

money. Federal taxation, too, is on a very much higher scale than ours. All these questions should be looked into carefully. I think, as the Leader of the Opposition has remarked, that the information must come largely from the departments; yet, it will come with much greater force if it has behind it the authority of a select committee of Parliament. Then, too, an inquiry by a select committee will also provide an opportunity for men engaged in our industries to give evidence. Our farmers who have to submit to high taxation on their agricultural machinery and in other ways will be able to explain the effect of the tariff upon their calling. Merchants and manufacturers will have an opportunity to explain what is standing in the way of progress. These opportunities will be provided by the appointment of a select committee, and I think that some men outside of Government departments who have given attention to these questions, will be ready to appear and tender evidence. I daresay we shall get some valuable information in this way. When the member for Gascoyne last moved in this direction—

Mr. Angelo: That was 12 months ago.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is an older and wiser man now. I hope he does not object to being reminded that he is older.

Mr. Angelo: Unfortunately, I have to admit it.

The PREMIER: Still the hon. member looks younger. At any rate, I think the motion now before the House is a wise one. The object is to appoint a joint select committee of the two Houses. I hope that the members who are appointed to it will realise the responsibility that devolves upon them. It will be cold, hard work. If it is to be of any use, they will have to bring out hard facts. They must deal with facts, because their conclusions will be very closely scrutinised by practical Federal officials anyhow. The task will not be an easy one; in fact, I think I can say it will be a very difficult one, and will be very important work. I hope the House will approve of the motion.

Captain CARTER (Leederville) [10.13]: I think that I am right in assuming, although none of the previous speakers has mentioned it, that this select committee will have an opportunity of preparing the case in defence or rebuttal of the probable attempt of the Federal authorities to cut away or reduce the capitation grant. I was surprised that this matter was not mentioned by the Premier, because it is one of vital importance.

The Premier: That will not be touched by this committee of inquiry.

Captain CARTER: This committee will have an opportunity to prepare the case for Western Australia, and for that reason I favour its appointment. This is a most serious matter, affecting a sum approximating half a million a year. If members multiply

the per capita grant or 25s. by the sum total of our population, they will find that it works out roughly at half a million pounds. If a reduction is made—I do not think that any reduction ought to be made—it will prove a serious blow to our financial position. If this committee does nothing else than prepare the case in defence of our situation financially and the proposed inroad upon our income from the Federal source, its appointment will have been justified. I have pleasure in supporting the motion, and I hope the committee will be very thorough in its investigations.

Question put and passed.

Message to the Council.

On motion by Mr. Angelo resolved: "That the resolution be transmitted by message to the Legislative Council and its concurrence desired therein."

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 15th September, 1921.

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

QUESTION—STATE SAVINGS BANK, AND COMMONWEALTH.

Mr. MacCallum SMITH asked the Premier: 1. Have there been any negotiations for the handing over of the State Savings Bank to the Commonwealth Bank? 2. If so, how far have the negotiations proceeded? 3. What is the Government policy in regard to the future of the Savings Bank?

The PREMIER replied: 1. Yes, from time to time over many years. 2. Nothing definite has ever been arrived at. Parliament would be immediately informed should any change be contemplated.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS AND FEEDER ROADS.

Mr. MONEY asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is he aware that the railways for many years have suffered considerable loss of traffic on the South-West lines during the winter months in consequence of many of the feeder roads being impassable through want of a supply of suitable road material? 2, Is he further aware that the road boards for many years past have been unable to construct and maintain the feeder roads through distance and excessive cost in procuring road material under existing conditions? 3, Will he arrange for the supply and haulage of suitable gravel to points along the railways adjoining the roads at the same net cost as ballast is supplied for ballasting the railway lines? 4, If not, what does he propose to do to prevent loss of traffic through want of feeder roads? 5, Is he aware that at the present time there is considerable unemployment in the railways and a quantity of rolling stock idle? 6, Will he arrange for whatever is to be done to be put in hand without delay to enable the material to be placed on the ways (called roads) during the summer months, this being the only time it is possible to place it thereon?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1 and 2, No, although such has previously been asserted. 3 and 4, On August 2nd last year the Commissioner of Railways circularised the road boards offering to supply and load gravel at railway ballast pits at actual out of pocket expenses, plus railway freight at Class "M," which barely pays cost of service. 5, Yes, but to employ men and use rolling stock requires funds, and the hon. member will see by answers to questions 3 and 4 that the Commissioner of Railways has offered to assist at actual cost of railway ballast pit plus a low freight for haulage. 6, Answered by No. 5.

BILL—PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE.

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment.

2, Administration Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 6th September.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.41]: This Bill in its main principles follows the line of legislation with which we have become familiar during the past five or six years. It is to be regretted, however, that this State is

forced to undertake the formation and control of a pool for the coming harvest, without any assistance from the Eastern States or the Commonwealth. The establishment of a Commonwealth pool in 1915, and its continuance in subsequent years, met, I think, with the general approval of the people of Australia. As we have recognised the Governmental control of our wheat supply as a Commonwealth function, it is much to be regretted that we have not been able to continue that method until de-control should be decided upon. All the machinery for carrying on the pool was in existence and the business was a going concern, whereas under the provisions of this Bill it will be necessary for Western Australia to set up entirely new machinery in order to give effect to it. I am at a loss to know why the Commonwealth pool has not been continued; at least, I was at a loss to understand the reason until I heard the remarks of the Minister for Agriculture when introducing the Bill. He stated that the influence of Messrs. Dreyfus and Company, large wheat-acquiring agents, was mainly responsible for the fact that South Australia and Victoria had decided to discontinue the pool this year. There can be little doubt regarding the accuracy of that statement. There must have been at work some powerful factor which has not been discernible on the surface, but which has influenced the Government of South Australia as well as that of Victoria in discontinuing the pool. We know, of course, that the Commonwealth Government have declined to assist or have anything to do with the wheat pool this year unless the whole of the wheat-producing States are in agreement. It follows that, although all the wheat-producing States with the exception of South Australia might have been anxious to continue the Commonwealth pool, the Federal Government would render no assistance whatever, until that one State decided to come in. I hope it may be possible even at this late stage to arrive at an agreement which will render possible the co-operation of the Federal Government; I see the Minister makes provision in the Bill for such a contingency. However, having regard to what appears to be the fixed, final, and determined attitude of the South Australian Government, we shall probably be compelled to rely on our own resources and to continue the pool as a State pool during the coming season. I doubt not that the Minister realises that a much greater responsibility will be cast, not only upon this State, but upon those charged with the administration and control of the pool, than was the case when our wheat formed part of the Commonwealth pool. There will be many difficulties confronting a State pool which were non-existent in the case of the Federal pool. I am glad to know that the Minister has been able to overcome what appeared to be the greatest obstacle of all, namely, the financing of the pool, inasmuch as we are assured that the London County and Westminster Bank have offered to finance the first payment of 3s.

per bushel at the siding, amounting, on a ten million bushels estimated harvest, to £1,500,000. Whilst it is a very good thing that we have been able to obtain financial assistance in that quarter, it is to be regretted that we have not been able to finance our pool within this Commonwealth. The Minister has stated that the Commonwealth Bank was considering the matter.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is all consideration so far. All the arrangements are tentative.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; but if the Commonwealth Bank authorities wanted to assist in the financing of our pool, it would not take them very long to decide the matter; and therefore the Minister ought to know.

The Minister for Agriculture: The matter is to be decided here.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But we have not got the money.

The Minister for Agriculture: The passing of this legislation has to be decided here.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As regards the establishment of the pool?

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the Commonwealth Bank authorities ought to be able to inform the Minister what their attitude would be in the event of the Western Australian Parliament passing this Bill. I consider the Minister would have been perfectly safe in advising the Commonwealth Bank officials that there was no doubt whatever about the passing of the measure; and he could have asked them what, in the event of the Bill passing, would be their attitude. That course would have saved all the trouble of making arrangements such as the Minister has been compelled to adopt for the obtaining of the money in London. In any case, it would be useless to proceed with a pool of this kind unless the Minister was assured of being able to finance the scheme from some source; if not through the Commonwealth Bank, then through another channel. The Minister has stated that he has made tentative arrangements in London for the financing of the pool to the extent of £1,500,000. However, it is rather a deplorable thing that that money should have to be raised in London, instead of being raised in the Commonwealth.

The Minister for Agriculture: The amount is one million pounds, not £1,500,000.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the Minister said £1,500,000.

The Minister for Agriculture: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think the hon. gentleman will find that is so. Or rather, the Minister said that, estimating on a 10 million bushel harvest, an advance of 3s. at the sidings meant a sum of £1,500,000. It is true the Minister estimated that he would not require more than three-quarters of a million pounds, as he considered that the other three-quarters of a million necessary to finance the 3s. per bushel would be forthcoming from sales of wheat in the meantime, or from other sources. But the fact is that if the Minister

undertakes to advance 3s. per bushel on 10 million bushels, he must arrange to have at call £1,500,000, even though it may not prove necessary for him to avail himself of the full extent of that credit. He must, in all circumstances, be sure of his ability to finance the 3s. per bushel. He informs us that he has been able to secure the necessary accommodation at even a lower rate of interest than has obtained in previous years. Still, it is an extraordinary thing that with the credit of this State, with the security of the State of Western Australia behind them, our Ministers have not been able to arrange with the Associated Banks or other Australian financial institutions for the financing of our harvest to the extent of £1,500,000. It cannot be for the reason that the money is not available. It cannot be for the reason even that there would be any difficulty in finding the necessary funds to make that advance. It must be that the influences which operated to induce the Governments of South Australia and Victoria to have nothing to do with a pool this year, the influences referred to by the Minister, namely those of the powerful wheat acquiring agency of Dreyfus and Co., have been at work to prevent the Associated Banks and other Australian financial institutions from undertaking to finance our pool. We ought to have been able to finance the pool from our banks here in Western Australia; but, as the Minister has stated, the banks here are mostly branches, with the head offices in the Eastern States, and of course they are compelled to take their instructions from that quarter. An important point in this Bill is that it provides for the establishment of an advisory board to assist the Minister in administering the measure. I do not know whom the Minister has in mind as being the men most suited to constitute that board.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have a perfectly open mind on the subject.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister will need to exercise great care in the selection of those men, because, as I have already stated, there will be difficulties to contend with in carrying out this State pool which did not apply in the case of the Commonwealth pool. The Minister will require to have at his disposal the very best advice procurable in Western Australia. Although the Minister will have the advice of the manager of the pool, who, I understand, is a very capable man, still, that manager is only one man; and in addition to him it would be well if the Minister appointed to the board someone with experience of wheat buying and wheat selling in previous years. It would not be sufficient to appoint to the board even a well informed farmer, a man thoroughly conversant with all aspects of wheat growing and with considerable local experience, but without experience in the business of buying and selling wheat. It is in the disposal of the wheat that the success or failure of this State pool will lie. Indeed, that is the only risk we run, if we run any risk whatever.

The advisory board, in addition to assisting the Minister in matters relative to the administration of the pool, will also advise him regarding the price to be charged for wheat for local consumption. It is proposed to charge on the basis of London parity for wheat for local consumption. That figure will be fixed by the Minister, on the advice of the board, from month to month. Let me say that I fear there will be great difficulty in fixing the price of local consumption wheat on the first of every month. Such a procedure would tend to unsettle the local market. That is to say, if there is to be a fluctuating price from month to month, it will mean that the purchasers of wheat for local consumption, for instance those engaged in the baking trade, can only buy a quantity of wheat sufficient to carry them on for the month, as otherwise they will be taking the risk of the price of wheat falling for the next month and some competitor, thanks to purchasing at the lower price, will be enabled to undersell them in the commodity produced from the wheat. Moreover, it seems to me that great difficulty will be experienced in fixing the price from month to month. Of course many buyers—millers, for instance,—will purchase in fairly large quantities, possibly sufficient for several months, and will take the risk of variations in price. Relatively to the constitution of the advisory board, I wish to urge the claims to representation of that large section of the general public who are not interested in the growing of wheat or in the price that may be obtained for wheat, but who are vitally concerned as to what the price shall be for local consumption. Of course the Minister may contend that such representation could not affect the position, inasmuch as the advisory board, under the Bill as drawn, will fix the local consumption price at London parity. However, I do not think one could meet two men in the City to-day who would agree on what was London parity upon any given date. Even men who have followed the business very closely, and are interested in the price of wheat, will differ in opinion as to what is the London parity price on the first day of any particular month. In order to conserve the interests of the great bulk of the people of this State, namely the consumers of wheat, there should be on that advisory board some man entirely free from any personal considerations as to the price to be fixed for wheat to be consumed within the State. While advancing that argument, let me say right away that I am entirely opposed to the principle of fixing the price of wheat for consumption within the State upon the basis of the price obtainable in London. I say that that principle cannot be defended.

The Premier: You are wrong there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am wrong there?

The Premier: I think so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The price that is to be paid for wheat for consumption in the

State is to be fixed upon the price of wheat in London on the first day in each preceding month.

The Premier: Less charges.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On the parity?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Well, I contend that that principle is wrong. That principle cannot be defended. Are the consumers in the State where the wheat is grown to be fleeced or charged exorbitant prices merely because of the conditions obtaining in other great wheat growing countries of the world, such as Russia, Roumania and South America. Because there may be a failure of the harvest in those countries and consequently a high price in London—it might even reach famine price in London—does that constitute a reason for the people of Western Australia paying a famine price for the wheat for local consumption? The farmers in Western Australia might reasonably claim the price, less cost of transport, at which they could dispose of their wheat in London or in any other market, if they were carrying on without State aid. It is well known that it would have been impossible during the past six years or so—and possibly it will be impossible during the coming year as well—for the farmers to carry on, had it not been for the pool. It is because the credit of one State has been behind the farmers, that they have been able to market their wheat at all. Surely the fact that the people of Western Australia agreed to this pool, pledged the credit of this State to the extent of 1½ millions for the first payment of 3s. per bushel, and placed all the organisation, machinery power and influence of the Government at the disposal of the growers, in order that they might obtain the greatest possible price in the world's markets, will entitle them to secure wheat for local consumption at a price which will allow the farmer a fair margin of profit for his commodity.

Mr. Sampson: Even if London parity were lower?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have always said that.

Mr. Sampson: It would be difficult to obtain.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not think so. I have said repeatedly that if wheat was at a low price in London and the parity was 3s. or 2s. 9d. per bushel, it would be most unfair for the people of this State to expect the farmers to grow wheat for home consumption for 2s. 9d. or 3s. or at a price which would not be profitable to them. We have no right to expect the farmer to give his time and labour to growing a commodity for the people as a whole at a price which will not allow him to secure a profit. We have no right to expect the farmer to do that any more than we have to ask a bricklayer or any other workman to work for less than a living wage.

Mr. Sampson: No such action was taken before the establishment of a pool.

Mr. McCallum: Yes, it was.

Mr. Sampson: I am glad to know it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) wishes to go back before the pool was established for the sake of comparison, he should remember that in those days the farmer did not have the benefit of that pool. Since the principle was introduced—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: By the Labour Party.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. Since the principle was introduced and recognised some six years or so ago, conditions have altered. In return for the backing of the people and the fact that the farmer has thus been able to sell his wheat in the world's markets at a highly profitable price—a price which exceeded his most sanguine expectations a few years ago—surely the public have a right to expect consideration.

Mr. Sampson: That action was taken to encourage the farmer to grow wheat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It does not alter the fact that the farmer has benefited from that procedure. Is the farmer to have it both ways? Without the support of the community, the farmer could not have procured 9s. a bushel for his wheat. Is he to continue to have consideration extended to him without a quid pro quo to the consumer?

The Premier: Would it not be better to charge him a fixed price?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know.

The Premier: You would not suggest that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I say—no one could justify any other attitude—that while we are prepared to guarantee the farmer a price for his wheat, the consumer in Western Australia should receive wheat at a price which will give the farmer a generous margin of profit. I would be willing to pay the farmers the price which prominent wheat-growers themselves have admitted gives them a generous profit. I would give the farmer 7s. a bushel.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is too high. The member for Sussex said 5s.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That may be so, but I would be prepared to give the farmer 7s. a bushel. At that figure the farmer would make a substantial profit on the growing of his wheat. What ground is there for saying that because there is a shortage in some other part of the world, and the people in London have to pay a high price for wheat shipped from long distances over seas, people in Western Australia should pay the same price? One argument that has been advanced is to the effect that we would not be justified in asking the grower to supply wheat at a price lower than he can get in some other part of the world. I would remind hon. members that the farmers could not have obtained even the price they have received during the past few years, had it not been for the establishment of the pool and the backing of the Government.

Mr. Money: Another reason is that he has had to take less money for his wheat than it cost to grow it in years gone by.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is not an argument. To say that because the farmer was fleeced in years gone by, is not to justify any such demand at the present time.

Mr. Money: He was fleeced by the market.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even if that were so, is it to be urged that after six or eight years we should now pay an exorbitant price in order that the farmer may get something of his own back.

Mr. Money: I thought you were referring to some of the past arguments.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I was not. If Parliament does not pass the Bill, what position will the farmers be in then? Is it not held with confidence that the passing of this measure and the establishment of a State pool will enable farmers to get a better price for this season's wheat than they would otherwise obtain? There can be no other reason for the establishment of the pool. That demonstrates the fact that the establishment of the pool, which is really the guarantee of the people of Western Australia, means that the farmer will be able to dispose of an exportable surplus of about eight million bushels at a considerably greater price than would be the case without the establishment of the pool. Is it not a fair proposition to put forward that in return for the State standing behind the farmers, and enabling them to get an enhanced price for eight million bushels, the farmers should make available the two million bushels required for local consumption at a reasonable price.

Mr. Sampson: If the world's parity drops below a reasonable price, what then?

Mr. McCallum: That is what we want to know.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We made this offer last year.

Mr. Hickmott: That was a good offer, too, but supposing that wheat was sold for 5s.—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I cannot allow the hon. member to make a speech.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) has heard me say many times in this House that because wheat in London ranges up to famine prices, is no reason why we should pay famine prices here. While holding that view, I also believe that if the price of wheat in London falls to a price which is not payable for farmers here, we have no right to ask them to supply us with wheat at a loss. The principle involved in fixing the price on the basis of London parity—

Mr. Pickering: Is a two-edged sword.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I disagree with that principle. If it were to obtain with regard to other commodities, where would it lead us?

The Premier: Take coal, for instance.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If it were applied to coal, the Railway Department would have to

pay a much higher price for their coal than they do to-day, in view of the price obtaining in London and elsewhere.

The Premier: They are paying more.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They are not. If it were on the basis of the price obtained in the world's markets, the Government would have to pay thousands of pounds more than they are doing to-day. This principle does not obtain with regard to other commodities, and it should not obtain in the case of our wheat supplies. The fact is that people here have been fleeced by the price charged for local consumption.

The Premier: What about the previous 12 months?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I intend to strongly resist this principle when the Bill reaches the Committee stage. Probably during the coming 12 months the consumers in Western Australia would have nothing to complain of if the price were fixed on the basis of the London prices, because I believe that the price of wheat next year will be fairly low in London. It might be that the parity price in Western Australia would not exceed 5s. a bushel. In these circumstances, it is possible that the consumer might not have anything to complain about if the provision were applied for the next 12 months. I object, however, to the principle of our having to pay for a commodity produced in the State by the assistance and backing of the people; that we should have to pay a high price for it because that high price rules in some other part of the world where they depend on importation for their supplies.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. Money: You ask for that condition to be attached to the pool for the next 12 months?

Hon. P. COLLIER: If, because a failure of the harvest in America or elsewhere whence Britain draws her supplies, the price in London goes up, is that a justifiable reason why the people of this State should have to pay a relatively high price? More particularly do I ask is it any reason, seeing that that price would not be available without Government support.

Mr. Mann: If there were no pool you would take no exception to the price?

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. It would be a different matter. If the farmer could sell his wheat in London without any assistance from the Government, he could justifiably ask, "What right have you to expect me to sell my wheat at a lower price than I can get for it in London?" But this London parity has not existed without the backing of the Government. Without the organisation of the Government, no matter what the price of wheat in London, it would have been of no use to the farmer here, because he could not have got his wheat to London. It was only by the organisation of the Government that we were able to sell the wheat and transport it to other parts of the world.

Therefore, without the intervention of the Government the price of wheat in London would have been entirely meaningless to the West Australian farmer. Of course it would have been exceedingly foolish for the State to have thrown the farmer on his own resources. It would have meant almost bankruptcy to Australia. It was in the interests, not only of the farmer but of the community generally, that Government assistance was given to the farmer.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You know that the farmer opposed it!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, I remember that. The assistance was given in the interests of the State as a whole. But that does not alter the fact that we are entitled to obtain wheat at a reasonable price for our own use.

Mr. Davies: Don't you think it is still in the interests of the State that the pool should be retained?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, I am supporting the Bill. As a matter of fact, it was the Labour Government of 1915 that first established the pool. When the pool was first proposed, the executive of the Farmers and Settlers' Association wrote out to the various wheat-growing centres and advised the growers to resist any compulsion to place their wheat in the pool, even to the extent of taking up arms and garrisoning their farms.

Mr. McCallum: Worse than the lumpers!

The Premier: That was McGibbon.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Well, is not McGibbon one of the king-pins of the association? So powerful is he that he succeeded in depriving the hon. member of one of his Ministers, or at least he forced the Premier to drop one of his Ministers.

The Premier: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Oh, yes. It was that quarrel between Mr. McGibbon and the Honorary Minister over the Australian Wheat Board that resulted in the Premier being deprived of the services of a Minister in another place.

The Premier: Quite wrong. He would deprive me of my job if he could.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No doubt. And in so far as the Premier or his colleagues are not amenable to the desires of Mr. McGibbon, their turn to walk the plank will inevitably come. I am watching with interest the Ministerial career of the Minister for Agriculture. Just so far as he is able to work amicably with Mr. McGibbon's party, or just so far as he may get into difficulties with them, to that extent will I draw conclusions as to the independent attitude of the hon. member in administering his department.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We will stick to the Minister if he has a will of his own.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, I can assure him that if he gets into trouble with that party the whole weight of this party will be behind him. When, during the war period, wheat, like nearly all other commodities, was controlled in Great Britain, they there were not so unmindful of the interests of the consuming public as to allow a price

based on the world's parity to be charged for wheat.

The Premier: No, the import costs made a great difference.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the wheat-growers of England did not obtain the price which the imported wheat was bringing.

The Premier: They reversed the position.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, they did not.

The Premier: Here we do not ask for the landed cost of wheat from some other country.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is the same principle. If the growers in Great Britain adopted the same attitude as the growers in Western Australia, they would say to the people of England, "You have to pay 14s. a bushel for the imported wheat, and therefore we have a right to expect 14s. for our wheat."

The Premier: No, we do not ask the landed price of imported wheat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the principle is the same. The English grower could easily have said, "Why ask me to sell my wheat to you here, on the spot, at a lower price than you have to pay for imported wheat?"

The Premier: What bonus was he getting?

Hon. P. COLLIER: When, at one period, in England the price of imported wheat was 14s., the maximum price allowed to be charged by the growers in Great Britain was 11s. 10d.

The Premier: And they got a bonus on top of that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know that the growers in England ever got any greater bonus than our farmers are getting as the result of the operations of the I.A.B.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That was a bonus paid for bread, not paid to the farmer.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A maximum price was fixed in Great Britain for wheat grown in that country. That price ranged from 2s. to 3s. per bushel lower than the cost of imported wheat. That is the principle for which I am contending. We should not have to pay these high prices simply because they obtain in England. When the Bill is in Committee I will endeavour to fix a maximum price which will be fair and reasonable to the wheat-growers. They cannot expect any greater consideration than that. The principle of paying high prices here because they obtain somewhere else is false and vicious, and cannot be justified while we have Government control of the commodity. If we had free, open buying, if the much vaunted law of supply and demand were allowed free play, it would be different. But, as I have said, it is rather strange that the strongest opposition to the operations of the economic law of supply and demand comes from those who have always pretended to uphold that principle of freedom of trade. When it does not suit them, they can set aside that law just as readily as can any other party.

Mr. Willcock: They keep up the price in London by refraining from sending wheat there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. A most important alteration is proposed in the agreement with the acquiring agents this year. In all previous years the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., who have been the acquiring agents, have not been allowed to buy, sell or trade in wheat. The proposed new agreement will permit of their trading in wheat, with the consent of the Minister. If in the past it has been found wise to prohibit the acquiring agents from trading in wheat, it is equally wise that we should retain the principle. The reasons for its retention are obvious. The company ought not to be permitted to trade in wheat. We shall be well advised if we re-instate that provision in Committee. I support the establishment of the pool this year, and I hope it will prove a success. The advance to the farmers will really mean 3s. 8d. or 3s. 10d. There will be 3s. at sidings, and 8d. or 9d. between the sidings and the ship's hold, for which the Government hold themselves responsible. It means an equivalent of 3s. 8d. to the farmers this year.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Actually, about 3s. 10d.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, very likely; I am making a conservative estimate of freight and other charges between sidings and the ships. I do not think the Government are taking any risk; because unless we are to meet a failure, to be faced with very serious consequences, we should realise a price that will cover all risk up to that amount.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If they cannot sell the wheat, they will be gone.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister for Agriculture expects to be able to start selling the wheat right away, but I understand there is something like two million bushels of last year's crop still in the State, and it is almost a certainty that this wheat will not have been disposed of before the new harvest comes in. Therefore, the expectation of the Minister to be able to sell the new season's grain immediately it begins to come in, and with the money obtained to assist in financing the scheme, will, I fear, not be realised, because he will be mighty lucky if he succeeds in disposing of the remaining portion of last season's harvest during the present year. Before that time he will have considerable quantities of the new season's grain on hand. I hope that the pool for this year will be a success. I hope the Minister will be able through the medium of his agents in London, to dispose of the coming harvest at a highly profitable price. While I contend strongly for the fixing of a reasonable price for wheat for local consumption, I hope at the same time that the Minister and those who will be associated with him in administering this measure will be able to obtain the highest possible price for all the exportable sur-

plus. There will be difficulties, I fear, because private buyers will be operating in the wheat growing states in the East. If by virtue of that fact they are able to buy at a comparatively low price it will mean that they will be able to dispose of the wheat in London at a comparatively low price, and that price will doubtless govern the price which the Minister will be able to obtain for the State controlled wheat.

The Minister for Agriculture: Not in regard to wheat, but for flour.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It seems to me that if any great quantities of wheat are bought and exported, the same law will operate as with regard to flour. If the farmers in the Eastern States are forced to accept a comparatively low price from private buyers for their wheat, the private buyers will in turn be able to place it on the London market, or on the markets in which we shall have to compete, at a low price, and our price will have to conform to the price the private agents get. This seems to me to be one of the very great difficulties that we shall have to contend with in respect to a pool controlled by one State as against a pool operated by the whole of the Commonwealth.

The Premier: That is undoubtedly the danger.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, we shall have to compete with the wheat grown in the Eastern States and purchased by private buyers. It seems to me that, even though we have a State pool in Western Australia, our farmers will not get as much for their wheat, despite all the assistance that the State pool can render them, as they would have obtained if we had had a continuance of the Federal pool. I am afraid that our farmers will have to sell at a lower price, and for this reason it is much to be regretted that the other States have not agreed to continue the pool for another year. It must have been apparent to the Ministers in South Australia and Victoria, and in fact to everybody interested in the Commonwealth pool during the past six years what an immense benefit the pool has been, not only to the growers of wheat, but to the whole of the people of the Commonwealth. This being so, I am at a loss to understand why the other States did not agree to continue the pool for another year in order that we might have reached a condition of affairs more nearly approaching normal than we have reached at present.

Mr. Willcock: We know where the pressure comes from.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. I hope the Minister will be successful with this pool and that the farmers will obtain as high a price as possible for their wheat, because that will be a good thing for the people of the State generally, but I also hope that those concerned will adopt a reasonable attitude, and show that in return for all the assistance given by the State and Government control, they are prepared to make wheat available for local consumption at a reasonable price.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [5.35]: This Bill, of course, has become an old friend, seeing that we have had similar measures before us time after time for years past. This is practically a similar measure with just a few improvements. I hope we shall be able to manage the pool in such a way as to obtain for the farmer a reasonable return for the wheat he puts into the pool, and particularly for the wheat exported. The Leader of the Opposition has referred to the one danger—that we shall probably come into competition with the privately-owned wheat of Victoria and South Australia. If the purchases made there during the early portion of the season are made at a low price—

Hon. P. Collier: It will govern our price.

The PREMIER: And if the wheat is held by the private buyers, we shall probably experience some trouble. I agree with the hon. member that it would have been very much better if the Australian wheat pool had been continued.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It was discontinued because of the influence brought to bear on the National Government. You could not help yourselves here; you had the Industries Assistance Board to consider.

The PREMIER: I am not responsible for what has happened in Victoria or South Australia. The position is that those States have decided on decontrol, and this I think will make our position a little more difficult. However, there seemed to be no chance of having a sufficient number of buyers to operate in this State, in order that the farmer would be able to sell on delivery, and that is of importance. The farmer, after stripping his wheat, must take it to a depot; he cannot store it on his farm, and he must be able to obtain the money for it. It seemed very unlikely that there would be a sufficient number of buyers willing to take a sufficient quantity of wheat. I mentioned some months ago that the Government thought it would be necessary to continue the pool for this year, and I looked to those who might wish to operate to immediately tell me that they were willing to buy the wheat. However, there were not enough buyers offering; with one exception, we had no definite statement from any of the wheat buyers. If buyers have only a limited amount of cash to put into the business, they will undoubtedly operate for preference in a small State like Victoria where they can do it more cheaply and more conveniently. We were faced with this position, too, that not only must the farmer have an opportunity to get the money for his wheat when it is stripped, but that the money is wanted in the country. If this money is not available, employment and trade and everything else must suffer. After all, the money which the farmer gets for his wheat remains in the State and is circulated in the State more than the money from any other interest.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do not the wheat buyers pay cash for it?

The PREMIER: Yes, but I could not see that the wheat buyers would be here to buy it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They would have come all right.

The PREMIER: The hon. member may know more than I do about that. I have already explained the position as it appeared to the Government. Not only did the farmer want the money for his wheat the storekeeper, and the worker, needed the money too. When all is said and done, the but other people in the State, the merchant, farmer does not get a greater share of this money than any other section of the people.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He has done so during the last year or two.

The PREMIER: I am not satisfied that he has.

Hon. P. Collier: The wheat-growers have done well.

The PREMIER: Everyone concerned in the handling of the wheat has received more for his work. The first difficulty that confronted us was that of finance, and I think we have got over it satisfactorily. Then we had to look into the question of shipping. I think ships will be available; in fact so far as our advices go they will be available. Naturally, here too there is a difficulty because our imports are so limited as compared with the imports to eastern Australia, and consequently we have a smaller chance of getting back freights. It is true that the distance from Western Australia to London is very much shorter, and for the boats which come out in ballast we should be able to get lower freights than the Eastern States will get. We may get an advantage of as much as a penny per bushel in this way. I think, however, that we shall get the shipping all right and this, of course, is all important. Then there is the question of selling the wheat, and here we are confronted with a serious responsibility. If sales be made as they will be made ahead of delivery, and if the Minister for Agriculture sells at a lower price than the wheat is eventually worth, I suppose there will be some trouble with the farmer.

Hon. P. Collier: He has to take that risk.

The PREMIER: Of course, the farmer would sell for a reasonable price to a cash buyer and should not complain if the wheat finally realised double the price. The farmer should trust us to do the best we can in this connection.

Hon. P. Collier: That is what often happened when private buyers were operating in past years.

The PREMIER: It did happen, but not so often, because they generally bought and sold on the same day. The value of the wheat increased and someone between the farmer and the last buyer of the wheat—generally the consumer of bread—obtained very much more. I doubt whether people like Darling, Bell, and the others held the

wheat very long. Their practice was to buy it and sell it quickly on a small margin of profit. If the farmer could have held his wheat, he might have got a very much better deal. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the fixing of the price of wheat for local consumption. This will be a difficult thing for the Minister to do month by month, because the period is so short. Probably it would be better to fix the price at longer intervals. However, I would point out to the hon. member that this will not necessarily mean that the price will be changed from month to month. The London parity may remain stationary for three or four months.

Hon. P. Collier: There is a possibility of it changing.

The PREMIER: Yes, there is a possibility of it changing rapidly.

The Minister for Agriculture: More so this year than in the past.

The PREMIER: When a year ago we fixed the price for 12 months the hon. member complained that wheat was being sold for local consumption at a price higher than the export price. When the price of wheat for local consumption throughout Australia was fixed at 9s. a bushel, it was less than the London parity. We were selling wheat at more than 1s. a bushel less than London parity.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You did not convince the Prime Minister of that. Look at the report.

The PREMIER: We know what outside people paid for wheat.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: For small parcels.

The PREMIER: They paid 10s. a bushel for some time after the price of wheat for local consumption was fixed at 9s. It looked as if 9s. would be a favourable price to the local consumer.

Mr. Pickering: It has been up to date.

Hon. P. Collier: It was at that time.

The PREMIER: That is so.

Hon. P. Collier: But it is well known that 9s. is not a favourable price covering a 12 months' period.

The PREMIER: If the price were fixed for a period of three months, the consumer might find himself in the same position. Because the Minister is taking power to fix the price of wheat for local consumption from month to month, it does not necessarily follow that the price will be changed from month to month. Honours are fairly even but if there is an advantage it is with the consumer, taking the past two years. To-day the price of wheat for local consumption is the export price and not the average price at all.

Hon. P. Collier: It is above the average price for the year.

The PREMIER: It may be this year, but I venture to say that the average price charged for wheat for local consumption last year was lower than the average price obtained by the pool for the whole of last year.

Hon. P. Collier: They got 8s. 6d. from the pool last year.

The Minister for Agriculture: There is some more to come.

The PREMIER: I know that the consumer has not suffered during the past two years.

Hon. P. Collier: Only 6s. 3d. has been paid up to date.

The PREMIER: But there is more to come.

Hon. P. Collier: There is not 2s. 9d. to come.

The PREMIER: I do not suppose there is. What I do contend is that, when members discuss the price of wheat for this year, they must have some regard to what happened last year. That is only fair.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Because we paid too much last year, we must get it cheaper this year.

The PREMIER: I do not want that to get into the minds of the people, that when it was fixed at 9s. it was thought wise to buy at 9s.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It looked as if wheat was coming down.

The PREMIER: We fixed it at 7s. 8d. for 12 months the year before.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Not for 12 months.

The PREMIER: For the remainder of the year.

Hon. P. Collier: Which was more than a payable price.

The PREMIER: I am not going to say anything about that.

Mr. Willcock: It was increased during the year.

The PREMIER: From the time it was secured it was not increased in price. I want hon. members to realise that this wheat belongs to the farmers.

Hon. P. Collier: Then why do we come in? It does not belong to the farmer because you are going to commandeer it. The farmer must put it into the pool whether he likes it or not.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Make a voluntary pool.

The PREMIER: This is the farmers' wheat.

Hon. P. Collier: Then let him do what he likes with it; that is a fair proposition.

The PREMIER: When export sales were being freely made we secured enough to supply this country for the balance of the year.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You had 25 million bushels of wheat for sale; you had the people's money invested in it, and no market for it.

The PREMIER: The hon. member relied upon the Government to hold the wheat in the country.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The farmer was not able to sell it; it is there yet.

The PREMIER: Some of the wheat which is here now is sold.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why do you not send it away? We want some work at Fremantle.

The PREMIER: If the question of this year's price is to be discussed, the price of the previous year's wheat should also be dis-

cussed. It has been contended time and again that wheat for local consumption should be fixed at a price which is equal to London parity. Of course London parity means the price realised in London less all charges, freight, shipping, handling, insurance and everything. That surely is the value of wheat. Anyhow that is the price at which the wheat can be sold.

Hon. P. Collier: The value of the wheat in the pool.

Mr. Willcock: With the collective credit of the country behind it.

The PREMIER: The actual value of the wheat in the possession of the farmer is the price he can get in London less all the charges.

Hon. P. Collier: With the aid of the Government.

The PREMIER: I hope the help of the Government will not be denied to the farmer or to any other producer in the State. The farmer has to pay a high price for all his purchases. The Government help the manufacturer.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: In what way?

The PREMIER: By high protection, of course.

Hon. P. Collier: Everybody has to pay as well as the farmer.

The PREMIER: The only difference is that the farmer does not benefit in the slightest from protection. He has to export his produce to the markets of the world. Other people have to pay higher prices for their goods because of the duties imposed.

Hon. P. Collier: The whole of the national interests do not begin and end with the farmer.

The PREMIER: Just as it is right to guarantee the manufacturer and the workers in the manufacturing industries, so it is right that the Government should assist the primary producers. Take an article manufactured in the State; the plough, for instance. Without protection it would be several pounds cheaper to the farmer than it is under protection.

Hon. P. Collier: Importers form rings and charge high prices.

The PREMIER: We pay a higher price for the good of the community. We believe in developing the State and those industries that are necessary to the State, though we do not believe in excessive protection.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I want you to help me to protect the farmer.

The PREMIER: I am entitled to point out that practically every other section of the community is protected. Take coal; the price is fixed. If the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) were here, he would tell us how the price had been fixed.

Mr. Willcock: He would not tell tales out of school.

The PREMIER: He took not only the employers, but the people who operate the mines, to the judge and said, "We want you to fix the price of coal; we are all here and it can

easily be arranged." Then the price was fixed.

Hon. P. Collier: That is what I am trying to advocate for the wheat, to get a fixed price.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member will fix the price of wheat on the same basis as the price of coal was fixed, then we must allow the men who work their farms the same rate of pay as the miners receive. But I know the hon. member would not agree to that. What I do claim is that, when considering this matter, we must have some regard to other questions which appear to have been overlooked by my friend.

Hon. P. Collier: The price of coal was based on the cost of production and a profit to the owner.

The PREMIER: No; the owners and the workers went to the judge and arranged what the price should be.

Mr. Willecock: We have done it pretty successfully during the last five years.

The PREMIER: The price of timber has increased tremendously in recent years.

Mr. Willecock: Particularly during the last two years.

The PREMIER: No one has complained very much. In fact it is more than double the cost.

Mr. Willecock: The building industry has been settled as a result of the increase.

The PREMIER: I am sorry the price of timber is so high. The value of gold has been increased as the result of the gold bonus. All along the line everyone has had his industry cared for, and cared for very largely by the Government. I admit that the collective credit of the State has to be used as a guarantee for this money.

Mr. Willecock: We must get something in return.

The PREMIER: That is just the point. In pledging the credit of the State, for the benefit of the State and incidentally of the farmer, a credit is given showing a 40 per cent. margin. The hon. member says the State should be paid for doing that. How much cash does he want for the guarantee?

Mr. Willecock: Only a fair thing.

The PREMIER: The hon. member says he wants payment for the guarantee.

Mr. Willecock: All I want is fair treatment.

The PREMIER: Is it to be payment by cash on the basis of one per cent., two per cent., or three per cent.? If the wheat producer has to put up the guarantee, let us know what it has to be. I do not think the hon. member wants paper at all.

Mr. Willecock: We have paid pretty heavily in cash during the past few years.

The PREMIER: Of course, but the consumers have had the cheapest bread in the world during the past few years.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And why not, with such an abundant production.

The PREMIER: Why should we not have it?

Mr. O'Loughlen: With a 10 million bushel surplus in the State, the price is very dear.

Mr. McCallum: A lot of the wheat became rotten.

The PREMIER: That is wrong. Our wheat was well cared for on the whole. I have no objection to the farmers getting a reasonable price for their wheat. When members say "You must pay for this guarantee," I ask them if the farmer alone has to pay. He certainly does not get all the money out of the wheat. No one knows better than the member for Geraldton the amount of money that is paid away in his electorate through the handling of the wheat. Under this Bill the price of wheat is to be fixed from month to month. Not much can be said against that.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And not much can be said in its favour. It is a difficult thing to work.

The PREMIER: It is only possible, then, to pay on the London parity. If the hon. member said the price was to be 20 per cent. under the London parity we could understand it.

Hon. P. Collier: Your whole argument is irrelevant, and you are begging the question.

The PREMIER: Not at all. There is no other way of fixing the price.

Hon. P. Collier: We will fix it.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member names the figure, he will get the money.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do not be too sure about that.

Hon. P. Collier: It has been a case of bare-faced robbery during the last 12 months.

The PREMIER: I would point out that all the crops are not of the same average. How are members going to fix the price?

Mr. O'Loughlen: So long as the pool is in existence, it is a simple matter.

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The PREMIER: I hope the hon. member will find some simple way of doing it. It is not such a simple matter.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You insist upon your departments getting timber for local consumption at £1 below the export price.

The PREMIER: I am not conscious of it. The cost of timber was never greater than it is to-day. Members have asked what the position of the farmer would be if the pool had not been established. It would, of course, have been very bad indeed. The position the farmers are in demands the continuance of the pool. I admit that they have benefited by the pools which have existed in the past. No farmer denies that.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is the consumer who wants a word to say in the matter.

The PREMIER: I do not think it is right to say that. For the past two years the consumer has not paid more than a reasonable price based on the London parity. There is a danger in running a wheat pool this year, because we shall be running a separate pool. This means that we shall have to take very much greater risks than would

have been the case if an Australian pool had been in existence. I cannot understand why the other States have not come in. We endeavoured to induce them to do so, but without success.

Mr. Willcock: You know why.

Mr. McCallum: The Minister for Agriculture gave us the reason.

The PREMIER: I do not know why. There is, of course, some influence that we do not understand. In South Australia they have had a bad time with their wheat. That is their business anyhow. Each State will act as it thinks best. To-day we are asking the House to agree to the establishment of a State pool. I hope, when it comes to a discussion upon the price of wheat for local consumption, members will recollect that it is not intended to buy the whole year's requirements at any one period, or to fix the price now. The Bill provides that the price shall be fixed from month to month, based on the London parity. The Leader of the Opposition said the London price was fixed below the import price. That may be so. If we took the cost of importing wheat into this country, it would be a very different matter to accepting London parity. We would have not only the cost of purchasing the wheat but the charges added to it.

Mr. Mullany: You would not discuss that question in a country which has a 10 million bushel surplus.

The PREMIER: No. England is an importing country and Western Australia an exporting country. The only question that seems to trouble hon. members is that affecting the price for local consumption. This should be thrashed out by members sitting on both sides of the House. Unless we accept the London parity, it will be a difficult matter to deal with.

Mr. Mann: Would you fix the price over a period of some years?

The PREMIER: It would not be fair to the consumer at this stage in the world's history to do so. The farmer would be perfectly satisfied to have a price fixed which would cover him for a period of years, for this would relieve him of some anxiety. Only a small quantity of the total production of wheat is eaten within the State.

Mr. Willcock: There is no control over it.

The PREMIER: In the interests of the farmer, and of all concerned, I hope the Bill will become law.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [6.10]: I seem to occupy a singular position in this House, and to be more or less bound to support pools. If it is not a wheat pool it is a Lane-Poole.

The Premier: You are safe with the wheat pool.

Mr. PICKERING: I should like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition upon his very fair consideration of this Bill. The whole-hearted support the Leader of the Opposition has given to the Bill does him great

credit. The suggestions that he has offered are reasonable, fair, and worthy of every consideration. I must also congratulate the Government for having brought down this measure. They were under no obligation to do so, but they realised the seriousness of the position so far as the wheat growers of Western Australia are concerned.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They could not possibly help themselves.

Mr. PICKERING: I am giving them credit to-night for having done this. As a rule I do not give them much credit.

The Premier: Only when you go before your electors.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PICKERING: I am sure the Premier accepts criticism from me in the spirit in which it is meant.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Your electors had the choice of two or three out-and-out supporters.

Mr. PICKERING: And they supported the Country Party member every time. Since I have been in the House I have devoted a considerable amount of my time to the study of the wheat question.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And every other question.

Mr. PICKERING: Therefore I consider I am entitled to say a few words upon this Bill. In framing this Bill the Government have made an honest endeavour to bring down a measure, which will to a large extent meet the suggestions and proposals submitted by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Willcock: No!

Mr. PICKERING: We have in the Bill a framework which we can amend in such a direction as to give satisfaction to the community.

Hon. T. Walker: If we wish.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This is not a party Bill.

Mr. PICKERING: No.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You can vote as you like.

Mr. PICKERING: The farmers in this State are not the exploiters they are alleged to be by members opposite. They have been the backbone of the country ever since it was occupied by the white race.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The farmers are all right, but their representatives are not.

Mr. PICKERING: I am sure it cannot be said that their representatives in this House are not a credit to them. Since the early days of farming, the farmer has laboured under grave difficulties. It is only since the pool system was conceived by the able intellects of members opposite, when they occupied the Government benches, that the farmer has come into his own. I am glad to know that members opposite are so cordial in their sympathy with the proposals which have been submitted to the House. The two main items in this question are finance, and the price of wheat for local consumption.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. PICKERING: Before tea I was saying that the two principal questions involved in this Bill were finance, and the price for local consumption. The financial difficulty has been extremely accentuated by the attitude of South Australia and Victoria in standing out from the pool. I join with the Leader of the Opposition in the hope that those two States may yet see the wisdom of forming pools in their own interests, and linking up with the other pools, so as to enable the Commonwealth Government again to assume control of Australia's wheat production. It is satisfactory to note that the Government have made arrangements to tide us over the initial difficulties of a State pool. So much having been done, the subsequent handling of the pool should adjust itself without very much difficulty. One feature of this Bill which I am very glad to observe is that the interests of all sections of the community are to be provided for. Under Clause 13 the price to be charged for wheat for consumption within the State is to be fixed on London parity. On this particular aspect of the question we have to bear in mind that we must consider not only the interests of the wheat growers, but also, as stated by the Leader of the Opposition, the interests of the combined community behind the Bill. In connection with the fixing of the price of wheat it is entirely reasonable that we should take into consideration what has occurred in connection with the fixing of prices for other commodities, and I desire to draw the attention of hon. members to a paragraph which appears in to-day's "West Australian" under the headings, "The Sugar Question and Jam Making, Statement by Sir H. Jones. Hobart, 14th September"—

In a further statement on the sugar question, Sir Henry Jones said to-day that there would be a rebate of 20 per cent., making it £26 ls. 6d. a ton for sugar used in the manufacture of jams and preserves for export. But for the manufacture of jams and preserves for consumption in Australia £46 ls. 6d. a ton would be charged for the sugar.

Before tea I drew attention to the circumstance that price fixing and the acceptance of parity represent two-edged weapons. A parity for sugar would be advantageous to the consumers of Australia, who are at present paying without protest a very big price indeed for the maintenance of the industry of sugar producing in Australia; so much so, that the difference represents something like £20 per ton. There is a very serious difficulty in the way of preventing undue profit being derived from a parity price for sugar. On the calculations of proved experts, the difference is so big as to amount to about £80 per acre of fruit grown. Thus it is plain that the question of fixing the price of sugar is a most serious one to the fruit industry of Western Australia and of Australia generally. Turning to another aspect of price fixing, we find that the price fixed until recently for

meat was such as to render it impossible for the meat producers of this State to sell their product at a profit. Such a position is most serious, placing, as it does, all qualities of meat on the same grade—which is ridiculous from the point of view of production of meat. Some of the meat grown in the southern part of the State should be, and in my opinion is, better meat than that produced in the North-West. Although the Leader of the Opposition suggested what might well be considered a reasonable price for wheat for the year, it is questionable if such a price would be acceptable in the event of the parity falling considerably below it. The basis suggested by the Leader of the Opposition would be a very fair one if we could arrive at it in some manner which was not suggested by that hon. gentleman. In my opinion, most of the wheat growers would be satisfied if they could get a guaranteed price for home consumption somewhat in the neighbourhood of the figure indicated by the Leader of the Opposition. We must bear in mind that Clause 6 of the Bill provides for certain sales, which feature should appeal to certain representatives of metropolitan and suburban centres.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not discuss clauses on the second reading.

Mr. PICKERING: This is only just a passing reference, Sir. I merely wish to show that the Bill does make provision by which we can be exempted from increasing the pool unnecessarily, by making available to such elements as the poultry farmers and pig raisers throughout the State supplies of wheat direct from the farmers. The Minister for Agriculture, in replying, will no doubt indicate whether I am wrong or right in drawing that inference. It seems to me that the course indicated would be a wise one. Under such conditions the poultry farmers and pig raisers would find themselves placed on more advantageous terms than if a price were fixed for all local consumption. At all events that is my interpretation of Clause 6. By Subclause 2 of Clause 13 the Minister is empowered, I infer, to deal with the prices of bread and other by-products. I should like the Minister, when he replies, to confirm that statement or to disabuse me of any error into which I may have fallen. The Leader of the Opposition drew special attention to the constitution of the advisory board for which the Bill provides. The State has at its service to-day a board with considerable experience, gained during the period over which former pools have extended. Those gentlemen must be of considerable value in forming a basis for selection of the members of the board to be created by this Bill. It may be advisable, as suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, that certain other elements should be represented on the board. I feel quite sure that the Minister in charge of the measure will use his discretion and his judgment in seeing that such

elements are represented, if their representation is necessary to the proper administration of the measure. Certain financial aspects of the pool may want specially trained men to deal with them. However, it seems to me that what the Bill proposes to authorise affords very little scope in that direction. Personally, I consider that the members of the present board, with their seven years' experience, should be well able to carry on the work under this measure. It is not to be assumed that the advisory board will have any particular interest to care for. They must, of course, look to the business of handling and selling the wheat, but they must especially conserve the interests of the State in conjunction with those of the wheat-growers. As regards fluctuation of prices, that phase of the question will render this measure more difficult for the Minister and his assistants to operate if we rely entirely on world's parity. My personal view is that reliance on world's parity would militate against the best interests of the farmer. Recently I read that according to the statistics available there was likely to be an excess of supplies over requirements to the extent of 11 million quarters of wheat. If that is so, we have no reason to believe that the demand for wheat will be so great as to make the parity price in any way excessive. Therefore a fixed price, if it could be arranged, would probably operate in the interests of the farmers rather than in those of the consumers. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) said that I had stated that 5s. per bushel should be the maximum price. What I did say—if I remember rightly, it was by way of interjection—was that it could reasonably be expected that wheat would produce 5s. or 6s. in bags.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Five shillings.

Mr. PICKERING: We will say 5s. or 6s. The quantity required for local consumption is, I understand, in the neighbourhood of two million bushels. That is a very big proportion of the output of Western Australia, and it is to be hoped that whatever price may be arrived at for local consumption will be such as to make the proposition remunerative for the wheat-grower. I am naturally interested in every phase of primary production, and it appeals to me that every care should be taken to treat all sections of the community as fairly as possible. I am anxious that all our various avenues of primary production should progress satisfactorily, because if we have a prosperous people we have a contented people, and it is much easier to govern a country of contented people than a country of people suffering under disabilities and grievances which should be remedied. In conclusion, I congratulate the Government on having made an honest endeavour to meet the situation. If they will trust themselves to the lead of this House, we will turn out the measure in such a shape as will

be entirely satisfactory to the community as a whole.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [7.44]: For one particular reason I am doubtful whether the House should pass the Bill. We were told to-night, by way of interjection, that arrangements have not yet been completed for financing the pool.

The Minister for Agriculture: You were not told that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Interjections made during the speech of the Leader of the Opposition were to the effect that the question of financing the pool was at present under the consideration of the Commonwealth Bank, and that the passage of this measure was awaited in order to finalise arrangements for financing the pool. That statement is quite contrary to the announcement made on a recent evening that arrangements for financing the pool had already been made in London. If there is any doubt about it, members of this House should protect themselves and not let the Government say in the future that Parliament authorised the formation of the pool, and, therefore, they must make a fair profit if they can.

The Minister for Agriculture: You are wrong.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not want that to take place. We are told that the financial arrangements have been made.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is wrong. The financial arrangements cannot be made until this Bill is passed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, they can. This is the most important part of the Bill. We are to give a guarantee of 3s. a bushel. It is anticipated that there will be a ten million bushel crop. On the estimate we have, this represents a sum of £1,500,000. No person would rush into a matter of this description involving such a guarantee of £1,500,000 without some arrangements having been made beforehand to meet that indebtedness. That is the position we are in.

Mr. Willcock: It was stated that arrangements had been made with the bank.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister said that arrangements had been made with the London, Westminster and Parr's Bank. Now we are told that the Commonwealth have the matter under consideration. If arrangements have already been made, how can it be that the Federal Government are now making arrangements and have the matter under consideration?

The Minister for Agriculture: You are splitting straws.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is too serious a matter about which to split straws.

Mr. Willcock: A matter of £1,500,000 is pretty serious.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Government have not £1,500,000 in the Treasury, and we are assured that the local bankers will not assist in the matter except in conformity with

arrangements made elsewhere. To-night we are told that the matter is under consideration. What is the position? Are we justified in saying to the Government: "You must establish a pool, no matter from where you get the money?" Are we justified in accepting the responsibility of authorising the Government to establish the pool under such conditions? I say we are not. I am in favour of a pool for this year, but, at the same time, it is necessary to know beforehand how we are going to finance it. It is no good entering into it blindfolded. Regarding the Minister's statement that certain influences were at work in the other States with a view to prohibiting a pool this year, is it not strange that the only two States where this has been evidenced are Victoria and South Australia, where there are National Governments? It had no effect in New South Wales. The Premier said to-night that no buyers except Dreyfus had made an offer to come to Western Australia to purchase wheat.

The Minister for Agriculture: The Premier did not say that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: He implied that. He said he had been told that Dreyfus would come here.

The Minister for Agriculture: The Premier did not mention any names.

Mr. Willcock: Yes he did.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I thought he did. If any wheat buyers or other persons studied the interests of Western Australia during the last few years, they would form the opinion that it would be useless to come to the Government of Western Australia because of the fact that, as the Government were financing the operations, it was almost compulsory to have a pool. It is not a matter of the Government desiring to give the farmers a pool, for they are almost compelled to provide a pool owing to the prevailing conditions. There are over 3,000 farmers on the books of the Industries Assistance Board and, consequently, the Government have a lot at stake. It is to the interests of the Government to have a pool, but it is necessary to ascertain how the money is to be procured to meet the payments as they become due. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the board should include a representative of the consumers, as well as of the producers and the buyers. It is necessary to have someone on the board to assure fair-play. In my opinion the public have not been treated fairly during the past 12 months. A perusal of the file dealing with the sale of wheat to New South Wales shows that when the sale was made, the Minister for Education came away highly delighted because he had secured the price of 7s. 8d. It had been lower than that previously. Now we are told that it would be wrong to fix the price of wheat for local consumption except on London parity. The Leader of the Opposition, when he referred just now to the action of the British Government, said that the local producers in England did not get a price for

their wheat on a fixed basis, but the Government fixed a maximum price, and he was quite correct. I have a copy of a letter written by Mr. McCurdy, who was the Minister controlling food in the British Government. The letter was written in 1920, and he said—

The Government had, however, decided that so long as wheat was still controlled, prices of Home-grown wheat of sound milling quality harvested in 1920 should be the monthly average c.i.f. price of imported wheat of similar or comparable quality, provided that the price so paid to the Home growers should not exceed 95s. per quarter of 504 lbs.

That shows that there was a maximum price fixed so far as the Home growers were concerned. The Government limited the price for the Home grower for local requirements, but it did not affect the position regarding other wheat. This letter was written in reply to an inquiry regarding the wheat pool in 1920. The action was taken in England and the price was fixed for the Home producers. If it can be done in England, I do not see why it cannot be done in Western Australia. Take the position regarding gold. The increased price for gold is only available to the producers in respect of gold that is exported; they do not benefit by the increased price in respect of the gold that is kept in the State. The Government do not care what one can get from the outside markets, but there is a limitation on the price of gold sold in Australia. If this can be done in the case of gold, why cannot it be done with regard to wheat?

Mr. Mann: You would have to fix the price for local consumption over a period.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It all depends. How could the Minister arrange it otherwise?

Mr. Mann: You would have to fix it for more than a year.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not follow that. My principal reason in speaking to-night is that the State, for the first time, intends to endeavour to finance the wheat pool. It is the duty of the State under such conditions to weigh very carefully the amount of money it is intended to expend regarding the wheat. If there is a possibility of any saving being effected, it is the duty of the Government to make that saving. We know from the manager of the wheat pool, who is a man having long experience, that by buying wheat, the board—a board is mentioned in the Bill—can save a considerable amount of money. That being so, I see no reason whatever why we should enter into an agreement with the Western Farmers Ltd. We have a staff controlling the wheat pool, and we have the board. That being so, why duplicate the work? Why have another official staff in connection with another firm? There is no need for it. When the Royal Commission on the wheat marketing scheme investigated this problem, a statement was made indicating that a considerable saving

could be effected if the wheat board handled the pool. For the information of members who may not have perused the report of that Royal Commission, I will read portion of the evidence. Question 4504 shows that Mr. Harrison asked—

But they claim that the taking over would be for the good of the scheme?

I will point out what that means. The Westralian Farmers Ltd. wanted to take full control. I would be quite safe in saying that the company wanted to sign Government cheques. At any rate, I am not far out in saying that. They did not only want to take control of the Board, which was under the supervision of the Minister, but to control the staff and everything else. They wanted to control the whole handling of wheat in Western Australia even to the shipping. Mr. Keys, who was the witness, replied—

The other day I made up an estimate at which I reckon the scheme could do the work of issuing certificates for a ten million bushel crop. The estimate was approximately £10,000. On a similar basis to last year's we would have to pay the Westralian Farmers Ltd. £25,000 for that work.

He estimated he could do the work for £10,000, whereas on that basis we would have to pay £25,000 for the same work. He continued—

Our salaries for officers at the present time are £7,000. If that staff were transferred to the Westralian Farmers Ltd., and that company paid those men £7,000, they would probably want to charge the farmer up with £14,000—something for their own profit. The pool represents every farmer equally. If one farmer puts a thousand bags of wheat into the pool and the next only 100 bags of wheat, each farmer is treated according to the quantity of wheat they had in the pool. If our expenses come to £20,000 and that works out at a farthing a bushel, that farthing a bushel means more to the larger farmer than to the smaller farmer. The profits of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are distributed according to the business the man does with them. The whole question is what actuarial calculation is made to see what profit arises from any particular line of business. You may be giving your insurance to the Westralian Farmers Ltd. and they may so work that it is debited to the insurance portion of the business. They say that their profits are distributed after the shareholder dies. If the wheat scheme is doing work, our charges are debited up and the balance distributed at the end of the pool or in dividends during the course of the pool. No dividend is kept until a man dies and then handed to his widow.

The Minister for Agriculture: All these claims come out of the pool.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course. You are paying a farthing for certificates and a farthing for profits. But if that can be

saved it is our duty to save it. The State Government will have to find the money this year, and according to what has been said there will be a difficulty in finding it. If we can save £15,000 by handling the pool ourselves, we have no right to hand it over to anybody else. Even the chief of the Country Party, Mr. Monger, has declared that we must have economy. Well, here is a chance to exercise economy to the extent of £15,000 on one year's harvest. Nobody in Western Australia knows more about the handling of wheat than does Mr. Keys. He has been managing the scheme for some years, and he was managing for Dreyfus & Co. before he took over the job. He can be relied upon for efficiency. That being so, why should we hand over to a private company the handling of the wheat when we can do it ourselves and save £15,000? Here is another question and answer:—

You said you got out a scheme by which you can do for £10,000 what you are paying £25,000 to the Westralian Farmers for doing?—Not quite. I worked out a statement showing what it would cost us to handle 10,000,000 bushels and, applying the rates which we paid this year, we would pay the Westralian Farmers £25,000.

Mr. Stubbs: How long ago was that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In 1918. But the same thing applies to-day, because any increase in wages has to be allowed for under the agreement. Here is another excerpt from the evidence—

Regarding the statement you handed in to-day, I see you say "Estimated cost for issuing certificates for ten million bushel requirements." It pans out about the same as the contract this year for issuing certificates?—Practically the same. We pay the Westralian Farmers Ltd. a farthing for issuing certificates, and then, of course, we pay them a farthing for profit, and an eighth of a penny for checking at the depots, which is work we do ourselves now and would not have to do over again.

You have cut that out altogether?—Yes. We shall save that service.

That is the work which the Westralian Farmers have girls doing at the present time?—Yes.

In other words, you are paying an eighth of a penny now for the girls checking your check?—That is the position.

Or the Westralian Farmers are being paid an eighth of a penny for nothing?—For very little. They had a man at each depot. The whole lot might cost them £1,000 for the year.

For that £1,000 the Government have to pay between £4,000 and £5,000. All that would be required for the handling of the wheat ourselves would be one or two additional inspectors, and an extra clerk or two. The rest of the machinery is already there. We would not require a dual managerial staff. The Premier the other day proved

willing to hand over to the Commonwealth the Taxation Department in the mere expectation of the transference saving us £20,000 per annum. In respect of the wheat, we are paying for a duplicate staff when there is no necessity for it. The Government take control of the wheat when it is brought to the depot, and the Government have there an officer to check the weights and approve the quality.

Mr. Stubbs: You would require an inspector at every depot.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes. There is no necessity for paying the Westralian Farmers Ltd. to have another inspector there. In the past the Westralian Farmers Ltd. have collected the cost of an inspector and allowed the Government officers to do the work, which was subsequently checked by girls in the office. It is a wrong system, and should be abolished. Next year in all probability the price of wheat will fall, and so it will be more than ever necessary to save all that we can for the farmers. The managers of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. have the wheat-growers well trained.

Mr. Mann: A section of them.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: A very large section. The farmers say, "What difference does the cost make to us? If the Westralian Farmers Ltd. make a profit, we shall get it back again."

Mr. Mann: The shareholders of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. would be but a minority of the wheat-growers.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Apparently the hon. member is a compulsory shareholder, and so is not taking a very keen interest in the question. Since the Westralian Farmers Ltd. have had the sole handling of the wheat, they have made every farmer with wheat in the pool a compulsory shareholder of the company.

Mr. Piesse: Not unless he did business with them.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: He could not help himself. If he had but 100 bushels in the pool, the profit on the parcel made him a compulsory shareholder.

Mr. Stubbs: I do not think that is correct.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have it in Mr. Murray's own words. He said, "If any profit is made out of the wheat, we divide that profit amongst those who put wheat into the pool, and we give them bonus shares." Mr. Allen, my colleague on the Commission, said, "You do not pay them cash?" and Mr. Murray said, "No, we require the cash, but we make it a kind of insurance. They cannot transfer the shares, but if a shareholder dies we pay his relatives out of his share." Only to-day, in consequence of what a farmer told me, I said, "You must be a shareholder of the Westralian Farmers Ltd.," and he said "No; they sent me a letter stating that if I sent a few shillings and put in only a few bushels, it would suffice to make me a shareholder."

Mr. Piesse: That is on the commercial side.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It has to do with the handling of the wheat. He puts wheat into the pool, and that very action makes him a compulsory shareholder. It gives the company an enormous pull. As a result they have been killing the small storekeepers in the country, for the farmers have been told that if they died their relatives would get the value of the shares.

Hon. P. Collier: Mighty small chance of that!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I could understand hon. members having their doubts if I, with my scant knowledge, declared that the acquiring should be done by the Wheat Board. But I am saying it on the authority of Mr. Keys, who made the statement I have read out. Having regard to the authorship of that statement, surely it is worth the consideration of hon. members. They are not my words, but the words of Mr. Keys. At a time like this we should not be paying for duplicate staffs where one will do. We should put on our considering cap and see if it is not possible to save £15,000 on a ten million bushel crop. If that could be done, the money saved, if hon. members thought fit, could be distributed amongst the consumers in the form of a reduction in the price of wheat. We are paying 3d. per bushel for managerial expenses. It is time that was altered. No doubt the Westralian Farmers Ltd. have handled the wheat fairly well. Still, I find there has been a marked discrepancy in the returns. Of course that might be explained by the natural increase. Only the other day I secured from the Minister a return showing the number of bags received at each siding and the number of bags returned to the pool from each siding, over the past two years. I find that in 1918-19, the agent received 4,365 bags more than were returned to the pool, or to the Wheat Board.

Mr. Piesse: In other words, wheat lost.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not going to say that. In 1919-20 there were 6,359 bags fewer delivered to the pool than were received by the agent from the farmer. Of course there may be some satisfactory explanation for this discrepancy. They might point to necessary reconditioning. Still, look at the large number of bags.

The Minister for Agriculture: You cannot be sure that the tallying was accurate.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am certain that it is not always accurate. We have had numbers of instances of proved inaccuracy in the tallying, as the agents sent more bags to the pool than they received from some sidings. But surely, a little inaccuracy in tallying would not account for so large a number of bags. I notice that last year the price fixed for shortages was 10s. 6d. per bushel. Suppose we assess the value of the shortage under con-

sideration at 6s. per bushel; it would mean a loss to the farmer of £5,223. There should be some explanation of this matter. The Minister said the work had been done satisfactorily by those who had acquired the wheat. If so, why is there such a big discrepancy between the number of bags handed in by the farmers to the agent and the number handed in by the agent to the pool? I could quite understand there being a discrepancy of 1,000 or 2,000 bags, but when it amounts up to between 6,000 and 7,000 bags, a very large quantity is involved, and some explanation should certainly be forthcoming. It is almost impossible to find out who is responsible for this. There is what we term the natural increase. The wheat is returned to the board by the bushel and the natural increase goes to the pool. In 1915-16 the agents, who were not millers, returned somewhere about 70,000 to 80,000 bushels more wheat than they received. This was supposed to be the natural increase. When we have such a shortage as I have referred to, the natural increase makes up the deficiency. The agents will not pay for the shortage, because the natural increase, of which the farmers should receive the benefit, is set against it, and thus a loss is incurred to the farmers. If they received all the natural increase, there would be a considerable difference in the quantity of wheat and a considerable difference in the returns to the farmer. This being so, is it any wonder that we have to pay such a high price for wheat? We cannot expect the farmer to stand the loss; and yet someone has to bear it. The farmers are entitled to the return, and yet they do not get it. No doubt the price has been increased to make up for the deficiency. The Minister the other night stated that the Fremantle Harbour Trust had received for storage £130,000.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is for the storage and handling.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The total amount received by the Fremantle Harbour Trust for all goods amounted to £56,163. During the years from the 1st July, 1916, to the 30th June, 1921, the Fremantle Harbour Trust received £26,223 for the storage of wheat. I mention this in order that the farmers may not conclude that the Fremantle Harbour Trust received £130,000 for the storage of wheat when they received only £26,000.

Mr. Stubbs: What do they do for that, provide the ground?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: And the sheds. This amount represents storage charges. I think the Fremantle Harbour Trust for two years were charging too much, but at the same time there is a big difference between £130,000 and £26,000. I hope that in Committee members will assist me to amend the Bill in the direction of making the wheat board the acquiring agents. This will make no difference to those people who handle the wheat in the country. The small co-operative societies in the country, if they so desire,

can handle the wheat at the sidings just as they do now. They will receive for this work the payment provided for in this measure; there will be no difference. I do not think the pool will cut down the people who handle the wheat in the country to do the work for a lower price than they as agents are allowed for it. We know from the inquiry which was held that this was done in the past. The Westralian Farmers Ltd. in 1917-18 were getting a half-penny a bushel for protecting the wheat with roofing, etc., on sites requested by the Minister, and they let the work to the co-operative societies in the country for a farthing a bushel. Instances were quoted to show that it cost 2s. to 3s. per hundred bags more to do the work of handling the wheat than the men actually engaged on the work were getting.

Mr. Pickering: They are getting only a halfpenny now.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Is the hon. member aware that during the first year £4d. was paid for roofing and stacking, and the Westralian Farmers Ltd. were paid three-eighths of a penny more than that. My proposal will not affect the small people in the country who handle the wheat; they could handle it for the board exactly as they handle it for the Westralian Farmers Ltd., but it will affect the pool to the extent of £15,000. This saving can be effected by cutting out the dual management. If we do not amend the Bill in this direction, we will be throwing away £15,000 so far as the pool is concerned.

Mr. Pickering: It goes back to the farmer again.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It does not.

Hon. P. Collier: It helps the company to keep afloat.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If there is a profit, a fraction of it might go back to the farmer, but the manager must get his money, the secretary must get his money, the accountant must get his money, and the inspector must get his money. All these are officers who are not required. I hope that in Committee members will assist me to prevent the Minister from entering into this agreement with the Westralian Farmers Ltd., and to provide for the board to take the responsibilities and be the acquiring agents as well as the selling agents.

Mr. Pickering: Do you know that the co-operative societies are carrying out their organisation?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not intend to interfere with that at all. My proposal will not make any difference to them. I am objecting to this expenditure for dual management in the city of Perth. We have our manager and we have all the staff, and why should we employ an outside body?

Hon. P. Collier: The co-operative societies could act directly on behalf of the State.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, on exactly the same conditions as are laid down in the Bill. Instead of Mr. Murray, the manager of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. entering into an agreement with the co-operative societies for

carrying out the work at the price set out in the measure or a fraction less, the wheat board can make an agreement with the co-operative societies. The tactics of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. in the past have been to get the agents in the country to do the work for less than the Westralian Farmers Ltd. received for it.

Mr. Pickering: Not so now.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In the past it was so. Why could not Mr. Keys, the manager of the wheat board, arrange with the co-operative societies to do the work at the price set down in the Bill? Why do we want to employ other people to do this for us?

The Minister for Agriculture: It would make more work in the office.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, but even allowing for that, it would still be possible for the board to make a profit of £15,000 on a 10 million bushel crop. Extra office assistance has been allowed for in the figures I have quoted.

Mr. Pickering: The Westralian Farmers Ltd. have done the work very efficiently.

Hon. P. Collier: That is not the point.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not know the wheat buyers and personally I do not care a snap of the fingers for them, but I want to point out again, as I have done for a year or two past, that the Government of Western Australia have acted unfairly and unjustly to the wheat buyers. I maintain that once a party enters into an honourable agreement with another party, especially if the other party be the Government of the State, the Government are in honour bound to carry out their agreement. Even if it resulted in a loss, the Government should carry out their agreement. When the wheat pool was formed, a definite promise was given to the wheat growers of Australia that, if they would give the country the benefit of their special knowledge regarding the wheat business to facilitate the formation of a wheat pool, then as soon as the war was over they would be able to take up their business again as they had left it. That promise was given definitely, clearly and distinctly by the Prime Minister of Australia, and every State in Australia has kept the promise with the exception of Western Australia.

Mr. Pickering: It is said that the wheat buyers are not prepared to carry on in Western Australia.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No; they know it would be useless to do so.

Hon. P. Collier: Who said that?

Mr. Pickering: It is common rumour.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the Minister would frankly tell us the position, he would say that owing to this country having on its books 3,000 farmers under the Industries Assistance Board, the Government dare not do it. I admit that it would be folly to advocate such a course this year. However, when there is a chance of saving £15,000 by making the board the acquiring agents, we should exert every effort to save that sum of money.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. RICHARDSON (Subiaco) [8.26]: I am pleased that the Government have introduced this measure to provide for a wheat pool in Western Australia. Until quite recently it appeared that the farmers would be thrown on their own resources and probably would lose a very great deal because of the wheat buyers not being prepared to come here and operate as in the past. If this matter had been left open, I do not think for one moment that the wheat buyers would have failed to come to Western Australia. I honestly believe that there are a sufficient number of wheat buyers who would be able to finance the whole of the wheat buying for the forthcoming harvest. I am in favour of a State wheat pool for the simple reason that it will be of great assistance to our farmers. If we had wheat buyers operating here, in all probability there would be a combination of some description working to the detriment of the farmers. I regret sincerely that the Commonwealth and State Governments were not able to continue the Australian pool. I can quite appreciate the stand taken by the Federal Government, because it would have been almost impossible for them to finance a pool so long as one of the States stood out. At present there appears to be no possibility of South Australia coming in. Therefore, we have to rely upon our own resources and to give our farmers a guarantee. The farmers of Western Australia must realise that we propose to give a very big guarantee on their behalf, and that we are accepting very great responsibilities by establishing a State wheat pool. If we may rely upon the estimate given of next year's export figures, the wheat pool will probably mean a million of money to the farmers of Western Australia. In Western Australia the consumption of wheat, according to the Minister's figures, is about 1,800,000 bushels per annum, and we are likely by reason of instituting this wheat pool, to secure an advance of 1s. I believe we shall secure an all-round advance of 2s. It is quite evident that if private wheat buyers had operated during the forthcoming season, the lack of shipping would probably have led them to sell quickly, and the farmers would have had to accept a lower price than is likely to be obtained by having a wheat pool in this State. In all probability throughout the forthcoming wheat season this will mean from 1s. 6d. to 2s. a bushel all round on the farmers' exported product. Working on these figures I think we shall find that this will represent a value of from three-quarters of a million to a million pounds to the farmers. We, who represent the consumers in the metropolitan area, are prepared to enter into what may be termed co-operation with the farmers with a view to securing the very best that they can get in the world's market. The whole of the people in Western Australia will be standing behind this guarantee should Parliament decide to create the wheat pool. Whilst we

are prepared to do this we consider that the consumers should be studied to the extent of having representation on the control board, so that they may have some say in the price that is fixed for wheat for home consumption. The member for Sussex pointed out that there was a provision in the Bill dealing with the price of bread and the price of offal. The price of these products is, of course, fixed by the price of wheat. That particular proviso is of no special use to the consumers, except that it prevents the millers from profiteering. When the Bill is in Committee, therefore, members will have to consider the advisability of fixing some price for the consumers. People in the metropolitan area and on the goldfields, as well as in other places outside the radius of wheat production, are faced with the difficulty that because of the high cost of living certain industries are being seriously affected. If we could place this matter clearly before individual farmers I believe they would be prepared to accept a compromise so far as the price of wheat for home consumption is concerned. They must realise that although people in the metropolitan area are not primary producers, they are trying to build up the secondary industries of the State, and that it is impossible for them to do this so long as foodstuffs, in particular, remain at so high a price. The man who is laying bricks for the construction of a house for another person who is working in some secondary industry is assisting in the building up of that secondary industry, just as if he himself were interested in that undertaking. The same thing applies to the farmer. The man who is laying bricks to build a farmer's house is assisting in the development of the farm. Farmers should realise that it is to their interests to see that the State continues along sound lines. Once they grasp that situation I think their representatives in this Chamber will be prepared to give some consideration to the details of the Bill. I do not propose to go over the figures which have already been given. When speaking on the Address-in-reply I expressed the opinion that a fair maximum rate for wheat for local consumption would be 7s. a bushel. The member for Irwin interjected, "Make it 5s." He is probably one of the largest farmers in the House, and is prepared to accept 5s. a bushel as a fair price for his wheat.

The Minister for Agriculture: Is he?

Mr. RICHARDSON: He says so; it appears in "Hansard."

Hon. P. Collier: He is a new kind of farmer in the House.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I take it the hon. member is an honest farmer. His interjection struck me as a peculiar one, and he reiterated it when I questioned him.

Hon. P. Collier: He is a rare specimen.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am pleased to find a rare specimen of that sort now and again. He evidently knew what he was talking about. We are prepared to fix the maximum price of 7s. for wheat for home consump-

tion, and from the interjection of the hon. member I should say that we were offering something that was more than generous.

The Minister for Agriculture: Did he want you to offer that price for a period of years?

Hon. P. Collier: There were no conditions attached.

Mr. RICHARDSON: He mentioned a period of five years.

Hon. P. Collier: We will guarantee that for home consumption for five years.

Mr. Mann: I will take it.

Mr. RICHARDSON: We are taking on a very big responsibility in creating this wheat pool. In the past it has been an easy matter for the wheat pools to carry out their functions, for the reason that during the past four or five years there has been a rising market for wheat. To-day, however, we have to be careful. We must see that every opportunity is taken to cover ourselves in every respect when dealing with this question. The representatives of the farmers in this Chamber are constantly referring to the probability of a reduction in the price of wheat, and they use that argument against ours that there should be a fixed price for a certain period. They say there is no necessity for us to agitate for the fixing of the price of wheat for our own use. If that is so those who are controlling the wheat pool in this State will have to be very much alive so that they may get the best possible price for their wheat. If the price of wheat is likely to come down I see no reason why those who are opposing the fixing of the price now should not be prepared to join with us. I support the second reading, and trust that the Bill will emerge from Committee in a form that will be fair to all concerned.

Mr. McALLUM (South Fremantle) [8.40]: I am satisfied that just as the farmers opposed the wheat pool when it was introduced, and went so far as to appeal to their supporters to come out with their guns and protect their wheat stocks against the proposals of the Labour Party to establish the pool, it will not be long before they will be opposing the policy which is now being enunciated for a world's parity, and will swing round to the policy put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, and will ask for that which the Labour Party is now offering. It has been shown during the trying period of the war and during the periods of distress suffered by our primary industries, that the only sound policy for primary producers was that laid down by the Labour movement. That is the position to-day. The farmers are trying for world's parity. Let them have world's parity on trial, but when world's parity represents a price of wheat that will not pay them, and they ask that our policy should be brought into force, if I can use any influence in the Labour movement, they shall not have it. They are not going to have world's parity both ways. They are not going to say that

whilst the world's parity is high they shall be given liberty to fleece the people by charging an exorbitant figure for their wheat, and when the wheat in the world's market falls below a paying proposition, ask the people to make up the difference for them. To-day they refuse to allow the people to get wheat at a reasonable figure, and yet they ask that they shall be guaranteed a price that will ensure for them a substantial profit. If I can prevent it they will not extort from the people a higher price than they could get from the world's market, should the world's parity fall below its present level.

Mr. Hickmott: Have the farmers ever tried to do that?

Mr. McCALLUM: They have been doing it for the past 12 months. Has there been any warrant for the people paying 9s. a bushel for wheat for local consumption, and for paying such a high price for bread?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The hon. member was in favour of a low price when there was a drought.

Mr. McCALLUM: The hon. member has admitted that the price was too high, and that the people had to pay more for their wheat than they should have been asked to do. If it had not been for the drought that is now covering Europe, and for the drought that has swept over the face of Russia, wheat throughout the world would have been down to between 4s. and 4s. 6d. a bushel. It is only the drought in the older parts of the world that has kept up the price of wheat. The latest information is that there will be a surplus output even this season, notwithstanding that there has been a shortage in Europe. It has been announced in France that it will not be necessary to import any wheat this season into that country. This circumstance is unique in French history. There is every reason to expect that the world's market will be supplied at a reasonable figure, and that next year there will be a glut in the market if there is anything like a decent season in Europe. When it comes to that, unless the cost of production in this State is materially reduced, we shall find our wheat an unpayable proposition. Then where will the farmer stand with his cry for world's parity? He will then be coming around to ask for something similar to what the Labour Party are offering him now. The wheat growers were coming out with guns to protect their wheat against the pool when the pool was first suggested. Now they declare that the pool is the only thing that can save them. As surely as the sun rises in the morning, the wheat growers will be asking for the Labour policy before many years have passed. While demanding world's parity for their product, they deny world's parity to almost every other product of this country, including such products as are necessary for the handling and sale of wheat. Without coal, for instance, wheat here would not

be worth twopence per bushel. But will the farmers of this State agree to pay world's parity for coal? Only last month I saw that coal in Italy was bringing £26 per ton. What if the Collic miners asked £26 per ton for their coal? What would it then cost to bring our farmers' wheat to market? There is no logical argument why the man producing wheat should not undergo the same close and humiliating scrutiny relative to his cost of production as is imposed on the man producing boots, or producing furniture, or producing timber, or producing iron and engineering requirements. And all this class interest comes from a party who declare that they are the only National Party, the only party with nation-wide ideals. In Queensland the Country Party link up with the Tories in order to defeat the Labour Party, and in Victoria they link up with the Labour Party in order to defeat the Tories. In this State they support a hybrid Government. All that is done on broad national questions affecting Australia from one end to the other! The Country Party will link up with any party, provided they can conserve their own petty personal interests. That has been their line of conduct ever since they have appeared as a party in the political life of this country. After all the people of this State have done for the wheat growers, who sail under false colours, who call themselves primary producers while they represent only one small section of the primary producers—

Mr. Pickering: Oh no!

The Minister for Mines: Nonsense! What about the bullocks in the North-West?

Mr. McCALLUM: The State has saved the wheat growing industry by backing it in a hundred and one different ways. The Minister pointed out that the Fremantle Harbour Trust had collected certain sums of money for storage of wheat. On the other hand, every other industry in this country has to pay for the passage of its products over the Fremantle wharf. Timber has to pay up to 2s. per ton. But hundreds of thousands of tons of wheat have gone over the Fremantle wharf without paying one penny-piece in wharfage rates to the Fremantle Harbour Trust. The wheat growers get subsidies in the form of cheap water supply, reduced railway rates, and cheap loans. The money of the people, the money of the workers, who cannot borrow their own money from the Savings Bank in order to set up in business or build homes for themselves, has gone to maintain the wheat growing industry. And after all this, after all the people of Western Australia have done for them, the wheat growers of this State now declare that our people must pay no matter what figure may be asked for wheat in starving Europe. Will the English workers allow their savings to be put into the Savings Bank here to be lent out at low interest in order to finance the farmers of Western Australia? No. But the

workers of Western Australia have allowed that to be done, and yet the farmers of Western Australia charge those workers 9s. per bushel for wheat, while the same wheat is being sold to niggers and Chinamen for 7s. per bushel. In Tasmania the price for local consumption has recently been reduced to 7s. 1d., permitting of a reduction of 1d. in the price of the loaf of bread. Why is no relief at all to be given to the masses of the people in this State? I would like the Minister to tell me how he expects to get through with a pool in this State while South Australia and Victoria will have, to a certain extent, an open market, and without legal means available to this Parliament to prevent South Australian and Victorian wheat buyers from trading in wheat here?

The Minister for Mines: You are arguing against yourself now. You would not ask for Tasmanian parity for anything that you want for the workers.

Mr. McCALLUM: No; but I say that the whole business of fixing prices on the basis of any parity is wrong. But how does the Minister expect to get through with his pool so long as South Australian and Victorian wheat acquiring agents are entitled to come here and operate, by virtue of the Interstate free trade provision in the Federal compact, with which this Parliament cannot interfere?

The Minister for Agriculture: Oh, yes!

Mr. McCALLUM: No. That point was tested when Queensland tried to prevent cattle going down to New South Wales and South Australia.

The Minister for Agriculture: That State did prevent it.

Mr. McCALLUM: Only by getting the Imperial Government to take charge of the whole of the cattle supplies of Queensland.

The Minister for Agriculture: No. It was due to South Australia prohibiting the movement of the cattle as soon as they came within the borders of that State.

Mr. McCALLUM: South Australia wanted the cattle. It was Queensland that entered into a contract with the Imperial Government to take over the whole of its meat supplies. I repeat, no action of this Parliament can prevent South Australian and Victorian agents from coming here and operating in competition with the State wheat pool. Notwithstanding the hundred and one different ways in which the people of this State have for years subsidised and are now subsidising the wheat growing industry, the people are apparently to receive no consideration whatever from the wheat growers. The wheat growers are living on the people's money; they could never have lived but for the financial backing they have received from the people of this country. Nevertheless the farmers say, "It is our wheat; we have produced it; it is the product of our labour; we are entitled to dispose of it as we please." Surely the people are entitled to reply to the wheat-growers, "Stand on your own feet, then. If you say that the markets of the

world are open to you for the disposal of your wheat, and if you demand the best price offering in the world for your wheat, then cease preying on the people's finances." However, the wheat-growers know that their industry could not have lasted for a week had it not been for the substantial backing it received from the finances of the people of this country. In the face of that knowledge, this is the gratitude that the wheat-growers show to the people of Western Australia! I say, if the farmers cry for world's parity, let them have it. They will be very sorry for it before long. When world's parity falls to an unpayable figure, then they will come along crying for something else.

The Minister for Agriculture: Have the farmers ever cried to you for anything yet?

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes. They are never done crying. No other industry in this country has received anything like the financial assistance granted to the farming industry. I am not saying that the policy of assisting the farming industry is a bad policy. But I am protesting against the ingratitude of the farmers after all that has been done for them. Is there no gratitude whatever in them? Are the people of this State to be treated worse than the niggers and brown and yellow folk in India and the Far East? Surely our own people are entitled to some little consideration on our wheat-growers.

Hon. P. Collier: They will get it before this Bill goes through.

Mr. McCALLUM: In this Bill the Minister makes provision for the appointment of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. as wheat-acquiring agents. I ask, what will happen if the firm are unable to carry out their obligations?

Mr. O'Loughlin: Suppose they should become insolvent?

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes; what would happen then? Such things have been known to occur. Firms have previously got into financial difficulties.

Mr. Pickering: You come to the financial assistance of the firm then.

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes. The desire is that the Government should finance the Westralian Farmers in the same way as they have financed the wheat-growers.

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member interjecting is only an Honorary Minister, and his utterances do not bind the Ministry.

Mr. McCALLUM: Although the voice is the voice of Jacob, we know whose is the hand. We know what request will come later. How will the Government act if the Westralian Farmers Ltd. cannot carry on? Why set out the name of that firm in this Bill? In former years other agents acted as well, yet the Westralian Farmers Ltd. have been specifically mentioned for some few years back. What will happen if they cannot carry on?

The Minister for Agriculture: What would happen if the Government could not carry on?

Mr. McCALLUM: There is not much fear of that. On the other hand, there may be

fears that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. will not be able to carry on. Before I will agree to the name of that firm being included in the Bill, I want to see some provision made so that the firm will pay the wages of the men who are doing the job, and, further, that they will pay the ruling rate for the district. The firm were paying 16s. to lumpers when 18s. was the rate; they paid 2s. 6d. less in many places than was the ruling rate. In some cases the men are not yet paid. The men cannot get their wages.

The Minister for Agriculture: That cannot be so, surely?

Hon. P. Collier: The sub-contractors have not paid those wages.

Mr. McCALLUM: That is the position. There has been so much subletting and sub-contracting going on before it becomes a matter of the employment of wages men that if the person becomes bankrupt or clears out, the workers engaged by such an individual have no chance of redress. Protection should be afforded to the men who are doing the work. Provision should be made to ensure that other industries are not penalised on account of the strong hold the wheat-growers have upon the political arena. It has been stated to-night that the people in the metropolitan area are not primary producers. There are many in my district who have suffered considerably through the high price of wheat.

Capt. Carter: The same applies all over the metropolitan area.

Mr. McCALLUM: The high price of wheat has practically wiped out the poultry industry that the Premier was so anxious to build up. The State encouraged that industry, yet it has now been penalised. I know one street alone where there were 35,000 head of poultry and where there are now less than 5,000 head.

Hon. P. Collier: They killed the egg-laying competition at Subiaco.

Mr. McCALLUM: The dairying industry has suffered, and so it goes on regarding other industries as well. The bacon-curing industry was established at Bellevue and that concern is in a rather precarious way. On behalf of that firm, it has been given out pretty definitely that unless there is some relief afforded in the direction of cheaper food for pigs, they will not be able to carry on the industry. It will be a bad look out for the State if industry after industry that depends upon the price of offal, has to go by the board on account of the high price fixed for wheat. I do not propose to detain the House any further beyond to emphasise that feature. I have given careful consideration to the question of whether we should not put up a fight to have the policy of the Labour Party embodied in the Bill. As the farmers have put forth such a cry for the world's parity, it is well for us to give them some of their own medicine.

Mr. Pickering: Why insist on the farmers "crying"?

Mr. McCALLUM: The farmers have not ceased crying for a long time past. They

have never yet been satisfied with what the Government have given them.

Mr. Hickmott: Do you not think that Western Australia would do better without the farmers at all?

Mr. McCALLUM: I do not. I have made my position quite clear.

Mr. Pickering: You have made your position clear as a vicious opponent of the agriculturists.

Mr. McCALLUM: I am a typical opponent of any section of the community who, having received assistance from the State, endeavour to treat the people worse than any foreigners in the world. I will not submit to any such kind of treatment. People who have paid the penalty by paying a high price for the wheat are entitled to consideration and unless that consideration is extended, sooner or later, a firm stand must be taken on the matter. It is just as well to make this perfectly clear now. Let the farmers have their world's parity! Let them have their fixed prices! Let them have their world's parity whether the price be high or low. The farmers must not ask for world's parity when it is high and then come crying for something else when it is low.

Mr. MULLANY (Menzies) [9.6]: I support the second reading of this Bill. With other members who have spoken, I regret the fact that the Federal Government have decided on this occasion not to continue the wheat pool throughout Australia. However, in the end, perhaps it will do no harm to Western Australia, isolated as it is, to undertake the carrying out of its own wheat pool. I believe the wheat pool is necessary, and I trust something will be done to conserve the interests of the consumers as well as the wheat producers. I believe it is in the interests of the whole community that the wheat pool should be established. I do not intend to take up the attitude that if I cannot get exactly what I think should be included in the Bill when in Committee, I shall attempt to wreck the measure. The continuance of the pool is necessary. The discussion has centred on the point whether world's parity or the price of wheat in London, less shipping and other charges incurred in sending the wheat overseas, is a fair basis upon which to fix the price of wheat in Western Australia for local consumption. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) has been very definite in his pronouncement of the Labour policy on the point. This aspect has been considered on many occasions during recent years. Members of this Parliament who were present last session will remember that on my motion, the Assembly agreed to a resolution embodying every point which the Leader of the Opposition, and the member for South Fremantle, have touched upon to-night. That motion was to the effect that, in the opinion of this House, the practice of taking world's parity as a basis for fixing the price for commodities produced and consumed in West-

ern Australia, was unsound. The resolution was carried and stands on record to-day. During the course of the discussion when it was stated that the high price of wheat and other foodstuffs had adversely affected the gold mining and other industries, the retort was made, "Look at the price you are getting for your gold." During his speech on the Address-in-reply, the Minister for Mines clearly showed the House what the position was regarding gold. It is a fact that gold brings from £5 to £6 an ounce in the markets of the world. The latest quotation I saw gave the price at £5 10s., which is certainly something like 30s. above pre-war prices. It should be understood, particularly by the wheat-growers, that when I say that the Gold Producers' Association are getting £5 10s. per ounce for the gold, it does not mean that the gold producers are getting that for the whole of their product. The association represent really a gold pool carried on with the sanction of the Federal Government. The association control the export of gold from Australia and no private individual is allowed to take gold out of the Commonwealth to-day. While the Federal Government give that power to the association, they do not permit them to export the whole of the gold produced in Australia. The Federal Government insist upon keeping within Australia such a quantity of gold as they deem necessary to stabilise the finances of the Commonwealth as far as they can. That means that those engaged in the gold mining industry are being forced to give to the Commonwealth Government so much of their gold product as is deemed necessary, at the pre-war price of £3 18s. per ounce or, roughly £4. On the other hand, they get as much as they can for their exportable surplus.

Hon. P. Collier: They are selling gold to-day for 30s. less than they could procure in the world's markets.

Mr. MULLANY: That is so. That is exactly what I and other members are asking the representatives of the wheat-growers to do. When the State comes to the assistance of the wheat-growers in the formation of this pool, we should ask them to place themselves in the same position as the gold mining industry to-day. The gold mining industry has been in that position for the past three or four years. It is a practical, sane and fair proposition to place before the wheat-growers. When the question is raised as to whether world's parity is a fair basis, it is well to look into that subject and endeavour to discover what are the reasons for the abnormal prices to-day.

Mr. Hickmott: Not only regarding wheat but other commodities as well.

Mr. MULLANY: That is so. In speaking upon this question last session and again this session, I approved of the principle of a pool in order that the community should get their commodities at a fair price and I held

that it should apply not only to wheat but to other products. However, we are dealing with wheat. Why is the position abnormal? It is because there have been droughts and failures in other wheat producing countries. Russia, which in pre-war times was a great wheat exporting country, has not done as we in Western Australia; Russia has not settled down to normal conditions since the great war was concluded. Members of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association and members sitting on the cross-benches in this Chamber have mentioned Bolshevism from time to time. When they say that Bolsheviks have control in Russia they apparently have a dread that something of the sort will follow in Australia. While they take the stand that they should endeavour to extract the last fraction of a penny for their wheat, they are only too glad for the Bolshevik control to continue in Russia so that they can continue to receive a high price for their wheat. I ask those representing the wheat-growers, is it fair to us in Western Australia, who did perhaps as much as any other portion of the Empire to hold up our end in the war, that we should be penalised in the price of necessary commodities merely because Russia has not got back to the exportation of wheat? Members of the Country Party will realise that it is not fair. Something has been said of the result on other industries of high prices charged for various commodities. No doubt the high price of wheat has been a big factor in the closing down of some of our mines. There is no chance for the gold mining industry to get back to its former activity while these extremely high prices continue. If we are to re-open some of our mines, we must endeavour to return to normal. While I am not going to stress what the goldfields have done for this State, or what the people of the State have done for the farmers, I again ask the representatives of the wheat-growing industry, the most prosperous industry in the State to-day, is it fair that they should hold out for the last fraction of world's parity when by so doing they are crippling other industries? I trust that in Committee there will be made certain amendments satisfactory to all concerned. We require the wheat pool, but it is not fair that the consumer should be altogether neglected while the State takes all the risk and thus provides an enhanced return for the wheat-grower.

Captain CARTER (Leederville) [9.18]: As a metropolitan member who is also representing a large number of primary producers, I am interested in the Bill. In the first place I am interested on behalf of 9,000 odd electors who are seriously affected by the price of the loaf. I am also interested as representing dairy farmers, poultry raisers and other primary producers in my electorate who have been seriously affected by the price of offal. I do not believe in compulsory pooling. Still I agree that a pool is necessary. I will not oppose the

compulsory system, for I believe it to be inevitable this year. But the system is so open to anomalies that very careful consideration requires to be given to every provision in the Bill. I have heard much with which I agree in speeches from both sides of the House. I hope the Bill will be so framed—it needs amendment in several respects—as to give equal consideration to all parties interested. Broadly speaking, the pool was of incalculable benefit to the farmer during the war, and more or less so to the general community. It proved its necessity during the unprecedented emergencies of the war period. I favour its continuance this year because the remaining influences of war conditions are still with us. The Bill is very arbitrary. There are in it clauses which conflict with my judgment in many ways. I have never yet been satisfied that the whole of the farmers desire a continuance of the compulsory pool; indeed I have it on the best authority that there are whole districts which do not favour such continuance.

Mr. Piesse: A good many did not favour the last pool.

Capt. CARTER: That bears out what I am about to say. This is forcing upon given people, free-born Australians, certain encumbrances, certain impositions which I do not like. On the other hand, it is for the greatest good of the greatest number, and therefore I favour a continuance of the pool. But the Bill should give the utmost consideration to the local consumer. In the main we have been treated fairly well in the matter of prices, although not so well as we might have been. Prohibitive prices have obtained in respect of by-products. So much has this operated in my district that it has practically wiped out big industries. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCullum) complained that in his electorate an industry which maintained 35,000 head of poultry has practically perished. The same thing has happened in my district and others in the metropolitan area. So, too, in respect of dairy herds. My electorate produces approximately 80 per cent. of the milk consumed in the metropolitan area, and therefore has every right to be considered in the fixing of the price of offal. That industry has been very seriously hampered by the prices charged for bran and pollard. Members of the Country Party have yearned for a return of the good old days, the days when private enterprise had its sway, when there was competition in the open market, and when the private individual was in a position to get immediate cash for his wheat. When members of the Country Party, who are seeking the passage of the Bill, speak longingly of the good old days, it is not hard to understand their motive. They know that were the position normal they would not for one moment consider a compulsory pool. Little wonder that the operation of the Bill is to be restricted

to one year. Those members who yearn for a return of the good old days will see to it that the pool is not continued one day longer than is necessary. In the Act is a section which provides that at the discretion of the Minister second-grade wheat may be sold to various industries requiring it. Under the past administration that provision did not work very satisfactorily. In my electorate it was practically impossible to buy poultry wheat at any figure much below the ruling price for f.a.q. One of the biggest farmers in the Dowerin district has told me that he failed to Perth a consignment of wheat very much below f.a.q. and fully expected that, under the section I have referred to, he would be able to get cash for his wheat in the open market at the railway yard. But, to his surprise, the wheat was diverted and pooled, with the result that he did not get cash for it, and the poultry farmers of the metropolitan area were not able to secure it. He has assured me that it was not fit for milling, and should not have gone into the pool. That sort of thing operates seriously against the metropolitan area and the people in the industries concerned. It is interesting to note the de-control which has taken place in the United Kingdom and all over the Continent. The Bill is but a temporary measure, and I believe that as soon as ever the conditions are favourable we shall return to what at least one member has described as the good old days. But in the meantime we should look for every means of economy. I agree with the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) that there should be no duplication of management and administration, of which we have had so many instances in the past. From the leader of the Government to the newest member, there have been constant cries for economy. We should go further and seize every opportunity for the practice of economy. In the administration of the wheat, and in its distribution for local consumption, every effort should be made to effect economy. I favour the Bill for the simple reason that I believe it is a necessary evil. Unfortunately it is forced upon us by the conditions now prevailing. If this administration is to handle the exportation of wheat and the chartering of ships' bottoms, I trust that we shall not have such a spectacle as we have had when, under the Federal arrangement a million tons of ships' bottoms was chartered in October at 15s. a ton and were being loaded a month of two ago alongside of ships which were filling at 30s. a ton. These facts stand; they have never been contradicted since I quoted them in my speech on the Address-in-reply and I take it they must be correct. I believe that all watchfulness and the greatest of care will have to be exercised in the administration of this measure when, in its improved form, it is placed on the statute-book.

Mr. SAMPSON (Swan) [9.31]: The system of pooling, I submit, calls for no defence. It is very necessary in the interests of the farmer and I venture to say that the South Australian farmers, by a very big majority, much regret the decision in that State to bring about de-control.

Hon. P. Collier: They voted for the Government.

Mr. SAMPSON: Members acquainted with the farming industry will agree that de-control is a very bad thing for the farmers of South Australia. I have been much impressed with the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition. If the hon. member had been a retired farmer, he could have scarcely presented a more contented or happy disposition in dealing with this matter. He has been reasonable in criticising the Bill. I warmly endorse his remarks regarding the un wisdom of adopting parity price for wheat for local consumption. That principle is a wrong one, and it would cause the Minister and the Government generally a great deal of difficulty. In South Australia there is to be no pool, and we may yet have the spectacle of merchants sending their representatives here to unload wheat for Western Australian consumption. In all these circumstances, I cannot help thinking that the viewpoint of the Leader of the Opposition is perfectly correct. The member for Leederville (Capt. Carter) has stated that he is "forced" to sit in a portion of the House which he states, suggests that he is dominated by the representatives of the farming industry.

Capt. Carter: I am basking in the reflected glory.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am very glad to hear this later explanation of his feelings. I hope that when the Prime Minister arrives here shortly and realises the position, a compulsory pool will be established on behalf of the Commonwealth, though I do not know that there is very much probability of that happening. In Western Australia the community must rely on its primary industries, and any assistance which can be given by means of legislation to make the lot of the farmer stable and secure should be given. I support the second reading.

Mr. MANN (Perth) [9.35]: I shall support the second reading of the Bill because I think the Government find it necessary to have a wheat pool in order to protect their securities under the Industries Assistance Board. That is my principal reason for supporting it. I am not so convinced that the wheat pool will be the great blessing for the farmers that some members suggest. If we have a State alongside of us dealing in the open market, I fail to see how the pool will assist us unless we have an overseas market. The pool cannot create an overseas market, and we will have to be bound by the pool, and I am not sure that we shall not find South Australia supplying our mills with wheat in opposition to the pool as they have

been supplying us with offal for some time past. I agree with the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) that there is no reason why this measure should not be administered by our own wheat board. Since the pool has been in existence, I have been in close touch with the wheat board and its executive officers, and I have been in touch with the officials controlling the Westralian Farmers Ltd. I do not see any superiority in the officials of the Westralian Farmers Ltd., as against the officers of the wheat board. On the other hand, the gentlemen controlling the wheat board and the chief executive officers are in closer touch with the wheat operations of the world, and would be better fitted than the Westralian Farmers Ltd., to control the pool. I fail to see what supervision the Westralian Farmers Ltd., really exercise because they sublet their sidings to co-operative societies or contractors, and the co-operative societies in turn sublet them again.

Mr. Sampson: The co-operative societies are affiliated.

Mr. MANN: All the same it means two profits. A director of one of the co-operative societies informed me that last year his organisation made a profit of £1,100 on its operations. That society had sublet its contract so that in this case there were three profits. I do not see any reason why these profits cannot be saved to the pool.

Hon. P. Collier: But you see the wheat-growers get it in dividends from the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Mr. MANN: If they live long enough. I have been told that the most recent balance sheet of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. shows that a profit of £26,000 was made out of the handling of wheat last year.

Hon. P. Collier: They had a profit on their total operations of only £15,000, so that, if it had not been for the wheat pool, they would have been a good £10,000 on the wrong side.

Mr. MANN: I have not seen the document, but that is the information which was given to me, and it came from a reliable source.

Hon. P. Collier: This is the only thing which is keeping them afloat.

Mr. MANN: I want to see this pool conducted in the most economical way in order that everyone may get a fair deal.

Mr. Hickmott: The wheat has never been handled more cheaply by any other firm.

Mr. MANN: It has never been dearer, and if there was competition it might be handled more cheaply. We can save the profit made by the Westralian Farmers Ltd. by allowing the board to acquire the wheat.

Mr. Pickering: You will have to increase the staff.

Mr. MANN: Very little.

Hon. P. Collier: Why is the member for Sussex barracking for the company?

Mr. MANN: I want to see the pool conducted as economically as possible. Although I am a wheat-grower, I say there are others

to be considered apart from the wheat-growers. In addition to the consumers of bread, there are the consumers of offal. Unless some provision is made in this agreement for the dairying and allied industries, some of them will be wiped right out of existence. In 1918 there were 85,000 pigs in Western Australia. Owing to the high price of offal, the number has diminished to 55,000.

Mr. Hickmott: Because owners killed them.

Mr. MANN: For the reason that they could not afford to pay the high prices ruling for offal.

Hon. P. Collier: They died of starvation!

Mr. Pickering: They were killed to save their lives.

Mr. MANN: Surely this industry is deserving of some consideration. Surely the people who have invested large amounts of money in erecting factories here should be considered. Had not it been for the business foresight displayed by Foggitt, Jones & Co., who imported offal and pig food into this State, the growers would have been unable to keep going last year.

Hon. P. Collier: Surely it is wrong to import offal into this State.

Mr. MANN: They imported barley from Victoria and bran and pollard from South Australia.

Hon. P. Collier: Well surely that is wrong. We should have been able to supply it here at a fair price.

Mr. MANN: That is so, and I want to ensure that the same condition of affairs will not recur this year. Our poultry industry is the smallest in the Commonwealth. In New South Wales and Victoria there is something like two million head of poultry. The smallest State of the Commonwealth—Tasmania—has something over 300,000 head, whereas Western Australia has just about 100,000. This is due to the high price of food. I would like to see the various interests represented on the board of control.

Mr. Pickering: What, the pig farmers?

Mr. MANN: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: The pig farmer is just as important as the wheat farmer.

Mr. MANN: I think there are more pig farmers than wheat farmers in the Sussex electorate.

Hon. P. Collier: And a better class too.

Mr. MANN: I trust that this will be the last year when a wheat pool will be necessary. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) spoke about London parity. While there is a pool, I do not know of any other way of fixing the price than by the world's parity. When the pool ceases to exist, then we shall return to prices fixed by the law of supply and demand.

Mr. McCallum: Who is going to decide the world's parity?

Mr. MANN: I take it that the board will decide what the world's parity is and base their prices on that. This year we have no alternative to passing the Bill, and for this

reason I support the second reading, but I shall be prepared to vote for some amendments in Committee in order to make the measure more workable.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mrs. COWAN (West Perth) [9.43]: It seems to be in the order of things that everyone should speak on the second reading of this measure. Perhaps I might bring under the notice of members the fact that there is a woman's side to this question, and particularly do I wish to bring this under the notice of members of the Country Party. The Leader of the Opposition was very good in the way in which he stated the case, and I feel that he is acting in entirely the right spirit towards this question. However, no one seems to have stressed the fact that there is a tremendous amount of poverty and unemployment prevailing at present, and that the women of the community are finding it very hard to make both ends meet in the matter of providing their children with satisfactory food. I speak advisedly, because I know of more than one case of this kind. The fact of having to pay the present prices for milk, butter, cheese, and bread, because of the price of wheat, is a terrible drag on and a very serious matter for those women who have to make the best of their husbands' incomes. Even those who do not need to make the best of their husbands' incomes cannot save anything out of their house allowances.

Mr. Hickmott: Butter and cheese are fairly cheap just now.

Mrs. COWAN: We should support the member for North-East Fremantle in what he said. The principle is a right one, and we should if possible save as a result of this Bill by reducing expenses instead of increasing them. Nothing can be done unless the people are behind it, and the wheat pool cannot be continued without the support of the people. I give my support to the second reading of the Bill as well as to the continuance of the pool. I also appreciate the position of the farmers. I have conversed with many young farmers who have been struggling along and endeavouring to do their best. If these men fall into the hands of local acquiring agents they will not be able to continue their business, and many farms must be shut down. That would be a grave mistake and would not help the community in any way. We should do everything we can to minimise the cost of administering this business. We should also remember the advice of the Leader of the Opposition with regard to a better control of our food supplies. I only rose to speak because I feel it is not right to let this matter pass without saving something on the women's side of the question. We women have a right to be remembered sometimes on a matter of this sort. The farmers especially should bear in mind the words of Lowell—

It is not a knowing kind of cattle

That is ketched with mouldy corn.

We have in a sense been kept far too long on mouldy corn, and have not been considered in the way that we should have been considered. I believe the Country Party will realise that there are more sides to this question than merely getting a good price for their wheat.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [9.47]: I gather there is no question about the second reading of this Bill being passed. I am in favour of the wheat pool. The various pools that have been established have greatly benefited the farming community.

Capt. Carter: And the consumer.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Not altogether the consumer. Some two years ago, when there was a trip for politicians to the Eastern wheat belt, the Premier announced that the Government were prepared to guarantee to the wheat growers 5s. per bushel. His announcement was received with loud cheers by everyone who heard it. Had it not been for the pool at that particular time, the acquiring agents could have gone through that particular part of the State and acquired all the wheat they wanted at 5s. a bushel.

Mr. Pickering: Are you not glad there was a pool?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Certainly. I am merely pointing out the benefit that the farmers derived as a result of the pool. The Minister for Agriculture tells us that as a result of the pool before last the farmers will receive about 8s. a bushel.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is the 1919 pool.

Mr. WILLCOCK: At that time there were grave doubts as to what the price of wheat would be.

The Minister for Agriculture: They have received 8s. 6d.

Mr. Hickmott: That has been a general benefit to the community.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am not denying that. I hope the pool will remain in existence for many years. If it is continued in the future no doubt it will prove of equal advantage to those who are still engaged in growing wheat.

Mr. Pickering: And we hope an advantage to the consumers.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I hope that some drastic amendment will be made so far as the fixing of the price of wheat to the consumer is concerned, in order that the consumer will not be robbed in the future as he has been robbed in the past. The Leader of the Opposition says it is difficult to ascertain what the London parity is. We have heard many different expressions of opinion on the subject. Last year one Minister said the world's parity represented so much, and he was challenged by another Minister, who quoted a figure that represented a difference of 1s. a bushel on the figure quoted by the other Minister.

The Minister for Agriculture: With an open market the price will always fluctuate.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The establishment of a pool this year should result in great advantage

to the farmers. The private acquiring agent makes practically 1s. a bushel on the wheat that he purchases. Immense fortunes have been built up in this way, even if there has been a loss in any one particular year. If millers require to make a contract for six months ahead, they must be assured of a supply of wheat at a certain price throughout that period. If they do not know what the wheat will cost them from month to month they cannot compete in the business with other people.

The Minister for Agriculture: They can buy all they want at the time they make their contract.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The millers should be in a position to buy as much as they want for six months ahead so that they can make suitable contracts. Under the system proposed of fixing the price from month to month millers will not be able to buy a sufficient quantity in any one month, for they will never know from month to month what the price is going to be. This constitutes a grave danger to millers whose business is to export flour from the State. During the past 12 months millers have been charged a higher price for their wheat in Western Australia than it could be acquired for in other parts of the world. As the result of this we have lost our export trade. I do not know that we would not have lost it in any case because of the quantity of wheat now being grown in Manchuria. If there is any chance of doing an export trade, millers should be able to acquire their wheat at such prices that they can quote for flour on contract over an extended period. The attitude of the Labour Party on the question of fixing the price of wheat for local consumption is well known. The Premier asked me how much I expected the farmers to guarantee in return for the backing of the collective credit of the State. I am not prepared to say how much that backing is worth, but it will be generally admitted that the community as a whole, as represented by the various Governments, has done a great deal for the farmers. I maintain that the Labour Government have done more for them than any other Government, but I am not going to debate that point now.

The Premier: It would not be wise.

Mr. SPEAKER: Not on this Bill.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The community has stood behind the farmers. If it had not been for the support of the community during the past six or eight years many farmers would have gone to the wall, and there would have been practically no agricultural industry in the State. The principle of interdependence might well be recognised. If the farmer appreciates the fact that he is dependent on the community he should also recognise that the community is entitled to purchase wheat at a fair price. Wheat for local consumption should not be sold at a higher price than 7s. per bushel.

Mr. Piesse: Nor under that price.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I would not go as far as that. The price should not be under 4s. There should be a sliding scale.

Mr. Money: The Leader of the Opposition suggested 7s. a bushel.

Mr. WILLCOCK: He made that offer 12 months ago.

Mr. Money: He made it to-night.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, he is not prepared to go on with that now.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He said that should be the maximum price.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I agree that it should be the maximum price. I want the minimum price to be 4s., and between these two figures the price should range according to the world's parity. Members of the Country Party will agree with me that the price of wheat will be less in this State than 4s. f.o.b.

Mr. Piesse: Not at all.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I hope it will not be necessary to come down to that minimum any more than it should be necessary to pay more than that maximum. I would be prepared to assist the farmer to get as much as he could for his wheat from outside sources. It is a distinct benefit to the community that the farmers should be able to do so, even if they could get £1 per bushel. It is, however, no service to the community if people are called upon to pay more than 7s. per bushel, for this means bread at about 5d. per loaf. Much of the depression now existing in the State is due to the fact that the price of commodities has gone up to such a great extent. Many avenues of employment have been closed down because of this. On the price of wheat all the world over depends the price of other articles of food. It is the standard upon which is built the price of other commodities, and upon which depends to a large extent the cost of living. Some of the mines in Western Australia have closed down because the management was unable to pay a living rate of wage. This has been brought about because of the high price of wheat. In my own district there are mines which would be re-opened at once if the miners would work for a lower rate of wage than has been laid down for them. The Lancefield Mine and other mines in the North Kalgoorlie area would be working if the men could accept a lower rate of wage. They would be prepared to accept a lower rate of wage if there was a considerable decrease in the price of essential commodities. Although the cost of living has gone up by 70 or 80 per cent. wages have not gone up to the same extent. When the cost of living does come down it will have to drop at a quicker rate than the wages, if the wage earners are to retain the position they were in prior to the war. If our industries are to be successfully carried on, the cost of living must come down. One of the principal reasons for the high cost of living is the high price at which

wheat has stood for the past 12 months. Eggs, bacon, flour, all depend for their prices on the price of wheat. Once the price of wheat is reduced, other commodities will come down in cost. Wherever in the world the cost of wheat is high, the general cost of living is also high. With the Leader of the Opposition I hold that this Bill should provide representation of the consumer on the board which will fix the price of wheat. The community stand behind the wheat pool, and if the interests of the community are to be conserved, they must find representation where the price is fixed, namely, on the board. An amendment to that effect moved by the Leader of the Opposition would no doubt find acceptance all round the Chamber. I agree with the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) that the wheat pool itself should conduct all wheat acquiring. As a fact, there is no acquiring at all to be done. The acquiring of the wheat in this State will be done absolutely by the passing of this Bill through Parliament. All that remains then is to arrange for the transport of the wheat, which can be done just as well by the manager of the pool as by any sub-agent. The contract should definitely state that the Westralian Farmers Ltd., or the pool itself, should pay the rate of wages ruling in any district for any particular work. In Geraldton during the past two or three years, every time the wheat has started to come into the town we have had either a strike or a lock-out or a dislocation of work—which is extremely unsatisfactory to the community. In view of the basis afforded by Arbitration Court awards, there is no necessity for such delay and protracted negotiation as have occurred in past years, nor, as occurred last season, the hanging up of industry for some three or four weeks in order to settle something which can be settled in this Bill. As to contracts which the pool may let for the erection or taking down of buildings required in connection with the work of the pool, anything that is done should be done by public tender. An arrangement made in Geraldton last year caused considerable dissatisfaction throughout the district. Nobody knew what was going to happen in regard to the dismantling of certain sheds, until a contractor was found engaged in the work of dismantling. He said that he had obtained the job practically as the result of a secret arrangement between himself and the pool. In the best interests of the pool, there should be a condition that any work of this description, and any sales of property acquired by the pool for the purpose of its business, should be by public tender, so that everyone may be satisfied that public interests are being conserved. I support the second reading of the Bill, but I trust that during the Committee stage we shall be able to secure amendments on the lines which have been indicated.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. H. K. Moley—Greenough—in reply) [10.6]: In closing the debate on the second reading, let me say that the Government, in

common with hon. members generally, realise that there are numerous difficulties in the way of the operation of the proposed State pool. I sincerely hope that, by virtue of the good management which has characterised the conduct of wheat pools in this State generally, we shall be able to overcome the difficulties which are anticipated. In reply to the queries of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for North-East Fremantle regarding finance, it is quite true, as I stated when moving the second reading, that arrangements have been made for the London County and Westminster Bank to advance one million pounds for financing the initial payment to be made during January.

Hon. P. Collier: One million pounds?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We estimate that we shall not require the whole million. However, that is entirely consequential on the harvest, and on the number of bushels of wheat to be acquired. Moreover, the entire volume of the season's acquisition does not come in on the 15th January; the bulk of it will not be in until the end of the succeeding month, or during March. We shall commence shipping in December, and we hope to continue shipping during January. Thus we expect to have the assistance of actual proceeds of the harvest in our financing of the pool.

Hon. P. Collier: You would need to sell half the harvest in order to make up the difference between the million and the million-and-a-half.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We are still in negotiation with the Commonwealth Bank on the question of financing the pool. Everything is subject to the Government being given the necessary powers by means of this Bill. Before we can finalise any arrangement, either with the London County and Westminster Bank or with the Commonwealth Bank, those powers must be vested in us. Members will be pleased to learn that the rate of interest at which we can obtain assistance from London is favourable. Within the last day or two we have heard that the rate of interest will be lower than we have paid in the past, and that the rate is likely to fall still further within the next few weeks.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is good information.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I can also inform hon. members that it will be impossible to complete arrangements with the Commonwealth Bank pending the visit to Perth of the governing director, Sir Denison Miller, who will be here at the end of the month. It would have been foolish on the part of the Government to complete their London arrangements and practically commit themselves before the necessary legislative authority had been conferred on them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I thought you had done nothing to make sure of the position.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The position is quite safe. The member for North-East Fremantle made some interesting

observations on the out-turn of the stacks by the acquiring agents. He acquired information regarding that subject by a motion he moved here last session. I would like the House to understand that the information furnished to the hon. member referred to the number of bags.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I said so.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Quite true. The gain in weight on the 1918-19 season was 100,129 bushels. The gain in weight on the 1919-20 season was 25,080 bushels.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But if the weight of the bags is included, the gains will be much more.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: As to the proportion of gain due to acquisition of moisture, let me point out that during last February, practically the hottest month of the year—last February was a record hot month—we sent away a shipment of wheat by the steamer "Kratos." That cargo of wheat was consigned direct from the country sidings into the ship's hold. The out-turn at the other end, at Southampton, was short by 1,456 bushels, or approximately 39 tons. On that shipment, made at the height of summer, there was no gain in weight during transit. And there are many similar anomalies. There are anomalies, too, in tallying. In the case of a boat loaded at Bunbury the out-turn was 300 bags over the actual tally here. And so these instances go on. As to the controversy over the acquiring agency, let me say that the acquiring agents are paid absolutely and entirely out of the scheme funds. I have heard no complaints whatever from the shareholders—that is, the farmers—regarding the employment of the present acquiring agents. Both the management of the pool and the advisory board are satisfied that the work of the acquiring agents has been done well and creditably, and done at as low a charge as is consistent with good service—a charge, moreover, which compares favourably with the cost of the same work in the Eastern States.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Nobody complains about the charge; but if we can do the work for £15,000 less, we ought to.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In view of the additional work to be undertaken by the scheme this year in the way of chartering and shipping, there is no ground for not again employing the acquiring agents. As to other points which have been raised, I shall not reply now, since I presume they will come up again in Committee.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the best time to reply.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I hope that we shall be able to make this Bill so comprehensive as to deal with every section of the community interested in the wheat question, including the poultry farmers, who, I trust, will find a pretty free market for their requirements. By this measure we hope to satisfy all sections, though not any one section in particular. I trust that in Committee

there will be a spirit of reasonableness shown with respect to the many amendments which hon. members have foreshadowed. Let me conclude by expressing the hope that we shall succeed in enacting a measure which will prove of definite benefit to the State, and which will serve the interests of a scheme which under present conditions is vitally necessary.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. F. T. Brown—Beverley) [10.16] in moving the second reading said: Since the Factories and Shops Act came into operation it has been found that certain anomalies existed in that measure; hence the introduction of an amending Bill. The Bill is one which can be dealt with in Committee. The parent Act has worked fairly satisfactorily, but it has occasioned a considerable amount of labour since its provisions came into force. Since the proclamation of the measure in January last, the number of shops and warehouses registered totals 4,053, and the number of factories registered, 1,468. There are many yet to be registered, but owing to the limited number of inspectors we have, this work has not been completed. After the whole of the registrations have been made, the work will not be so difficult and there will not be so much to do, because a card system will be introduced, making it much easier for the officers to carry out their duties. I will briefly give the reasons for the various amendments that are included in the Bill. Under the Factories and Shops Act, 1920, factories which do not have any machinery in operation of more than one-horse power are exempt from the provisions of that measure. It is proposed to do away with the limitation of one-horse power so that the whole of the factories will be brought within the scope of the legislation. The carrying of this amendment will mean that another 90 factories will be registered. The next alteration deals with the payment of fees for registration. Under the present Act, shops are allowed a rebate of half the fee provided they are occupied after the 30th June. On the other hand, factories are charged four different classes of fees. If they register after the first quarter, they pay only three-quarters of the fee; if they register after the second quarter, they pay only half the fee, and so on. It has been found that factories starting on the 1st January have not been registered until after the first quarter, with the result that they have only paid three-quarters of the fee. It is proposed to put factories on the same basis as shops and warehouses, so that if they start operations in the first half-year they will pay the full fee, but if they start operations after the first six months, they will pay the half fee.

There is another amendment provided in the Bill which deals with public holidays. Section 4 of the Act defines Boxing Day as a public holiday, but under Section 42, dealing with holidays for women and boys employed in factories, Boxing Day is omitted. With this amendment, women and boys will be included and they will have a holiday on Boxing Day in common with the other employees. There is also a provision made for altering the recognised holiday from Eight Hours Day to Labour Day. The alteration regarding the celebration of Labour Day was made after the Act was agreed to by Parliament, and the amendment will substitute Labour Day for Eight Hours Day. There is also an alteration regarding King's Birthday and Foundation Day.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why alter that? It is the same as under the Public Service Act.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Under Section 42 of the Act, women and boys employed in factories are entitled to a holiday on King's Birthday. In many Arbitration Court awards and agreements, Foundation Day, the 1st June, is specified as a holiday, but King's Birthday, which falls two days later, is not included. The adoption of the amendment will entitle women and boys to a holiday on full pay on either of the days mentioned, but not on both during the reign of our present Sovereign, King George V.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Under the Public Service Act provision is made for both Foundation Day and King's Birthday.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There was an instance this year where factories were working, but the women and boys had to be given a holiday under Section 42.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Under some arbitration awards it is set out that the employees will get public holidays off, but under this amendment you will knock that provision out.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We will not knock it out. Under the existing Act the application of these sections means that many factories cannot operate on the day specified because the male employees are unable to continue working, owing to the absence of the women and boys. It is now provided that so long as the present Sovereign reigns, his birthday shall be celebrated on the 1st June. The women and boys will have a holiday on that day in common with the men.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is contrary to the Public Service Act.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Public Service Act has nothing to do with the Factories and Shops Act. Where an award is made, a common rule overrides it.

Mr. McCallum: This will have the effect of making one holiday less for the workers.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is not so.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Some awards merely specify public holidays.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: As a matter of fact, King's Birthday is generally celebrated on Foundation Day.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You are wrong there. The King's Birthday is celebrated on his birthday.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Not in recent years.

Mr. Willcock: Both holidays are held on the first Monday following.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is the position; that is what happened last year.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We tried it once in the public service and they claimed both days.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The holidays are set down in the awards governing factories and shops and they are also set down in the Factories and Shops Act itself, and we have to comply with the latter. There is another amendment dealing with boys and girls. At the present time a boy or a girl under 14 or 15 years of age respectively may not be employed in any factory. An amendment included in the Bill extends that provision to shops and warehouses as well. It is considered that we should have control over the children of the ages mentioned who are working in shops and warehouses, and by bringing them within the scope of the amendment, we will place factories, shops and warehouses on the same basis. There are two amendments dealing with Sections 102 and 106 of the Act. At the present time one nullifies the other. When the Act was going through Parliament originally provision was made under Section 102 for a late shopping night and there was provision under Section 106 for the holding of a poll. If we took a poll under Section 106 and it resulted in an affirmative vote, it would result in abolishing the late night in the districts outside the metropolitan area and the goldfields. The amendment will mean that an affirmative vote will result in the retention of the late shopping night in the country districts. The amendment in these two sections makes provision that when a poll is taken under Section 106 and the answer is in the affirmative, Saturday becomes the late shopping night to be observed in country districts. Provision is also made for registered small shops to remain open until 9 o'clock in districts where the late shopping night is observed. Under the Act they cannot remain open after 8 o'clock. There is a minor amendment in regard to the registration of shops. Under the Act, it is the shop—not the shopkeeper—which is registered. The Bill provides that the shopkeeper himself shall be registered. Under the existing system if the shopkeeper sells or transfers his business to somebody not eligible for registration, we are unable to do anything. The amendment will rectify that. Provision is also made to bring under the Act the proceedings relative to the taking of polls, so that they shall be in conformity with the Electoral Act. In most places the machinery is already available. The Act provides that the returning officer and his deputy shall be appointed by the Governor in Council, and shall in turn appoint presiding officers and poll clerks.

Under the Act we cannot compel hairdressers to close on public holidays. All that is provided is that the hairdressers may remain open from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. on a holiday observed on a Monday. We have no power to compel a hairdresser to close on a public holiday. The Bill provides that power.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Provides that they shall close all day?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Then, when the holiday falls on a Monday, nobody will be able to get a shave from the Saturday until the Tuesday.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Oh yes, the hairdresser can remain open from 8 a.m. till 10 a.m. on the Monday. Provision is also made to bring hairdressers into line with other businesses in a district where the late night obtains, or where the half holiday is observed on the Wednesday. At present hairdressers are compelled to close for half a day on Saturday, even in districts where the half holiday is observed on the Wednesday. This is rectified under the Bill. Provision is also made that, instead of being compelled to observe the half holiday on Saturday, the hairdressers can observe it on the Wednesday, in common with other businesses in the district. Another amendment provides that butchers' shops may open from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. on holidays observed on the Monday. Under the existing system they are not allowed to open at all on a holiday. It imposes hardship on hospitals, public houses and the like. There are one or two minor amendments which I need not now mention. The only other one of importance is in regard to wine licenses. Any business which has to be licensed under the Licensing Act does not have to register under the Factories and Shops Act. It escaped notice that wine licenses have to pay a license fee under the Licensing Act, and also have to be registered under the Factories and Shops Act. That was never intended. Provision is now made to rectify that. Then there is an alteration in the method of taking a poll. Instead of the papers being marked "yes" or "no," in future they will be marked with a cross, as provided in the Electoral Act. Those are the main amendments comprised in the measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. McCallum, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.38 p.m.