a saving clause such as Clause 11, which reads—

No prosecution under this Act shall be commenced without the authority in writing of the Attorney General first obtained.

Under these circumstances there is nothing to be feared; this is a safeguard. We may find ourselves in the position that a farmer may be holding wheat for seed and it may not be seed wheat, and the farmer is not entitled to more consideration than anyone else in the community.

Hon. J. Mitchell: He must have a continuity of crop.

The PREMIER: The farmer need not fear anything such as the hon. member suggested. If he thought there was an opportunity to make a virtue of this Bill for the purpose of creating a further cry for the farmers—

Hon. J. Mitchell: Cannot I point out these things?

The PREMIER: Of course. When the Minister for Lands said it was undesirable to have recriminations at such a time the hon. member said, "Hear, hear," but the hon. member made an appeal largely on behalf of the farmer. His purpose might be all right, but there is sufficient protection for the farmer and for every person in the community, and the same applies to the North-West. We appreciate the fact that, in connection with the supplies in the North-West, quite a number of people will have to carry more than three months' stocks. The Attorney General will take this point into consideration, and the interests of these people will be safeguarded. The only other point which requires any consideration is that mentioned by the member for Leonora as to districts. We could not agree to have Royal Commissions all over the State. We must have one, and immediately it comes under notice that a corner is taking place in food-stuffs in "Italy"—Gwaha—or any other part of the State, the Commission will take evidence and, if necessary, proceed to the spot and recommend the Government what action they should take. Under Clause 4, we will have the right to fix the maximum prices, and we have the right to fix them to suit the different conditions prevailing in the different parts of the State. We would not fix prices satisfactory to Perth if we fixed

them on the basis of Mount Sir Samuel. We are asking for tremendous powers—

Mr. Taylor: And you need them.

The PREMIER: Yes; but we need to use them with common sense. If we are not in a position to exercise common sense, then Parliament should refuse to pass the measure. I want hon. members to accept an absolute assurance from me that any action of any consequence to the community taken under this measure will be taken only after consulting the leader of the Opposition. This Bill contains tremendous powers, but we consider them necessary, and there is no party significance about them at all. The Bill is for the protection of the people, and I am sure the leader of the Opposition has the people's interests at heart just as much as we have. Though we differ on some questions, we cannot differ on this.

Mr. Price: His followers will not stand by him.

The PREMIER: I think they will. Under the circumstances hon. members will recognise that the Bill is necessary and that it should be passed at the earliest possible moment. The leader of the Opposition suggested the appointment of a select committee. I do not think this is necessary. Since we have been discussing the Bill hon. members have gained a fair grasp of it, and we might now put it through Committee, so that the Council, who are waiting to receive the measure, may consider it. If there is anything in the measure which eventually proves to be unsatisfactory, we can easily approach Parliament again. We do not propose to dissolve Parliament; we will adjourn and will be called together if necessary almost at a moment's notice, so that we are in the hands of Parliament. Under the circumstances, I hope the House will pass the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. McDowall in the Chair: the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 3:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am sorry the Premier should have made so much out of my very simple and inoffensive suggestion. In the interests of the whole of the people, it is necessary that there should be a continuity of crop. The operation of this measure may extend over the next seedling time. In December we shall harvest our wheat and will be sowing until June.

The Premier: What are you coming at?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: At the definition. The Bill should make it possible for the man growing potatoes or any other crop to keep the necessary seed to plant his accustomed area. I suggest a proviso such as this—"Provided that nothing in this Act contained shall prevent any farmer or other primary producer from holding sufficient seed of any kind necessary in the opinion of the Royal Commission to plant or sow his crop and retain a sufficient quantity of hay and other food supplies for his animals necessary to carry on the work of his farm." I have no intention of pressing this amendment; I merely suggest it. There is ample wheat in this country for all requirements this year, and to provide a good deal for export next year. There will not, however, be sufficient potatoes; and the Minister for Lands should be the first to see that sufficient seed is retained to allow of planting next year.

The Minister for Lands: I am not in the least afraid of any such contingency as you suggest arising.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Under the proviso which I suggest, the defendant would succeed in the event of a prosecution.

The PREMIER: I appreciate what the hon. member has stated, and, as I said on the second reading, he is anticipating something that will not arise. I give the hon. member my assurance, which should satisfy him on a measure of this kind, an emergency measure, which will not remain on the statute book for all time, and in the administration of which I am prepared to consult the leader of the Opposition before taking any step. I have already said that I intend to consult the leader of the Opposition regarding the

personnel of the Royal Commission. Therefore I ask the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) to accept the Bill as printed. Amendment will mean delay. Moreover, I am hopeful that the measure will not be needed for any considerable period; I hope the British fleet will so effectually clear the sea that commerce will not be hampered. I give the hon. member my absolute assurance that the position he fears will not for a moment be allowed to arise.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Under the circumstances I will ask my friend the member for Northam not to press the suggested amendment. I think he was perfectly justified in raising the point, his one object being to ensure continuity of crop, which is most essential. I think, however, that the clause giving the Attorney General the administration of prosecutions will be sufficient to obviate any danger. Since the Upper House is waiting for the measure, I think we had better pass the Bill as printed.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I accept the assurance of the Premier that he will protect the growers, although I would like to point out that his word will not become law, while this measure will.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 to 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Corners and restrictions prohibited:

Mr. MALE: On this clause I merely wish to ask the Premier whether he thinks the latter portion of it will in any way affect present obligations, existing obligations, in connection with shipment of stock?

Hon. Frank Wilson: Existing contracts?

Mr. MALE: Yes, existing contracts.

The PREMIER: Here again the same position arises. Under circumstances such as these, we must take into account the conditions prevailing. I would not for one moment deem it desirable to prohibit the exportation of articles which are not essential for our own preservation and which would not assist the enemy. As a matter of fact, I do not think the obligations to which the hon. member has re-

ferred continue once the Empire is at war. I think all contracts with an enemy immediately become void upon a declaration of war. Anything exported in the ordinary course of business, and not essential to be retained in the State, would not come within the purview of this clause. The power contained in this clause must be taken, but it must be exercised with common sense.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 8 to 11—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

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

BILL—ROYAL COMMISSIONERS' POWERS ACT AMENDMENT.

All Stages.

Introduced by the Attorney General, and read a first time.

Second reading.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. Walker—Kanowna) [5.55]: The Bill now introduced is the complement, and the necessary machinery if I may so say, of the Bill which has just passed through this Chamber. It would be futile to have a measure like the last, containing such drastic powers for inquiry as the appointment of the contemplated Royal Commission involves, if we did not invest that Commission with such powers as are absolutely essential for the purpose of obtaining evidence. The moment a Royal Commission is appointed under the Bill which contemplates it, that Commission will have to make the most searching inquiries and the most delicate inquiries from witnesses who may be disinclined to disclose their business aims and their relationships to the trading world. If they are allowed to hesitate, if they are allowed to withhold evidence, and if there is no means, on the part of the Royal Commission, of forcing that evidence, and of inflicting penalties for the non-giving of the evidence, then the Com-

mission would be hampered and the Government would be absolutely disabled from fixing or varying the prices of commodities. In the proposal as now submitted to the Chamber, no very drastic measure is proposed, because this is merely a copy of a measure which is already the law of the land so far as the Commonwealth is concerned. For the Royal Commission appointed by the Commonwealth all the provisions contained in this Bill exist. We are not, therefore, making any innovation in that respect; but, just as it was found necessary by the Commonwealth that Royal Commissions should be enabled to enforce and to sanction inquiries which were made, so we find it necessary for the Royal Commission which we intend shall be created under the Bill which has just passed, to provide similar powers. On reference to the Royal Commissioners' Powers Act of 1902, it will be seen that no authority whatsoever was vested in the chairman of the Royal Commission beyond that of merely summoning witnesses; the penalty for disobedience of summons was extremely light. Therefore it would be very easy, under the existing powers of Royal Commissions, to evade the measure which we have passed; every one could stand upon his dignity and refuse to give evidence, suffering an exceedingly light penalty for the refusal. We propose, therefore, to place the Royal Commission about to be created precisely on all fours with the Royal Commissions appointed by the Federal authorities. I do not know that I need say more. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [5.58]: I have just compared this Bill with the Federal Act, and find that what the Attorney General states is quite correct, namely, that we shall be extending our Royal Commissioners' Powers Act only so as to coincide with the Federal measure. It is necessary that the proposed Royal Commission should have exceptional powers, to some extent drastic powers, in order to get proper evidence;

and therefore I think we may as well pass this Bill just as it stands. What was passing in my mind, however, was, if all these powers are contained in the Federal Royal Commissioners' Powers Act how was it that our Ministers were not compelled to attend before the Powellising Royal Commission the other day? How did our Ministers escape getting into gaol?

The Premier: We wanted to attend, but the Commission would not allow it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If I had been chairman of that Commission, I would have summoned you all right.

The Premier: I attended, and the Minister for Works wanted to give evidence, but the chairman would not allow him.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

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

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

House adjourned at 6.17 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 11th August, 1914.

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

RESOLUTION—LOYALTY TO KING AND EMPIRE.

The PRESIDENT: I have received the following letter from His Excellency the Governor:—

Sir,—I am directed by His Excellency the Governor to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 6th inst., forwarding a copy of the resolution passed by the Legislative Council requesting its transmission to His Majesty the King. His Excellency directs me to inform you that he was pleased to cable the message to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to which the following reply has been received:—"Please convey to the Legislative Council assurance of His Majesty the King's appreciation of their expressions of loyalty to his Person and Empire, signed Harcourt." I have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient servant, H. Wilkinson, Major, Private Secretary.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

- 1, Registration of Births, Deaths, and Marriages Act Amendment.
- 2, Supply (Temporary Advances), £230,830.
- 3, Land and Income Tax.
- 4, Control of Trade in War Time.
- 5, Royal Commissioners' Powers Act Amendment.

BILL—MELVILLE TRAMWAYS.

Report of Committee adopted.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, the 18th August.

Question passed.

House adjourned at 4.35 p.m.