

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the report of the Auditor General for the year ended the 30th June, 1920, under the Audit Act, 1904. The report will lie on the Table of the House.

BILLS (3)—RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.

- 1, Meekatharra-Horseshoe Railway.
With amendments.
- 2, Herdsman's Lake Drainage.
- 3, Public Service Act Amendment.
Without amendment.

House adjourned at 11 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Monday, 20th December, 1920.

Questions: Kalgoorlie Deputations	...	...	Page
Finances and Legislation	...	...	2581
Motion: Water Supply, to disallow by-law	...	...	2581
Bills: Permanent Reserves, 3a.	...	...	2586
Narrogin Recreation Reserve, 3a.	...	...	2586
Navigation Act Amendment, 3a.	...	...	2586
Justices Act Amendment, 3a.	...	...	2586
Bayswater Drainage Works, 3a.	...	...	2586
Transfer of Land Act Amendment, 3a.	...	...	2586
Sale of Mangarine, Discharged	...	...	2586
Workers' Compensation Act Amendment, Report	...	...	2586
Divorce Act Amendment, Report	...	...	2586
Stamp Act Amendment, Com.	...	...	2587
Wheat Marketing, 2a., Com.	...	...	2587
Resolution: Returned Soldiers and Railway Passes, Assembly's Modification	...	...	2586

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTION—KALGOORLIE DEPORTATIONS.

Hon. T. MOORE (for Hon. A. H. Pantton), asked the Minister for Education: 1, Is the Minister aware that men have been threatened with deportation by returned soldiers in Kalgoorlie? 2, Is he aware that two railway employees were ordered out of the town? 3, Is it a fact that those two railway employees, having left the town under compulsion, have been dismissed from the service? 4, Has any report been received from the Police Department? 5, If so, what is the nature of the report? 6, Has any complaint been received by the Government from the trades

unionists in Kalgoorlie on this matter? 7, If so, is it the intention of the Government to take steps to maintain law and order in Kalgoorlie? 8, In view of the circumstances of the dismissal of the two men will the Government consider their re-instatement?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, No. The only advice the Government have received is contained in a letter from the secretary of the A.W.U. at Boulder and a report from the Inspector of Police at Kalgoorlie. 2, No. 3, No. Two railway employees have been dismissed for being absent from duty without leave. 4, Yes. 5, The Inspector of Police, Kalgoorlie, reports that a rumour was current that members of the Returned Soldiers' League intended to forcibly deport certain supposed leaders of the O.B.U. As a result of action taken by the Inspector nothing of the kind took place. 6, Yes. A letter from the secretary of the A.W.U., Boulder. 7, The Government will maintain law and order at all times. In this instance the law was not broken. 8, The decision in this case rests with the Railway Appeal Board, to whom one of the above-mentioned employees has already appealed.

QUESTION—FINANCES AND LEGISLATION.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN asked the Minister for Education: 1, Are the Stamp Act Amendment Bill, the Dividend Duties Act Amendment Bill, the Land and Income Tax Assessment Bills the only measures which the Government propose to submit to this House during this session, for the purpose of restoring the equilibrium between the expenditure of the State and the revenue of the State? 2, If not, what other measures are to be submitted?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: (1, and 2), Yes. Unless something unforeseen happens the deficit at the end of the financial year will be as estimated, £399,000, as against the deficit of £668,000 for last year. Under the circumstances additional taxation is not considered essential.

MOTION—WATER SUPPLY.

To disallow by-law.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [3.3]: I move—

That the amendment to By-law No. 112, made by the Minister for Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage, under the provisions of "The Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Act, 1909," and laid upon the Table of this House on the 15th of December instant be disallowed.

This is a small matter, but important. I regret having to bring it forward during the closing hours of the session, but unless I do so, the by-law, to which I wish to draw atten-

tion, will become law and have effect. We have to deal with a by-law or regulation within 14 days of it being placed upon the Table, if we desire it to be disallowed. We know that there is a shortage of water in Perth and I am sure no one desires to preclude the Minister or his officers from doing the best they can, to prevent an insufficiency of water being available for human consumption, and from prohibiting to some extent the use of water on gardens. This by-law, however, goes too far. It is sought to make this provision a permanent by-law prohibiting the use of water in the direction I have indicated unless it is repealed. It has to be repealed by the same process as that adopted in order to give it effect. It provides that the use of sprinklers shall be permanently prohibited unless this by-law is disallowed. The by-law reads—

No person, shall, after the publication of this by-law in the "Gazette," and so long as it continues in force, use water supplied under "The Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Act, 1909," in any place within the metropolitan water supply, sewerage, and drainage area, as constituted under the said Act, for watering lawns or gardens by means of mechanical or fixed sprinklers or any other mechanical contrivance, or by means of any temporarily fixed hose; except in the case of services to parks and reserves open to the public, services to bowling, cricket, golf and other sports grounds, and such other services as the Minister after due inquiry shall think fit to exempt. Any person who commits a breach of this by-law shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a penalty not exceeding Twenty pounds.

The shortage may be only a temporary one, and, as a matter of fact, it will be in that category. It is well known that after the hot spell passes, the reservoir is nearly empty, but after a few days of cool weather, the reservoir fills up again. It then becomes possible for people to use their sprinklers again and keep the gardens, which we need so much in Perth, growing as we would desire. That will be the position under the by-law as it stands. It does not matter whether there is water in the reservoir or not; the sprinklers are prohibited and the gardens which we desire to see must disappear. If the department were to promulgate a by-law, permitting some measure of discretion by the Minister, which would enable him to temporarily suspend the use of sprinklers, and allow them to be used later when circumstances warrant it, there could be no objection to the by-law. To make such a provision permanent, however, is going altogether too far. We have had a number of by-laws more or less stupid issued by this department. There was one, for instance, which provided that no person was allowed to put a washer on his tap without infringing the law. This by-law is another. The House should take this opportunity to disallow the by-law

and suggest that if the Minister desires a by-law to temporarily prevent the use of sprinklers, he should make another one and use his discretion enabling householders to use the water for their gardens as circumstances warrant.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I second the motion.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [3.6]: I trust the House will not agree to this motion. If we do so, members will find that it is not such a small matter at all, but a particularly important one. It will mean that instead of persons being restricted in the use of sprinklers for watering their gardens, many people will have to go without water altogether. As to the suggestion that this by-law is permanent, there is no permanency about it. The by-law is in force and will continue while it is necessary. Directly the necessity ceases, it will be repealed. There is no desire on the part of the Government or the department to restrict the use of water. On the contrary, it is their desire to have water used.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Will it be repealed by a notice in the "Government Gazette"?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes, in the same manner as it was gazetted originally, and it can be repealed just as quickly as it was gazetted. I will quote what happened during November, which will give a fair indication of what has happened during the summer. The records show that the average supply drawn from the hills water supply was 2,453,000 gallons. The total available from the bores was 5,855,000 gallons, making a total average daily supply available of both hills and bore water, of 8½ millions. The average consumption for the whole month was about 8½ millions per day. Thus, a daily shortage of a quarter of a million gallons was recorded throughout the month of November. It was necessary to meet the shortage and this was done by drawing on the reserves at the service and storage reservoirs. During the hot spell, the November consumption became abnormal, and on the 19th November it reached 9½ million gallons, which is a million gallons in excess of the daily supply. The consumption went up steadily until on the 23rd November it was over 11 million gallons, or 2½ million gallons in excess of the daily supply; and it continued to average from 8¾ millions to over 10 million gallons until the 4th December, when these new regulations came into force. That was the day the restrictions were introduced. The highest consumption since that date was on Wednesday, the 8th December, when it was 9¼ millions. That will show that a saving as compared with the highest consumption in November of three-quarters of a million gallons, which was achieved through the agency of these restrictions. From the 5th to the 17th the average was 8¼ million gallons. This shows that as a result of these restrictions we were just able to come within the limits of the supply. At the time the

regulations were introduced, it was imperative that something should be done immediately. The water in the main service reservoir had fallen 16 feet and there was only 16 feet in the reservoir, which has a total depth of 22 feet. This represents a reserve of $2\frac{1}{4}$ million gallons. The reservoir at Mt. Hawthorn which serves North Perth and Mt. Lawley had also fallen to 15 feet 6 inches, which only left $1\frac{1}{4}$ million gallons in that particular reservoir. The reservoirs at Claremont and Fremantle also fell rapidly. Since these restrictions have been in force the reservoirs have shown a slight increase. In the main storage reservoirs there was on Friday last nearly seven million gallons in the Mt. Hawthorn and Mt. Eliza reservoirs, showing an improvement with these restrictions. These restrictions are not particularly arduous. The by-law to which exception is taken, does not prevent people from watering their gardens but only prevents the use of fixed or mechanical hoses. Anyone can use his hose on his garden as much as he desires. By the imposition of this restriction, the position has been retrieved. There is not the slightest doubt that had these restrictions not been imposed, the water supply would have been exhausted. On the 22nd, 23rd and 24th of November the consumption was over ten millions per day and as the temperatures increase in January and February, the consumption becomes greater than in November. From the figures in the last annual report it is shown that the consumption in January, 1920, averaged $9\frac{1}{2}$ million gallons per day, as against $9\frac{1}{2}$ million gallons for November of that year. This November has been particularly hot and perhaps the consumption during the month will show an increase over the normal consumption for the month, but without these restrictions the water supply would have been depleted. It is expected that $9\frac{1}{2}$ million gallons per day will be the consumption during the months of January and February, and if watering is freely allowed with the use of sprinklers and fixed hoses, it is certain that a great many of the residents in the metropolitan area will be left without water. The department has done what it could to meet the situation pending the construction of the large scheme from the hills, regarding which the report of the visiting engineer, Mr. Ritchie, of the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works, was laid on the Table some little time ago. Boring has been proceeding and during the coming week it is expected that from 300,000 to 400,000 gallons will be added to the daily supply, as a result of operations at Osborne Park. It is hoped that the electrical power mains will be installed and pumping plant in position in time to increase the supply towards the end of January or the beginning of February by at least a million gallons per day. If that is done, it may be possible to remove this restriction. This new bore has struck water at the comparatively shallow depth of 700 feet. The water has a temperature of only 76 de-

grees, so it will be much more palatable and altogether better for the gardens than water from deeper bores, which usually has a temperature of over 100 degrees. In every other capital city of the Commonwealth, except Melbourne, which has been fairly well supplied, it has been found necessary from time to time to restrict the water consumption to even a greater extent than here. Last summer the restrictions in Adelaide were very much more severe than ours, and in Sydney, too, restrictions were imposed, although this year late rains have rendered it unnecessary. In Brisbane last year the use of water for gardening, bowling greens and the like was entirely prohibited, and even nurseries and market gardens were placed under restrictions. The present regulation does not prevent people from keeping their gardens alive, but merely curtails the indiscriminate use of water. It is common knowledge to the officers of the department that many who ordinarily use sprinklers allow them to stand for 10 or 12 hours in one spot. That is where a big percentage of the water is consumed. The position is, are we going to restrict that particular form of the use of water, or are we going to run short and have to restrict the domestic supply? If the by-law is annulled, the department will have no option to introducing further by-laws adopting a more objectionable form of curtailment, as for instance, the prohibition of all use of water during certain hours. Before the regulation came into force, people on the higher land were complaining every day that they could get no water at all. Since the regulation has been in force, the complaints from those people have fallen by 50 or 60 per cent. I put it to the house that in the first place there is not sufficient water to meet the demand. The question then arises, how are we to eke out the supply? Shall it be by simply preventing the wasteful use of water on lawns and gardens while we have water at all for their upkeep, nothing could be more desirable—by fixed sprinklers, or by restricting the consumption for domestic purposes, by cutting off all water during certain hours of the day? Just so soon as an increased supply of water is rendered available by the means I have enumerated, the by-law will be repealed. In the meantime it is the least objectionable method of restricting the use of water.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [8.19]: Everybody knows there is a shortage of water, and that the people living in the higher localities have been penalised in consequence. If anybody is to blame for the shortage of water it is those charged with the administration of the department. All that they have done by way of providing a supply is to exploit the subterranean basin, the water from which is positively harmful to gardens. In my locality, within a radius of a mile, there is no public grassed area on which children can play. In consequence everybody in that

locality tries to maintain his own little plot of grass. The water service out there has not been improved during the last three or four years, although no other locality in the metropolitan area has gone ahead to so marked an extent. There being a shortage of supply, it is necessary that some restriction should be placed on the use of water. No man should have water to burn when another cannot get water to drink. The householder has to submit to inconvenience if he would keep up his lawns, while bowling greens, gold links and racccourses, none of which serve children, have water ad lib. I agree with the free use of water on public parks, so long as it does not encroach upon the domestic supply. Because I have time to spare, I am using more water through my hose than I would use through my sprinkler. I suggest to the Minister that the regulation should be modified to the extent of permitting the use of mechanical sprinklers during certain hours of the night, say between 8 o'clock and 12 o'clock. Even to-day mechanical sprinklers are being extensively used on the sly. I am not doing it, because my sprinkler is only a poor one. If this regulation could be modified in the direction I suggest, it would serve to alleviate the situation. Watering by night is very much more effective than by day; indeed the gentleman who is content to apply bore water to his garden during daylight hours, is only doing his garden harm.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [3.28]: In seconding the motion it was not in my mind to disparage the Water Supply Department, but I felt that the motion would afford a good opportunity for ventilating this question, which is of considerable importance. We cannot expect anybody to go without water for domestic purposes. On the other hand, although the Minister speaks in casual fashion about gardens, as if they could be watered one day, let go for a week and built up again in a day or two, we know that the development of a garden frequently requires months if not years, and affords very much pleasure to the owner. One is not always in a position to water his garden by hand, for it takes a considerable time. Mr. Cornell has shown us how easily small places may be injured by the want of water. I desire to learn why no provision has been made ere this to supply us with water. The Minister has told us of all the efforts now being made to increase the water supply. But why was it not all done long ago? Last year we were restricted to watering during certain hours; yet no provision has been made for this shortage, except what we are told is now to be made, when it is virtually too late. The justification advanced for not having provided an adequate water supply here is that it has not been done in other places, and that no other city except Melbourne has an ample supply. That is no justification, and in the circumstances it would be well if the water supply officials took some cognizance of a

debate of this kind and endeavoured, before next year, to provide a good supply for the citizens of Perth. The little decorations around the houses are of very great importance; they are a very refining influence, they are very attractive in appearance and they form a very genial and nice occupation for those who take pleasure in them, and one can understand the disappointment of a person who has laboured and laboured to bring his garden to a state of perfection and who finds that, for want of a little water during the hottest period of the year, his lawns and gardens wilt and die. I hope the motion will not have any disastrous effects, but my object in seconding it was merely to ventilate the fact that no provision has been made to provide an adequate supply this year, which provision should have been made and which is only now contemplated when it is too late.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [3.31]: Every member who has spoken recognises the importance of giving the fullest support to the Minister in charge of the Water Supply Department. At the same time, members naturally wish to see that whatever regulations are framed are framed in a manner which will give the public fair treatment and a maximum of that supply so essential for the maintenance of the beauty spots around houses in which the owners or occupiers delight. I am at one with members in the wish to give support to the Minister, and I realise that Mr. Lovekin, in moving his motion, is in no way opposed to that desire. I take it that what he wants is that there shall be some modification in the regulation now propounded, and this is only reasonable.

Hon. A. Lovekin: A more elastic regulation.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Precisely. The hon. member is not seeking to take from the Minister the power to regulate the supply, so that he may be able to provide for the public generally that domestic supply which is the first essential. I venture to think that some modification of this regulation could be introduced.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The Minister said it could be cancelled at any minute.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I admit that, but the moment it is cancelled the regulation would be of no use, and a new regulation would have to be propounded when Parliament was not in session. It would be better to adopt Mr. Lovekin's suggestion to give the Minister power to prohibit from time to time the use of sprinklers and mechanical contrivances during such period as he thinks proper and of which he would give notice.

The Minister for Education: He has that power now.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That being the case, I do not see why he should enforce a regulation which in itself is unyielding in its influence. He should exercise the power, which the leader of the House states he possesses, to prevent the use of sprinklers, and give notice to that effect, so that people will

not use the water to the detriment of the domestic supply. No one wishes to embarrass the Minister; I am sure the mover of the motion has no such intention. If the debate were adjourned, with a view to seeing whether the regulation might be modified, the whole difficulty might be overcome.

The Minister for Education: The regulation may be removed as soon as the circumstances permit.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It might be modified now to make it a little more elastic.

The Minister for Education: It cannot be modified without imposing restrictions in other directions.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It would be well worth a few minutes consultation if the difficulty could be obviated. The regulation affects my district, but I realise that we have to assist the Minister to do what is best in the very difficult and trying circumstances which exist, and which I hope will be obviated when the new supply is forthcoming. As Sir Edward Wittenoom suggested, this debate should serve to show to the Minister the necessity for making preparations at once to instal a supply which will render similar regulations unnecessary in future.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban): I move—

That the debate be adjourned till this day week.

Motion put and negatived.

Hon. J. MILLS (Central) [3.36]: This discussion on the shortage of water for flower gardens, lawns, etc., in the city of Perth has brought home to me more clearly than anything has ever done before how the people of the metropolitan area are cosseted and catered for, while people in the country districts are neglected. Geraldton is the second or third largest sea-port town in the State and it is without a water supply of any description whatever, notwithstanding that the residents have been clamouring for one for many years past. Yet, while that state of affairs exists, we have a big discussion here regarding the shortage of water for the lawns and gardens of city dwellers. I am with the Government absolutely, and I hope that before they go in for any further expense to increase the water supply of Perth they will cater for the country districts which are without water supplies. Geraldton has no water supply. At Port Hedland the people are carting water for 50 miles by train for domestic use and not for lawns and flower gardens. What would the people of Perth think if they had to put up with similar difficulties? I shall certainly support the Minister.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [3.39]: I have risen to speak largely on account of the remarks of Mr. Mills. Collie, which is in the district I represent, is in a very serious position indeed owing to its water supply, and this being so, it requires the attention

of the Minister for Water Supply just as well as does the city of Perth. The people of that town run the risk of being poisoned on account of the water supplied there. Perhaps I am not quite in order in making this reference, but I certainly think the Minister should be allowed to do what he thinks is best in the interests of conserving the supply. At the same time I would ask him to extend his attention to those districts which, at the present time, are in a very sad state, and which will be practically without water during the summer months.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan—in reply) [3.40]: The remarks which have fallen from Mr. Mills and Mr. Ewing are entirely beside the question. We all sympathise with the country districts in the matter of their water supplies, but the metropolitan area is in quite a different position, inasmuch as it has a scheme which pays interest and sinking fund and shows a profit on the water supplied. In these circumstances, it is a scandal that for so many years, we have been without an adequate supply when there was a demand for the water at a big profit, and when the pipes were available to supply it to the users.

Hon. J. Ewing: Whose fault was that?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: The Minister, in proposing the motion to disallow this by-law, has, as usual, endeavoured to camouflage the whole question. I did not suggest that there was no shortage, and I did not suggest that we should hamper the Minister. I realised that there was a shortage and I sympathised with the Minister in his efforts to maintain the supply for domestic purposes. The point I did make, and on which the Minister has not touched at all, was that I wanted this by-law made more elastic, or left more to the discretion of the Minister. The leader of the House said that this by-law could be brought in to-day and repealed to-morrow. Then, of course, it could be brought in again and repealed once more. Whether the reservoir is full or not, largely depends on the weather conditions. I have been to the reservoir. One day I was there the water was down to 5ft. and a few days later, after a cool spell, the water was nearly to the top again. This shows that there is no need for a permanent regulation of this kind. I suggest that a regulation be framed which will give the Minister more discretion. By publishing a notice in the newspapers he could—

The Minister for Education: It would be necessary to amend the Act to do that.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I do not think that is so. The Minister has to publish the regulations in the "Gazette," which is issued once a week. Meanwhile he could give notice to the public through the newspapers that for a few days the use of sprinklers would be disallowed. Then, when the reservoir filled up again, he could announce that people were at liberty to use the sprinklers again until further notice.

The Honorary Minister: But the people are using the maximum quantity of water now.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: The hon. member does not see the point. I think I understand the question. It is perfectly plain that if the reservoir is full of water, the water is therefore for use and can be used. If the reservoir is nearly empty, the consumption of water must be restricted. As I have pointed out, I saw the reservoir on one day, with the water down to 5ft.—a very small quantity for the metropolitan area—and a few days later, after a cool spell, the reservoir was full and the water should have been available for garden and other purposes. There was ample water to go round. Instead of having a fixed regulation which, if an alteration were required two or three days hence would have to be repeated, we should have an elastic regulation giving the Minister more discretion. No one would complain of giving the Minister full discretion, so that at very short notice he could say, "You may or you may not use sprinklers." This is my object in moving to disallow the regulation which is a permanent regulation, and for asking the department to bring in another regulation which is more elastic. I have no desire whatever to hamper the Minister. I realise that he has his duty to perform, and I realise that there is a shortage of water during the spells of hot weather.

Question put and negatived.

BILLS (6)—THIRD READINGS.

- 1, Permanent Reserves.
 - 2, Narrogin Recreation Reserve.
 - 3, Navigation Act Amendment.
 - 4, Justices Act Amendment.
 - 5, Bayswater Drainage Works.
 - 6, Transfer of Land Act Amendment.
- Passed.

BILL—SALE OF MARGARINE.

Order Discharged.

On motion by the Minister for Education Order of the Day for the second reading of this Bill discharged.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—DIVORCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—STAMP ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 17th December; Hon. J. Ewing in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 59:

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move an amendment—

That in line 8 of the first paragraph, after the word "security" the word "or" be struck out and "and" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I suggest that these words "the Bills of Sale Act, 1899, or any other Act relating to the registration of securities" be struck out. I am advised that the words will lead to difficulties. A bill of sale sets out the maximum of the advance, and must therefore be stamped for the full amount. Would the Minister postpone the clause and look into this point, and see whether or not these words conflict with other portions of the Act itself?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I have no objection to allowing this matter to stand over for inquiry, or to make similar inquiries into any other amendments the hon. member may have to move.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I desire to move a new clause at the end of the Bill to provide that all future prints of the Stamp Act shall be consolidated.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I desire to move a new clause also, with regard to trust funds.

On motion by the Minister for Education further consideration of Clause 2 postponed until after the consideration of Clause 7.

Clauses 3 to 7—agreed to.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Under the Factories Bill we exempted stamp duties under declarations. This is not provided here and may lead to difficulties. I draw the attention of the Minister to the fact.

Progress reported.

RESOLUTION—RETURNED SOLDIERS AND RAILWAY PASSES.

Assembly's Amendment.

Message from the Assembly notifying the Council that it had agreed to the resolution subject to an amendment that, after sub-paragraph (a) of paragraph 2 the following words be added:—" (3) Grant to ex-members of the A.I.F. free railway transit for one year, provided that they are," now considered:

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [3.59]: I desire to extend to hon. members in this and another place the thanks of returned soldiers for the manner in which they have received this motion. These thanks will be supplemented by the returned soldiers outside both Houses of Parliament. I propose to accept the modification made by the Assembly. Paragraphs (b) and (c) have been agreed to with a proviso which is in conformity with the motion itself. Our hope is that in

the interim the Federal Government will recognise their responsibility in this matter, a responsibility which has been put up to them by the Returned Soldiers' Association. I move—

That the Assembly's amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous sitting.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM (North-East) [4.2]: The object of this Bill is to extend the operation of the existing Wheat Marketing Acts. The Honorary Minister's speech in moving the second reading left me rather disappointed, as I had expected to hear from him something on the subject of the fixation of 9s. as the price of wheat for local consumption for the next 12 months. We know that the Honorary Minister has put in most of his time on the business of administering the Wheat Marketing Acts.

The Honorary Minister: Nothing like it!

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: We know that he has attended a number of conferences in the Eastern States, conferences which were also attended by the Premiers of some of the Eastern States and by the Ministers of Agriculture of other Eastern States. We know that some little time ago, as a result of one of these conferences, the price of wheat for home consumption was fixed at 9s. per bushel. I expected to hear the Honorary Minister give the House his confidence on this subject. I expected him to throw some light on the reasons which brought about this action of the conference. But on that point we have heard nothing from him. The matter is one which, even if the Honorary Minister passes over it lightly, should be prominent in the minds of members of this Chamber. Members generally are well aware that throughout the English speaking world the price of wheat has experienced a considerable fall. We know what has occurred in the old country in that regard. We know also that this season's Indian wheat crop shows a huge surplus for export. The same remark applies to Canada. As regards Australia, we have the assurance of the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth that this continent will have an exportable surplus of about 90 million bushels. I will admit that the cable reports regarding the grain position elsewhere have been meagre, but we have sufficient evidence that the price of wheat has dropped very appreciably. In view of that fact I consider that something ought to be done in Australia, which has grown such a huge exportable surplus, in the interests of the general community, rather than that the Australian Wheat Board should fix the record price of 9s. for wheat for home consumption. The efforts of the board should, in preference, have been

directed towards arriving at a figure which would be just to the consumer. I trust that the Honorary Minister, when replying, will throw some light on this subject. He should let us know on what principle, or on what premises, or on what basis the Prime Minister and other Ministers attending the conference proceeded in order to arrive at the price of 9s. The matter is one which concerns every member of the House. The people of Australia, and particularly of Western Australia, want to know why, in view of the bountiful harvest, the price of wheat to them has been fixed at 9s., notwithstanding that throughout the war and up to the present time they have obtained their wheat for home consumption at a far lower figure. Only a few weeks ago the Parliamentary representatives of the farmers, and also the farmers themselves, were asking for world's parity for this season's crop. To-day we hear never a word about world's parity. What we do hear, and what we are definitely told, is that the price of wheat for home consumption has been fixed at 9s. per bushel not for three months, or for six months, but for 12 months. World's parity has gone by the board absolutely. The people who only a few weeks ago were so anxious to secure world's parity for their wheat have now dropped world's parity overboard, and have definitely fixed the price at 9s. per bushel. That action calls for some explanation. If world's parity was good enough a few weeks ago, it should be good enough at all events for the immediate future so far as the wheat growers of this State are concerned. However, it seems to be a matter of demanding world's parity when prices are good, and of calling on the general taxpayer of Australia to subsidise the farming industry when prices are not so good. Recent history tells us that the general taxpayer of Western Australia, and he alone, through the Industries Assistance Board enabled the wheat growers of this State to carry on during the last four or five years.

Hon. H. Stewart: The farmers would not have needed assistance if they had had world's parity.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Probably that is so, but they could not get world's parity. There were no boats to carry the wheat, and, therefore, the farmers had to fall back on the general taxpayer. While I will not say absolutely that the price for wheat for local consumption has been fixed too high, I will say that the manner in which it has been fixed is such as to leave the majority of the people who are concerned entirely in the dark as to the basis on which that price was arrived at.

Hon. J. Cornell: We know that the price has been fixed by the growers.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Exactly. We know that the growers have the right, through their representation on the Australian Wheat Board, to fix the price of the commodity that they sell. So far as I know, the wheat grow-

ers are the only people in Australia enjoying such a privilege. The traders of this State have their prices fixed for them by the Prices Regulation Commission; and they are not empowered to elect representatives on that Commission to fix the prices of their commodities and articles of trade. The primary producer, however, the wheat grower, has the power, through direct representation on the Australian Wheat Board, to fix the price of his own product. I am not blaming the Honorary Minister at all. I know that the Honorary Minister has to carry out his instructions. I also recognise that he is a member of the Country party, and, therefore, responsible to the Country party. It is no doubt by those considerations that his actions relative to fixing the price of wheat have been guided.

The Honorary Minister: No.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: We do not know anything definite, because we have not been taken into the Honorary Minister's confidence on this subject. We are completely in the dark. I hope to get to know at least some of the facts on which the Honorary Minister and those associated with him have fixed the price of wheat for home consumption at 9s. a bushel. I know that a similar Bill to this has come before Parliament yearly for the past three or four years, and that on every occasion this House has seen fit to pass the measure. When this Bill gets into Committee, however, I shall move the insertion of a proviso to protect the interests of the consumers in this State. I am confident hon. members, when they have given the matter consideration, will recognise the necessity for doing something to protect the people generally in this matter. So far, we have had no justification from the Honorary Minister for the fixing of the price on which I have commented.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [4.13]: The Bill which we are asked to pass is practically a re-enactment of existing legislation. It may be described as an annual. Whenever this measure comes up for consideration, I derive a certain satisfaction from the reflection that on the original introduction of the measure into Parliament there was opposition from almost every wheat grower in the State. The farmers and their Parliamentary representatives were at first utterly opposed to the idea of a wheat pool. However, the idea of pooling wheat has evidently come to stay. Certain hon. members have seen the error of their ways, and very many of their constituents have also seen the error of their ways. The pooling of wheat under the abnormal circumstances which prevailed at the initiation of the system was possible only by reason of the collective financial backing of the States and of the Commonwealth as a whole. The position which then presented itself was that to all intents and purposes the wheat farmers of Australia were growing wheat which, the outlook indicated, would probably have to be converted into manure so far as the supply of grain exceeded the normal local consumption,

which I admit is fairly large. The seas were not open; shipping was not available in any true sense of the word. Indeed, the seas were closed, and the question of who was going to control the shipping of the world and also the farmers of Australia was then wavering in the balance. There are two factors which we will hear of to-day, or probably later on in the discussion of the Bill, that though the collective credit of the Commonwealth was used to finance the wheat growers, they lost nothing, inasmuch as the pool met all its obligations and paid all expenses. Granted that is so. But I have said that the pool was only launched and kept in operation by the collective credit of the Commonwealth, and the only valid reason why the wheat never left the shores of Australia was vested in the men who kept this country free when they fought on the battlefields. That is the chief reason why the pool has been a success. If you follow the history of this pool through the Commonwealth and you follow politics, and you follow what has happened, you find that the pool has had a curious history, and that it has had a remarkable faculty for bringing about silence in a certain political party, where uproar and noise was their chief prerogative. The Prime Minister early in the piece said so far as the Federal Government were concerned, that they did not intend to carry out the operations of the pool as heretofore, and intimated that that was the function of the collective wheat growers of the States, plus the State Governments. The wheat growers had become imbued with the efficacy of the pool, and they petitioned the Prime Minister to make it compulsory for every farmer to put wheat into the pool. Whatever may be said to the credit or discredit of the Prime Minister, this can be said: that he shoved them the door. We find that the various States made all arrangements in connection with the pool. That was a comparatively easy matter, inasmuch as all existing machinery was there, and it only needed to be carried on. They were going to do everything without the financial backing of the Commonwealth. Then taking into consideration the action of the primary producer members, in the national legislature, we find that for weeks and weeks, owing to the peculiar circumstances of the political parties in the House of Representatives, the Prime Minister, through the antics and actions of the primary producers who were connected with this pool, was at his wit's ends to carry on his Government. However, he had more brains than they gave him credit for, and they found in the final analysis that it was money and not noise that made the mare to go. We find that though the primary producers and their representatives decided to continue the wheat pool, under existing conditions, they could not raise the money to do so. They went to the Prime Minister. Evidently he had his price, for that section of the primary producers' representatives in the Federal Parliament who were making all the noise have been silent ever since. They have not been heard of since, not as the noisy sec-

tion that they were prepared to be. Next we find a curious agitation in connection with which the by-word or the password was "world's parity," a password even to take you into an agricultural hotel. We find they all wanted world's parity, but now that parrot phrase or cry is no longer needed. A meeting was held in Melbourne, and at that meeting the question of parity was dropped, and a fixed price for wheat per bushel throughout the Commonwealth was arrived at for one year. That fixed price was 9s. I say, and I have always said, that the best indicator and perhaps the only indicator in such a world wide commodity as wheat, that would satisfy the producer of the wheat is the world's parity. That is where the price is regulated and where all sellers get from day to day the same parity plus the cost of transport and all other things. I would have no objection if, from month to month, the farmer got for his products sold in this State, the world's parity, minus the cost of transport, insurance and freight. But it has been agreed that he is to get 9s. a bushel for 12 months. Those who have made it possible for the farmer to pool his wheat and to carry on are advancing something in the vicinity of 30 millions, and they are placed in this position that they pay the 9s. within the State whether the price goes up to 10s. or falls to 4s. In a sense it is give and take. The chance has to be taken, whether or not the world's parity declines. So much for that. The man who has to eat the wheat was not represented on the tribunal that agreed to the 9s. per bushel. That tribunal was composed of wheat growers and politicians. I know the representative of the New South Wales farmers and growers, and there is no man that I have greater respect for, but he is representing the growers.

The PRESIDENT: Is the hon. gentleman alluding to the Bill?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I desire to lead up to the position that something has occurred in connection with the Wheat Marketing Bill which will become law in this State of ours, and that there is no reference to it in the Bill.

The PRESIDENT: An omission in the Bill?

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes, and by a peculiar set of circumstances the people of this State will be compelled to obey a law which is not a Statute law, and has not had the consideration of Parliament. There is no provision in the Bill for the appointment of the growers' commission who will fix the price at 9s. a bushel for the next 12 months. I have said that those who have fixed the price are growers and politicians, and though the Bill has come to stay, I hope it will not remain long if those who are interested are the people who will frame the law that will be binding on the community. Those people have had no consideration whatever. It is advantageous to the grower to get the best price, and it is advantageous to the politician that he should not displease the grower. I object to the way in

which this business has been carried out. I want to know where the potato grower comes in and where other growers come in, whose produce would be subject to the operation of the Prices Regulation Commission.

The PRESIDENT: I am giving the hon. member a lot of latitude, but I do not think I can allow him to continue in this way. I would like him to connect his remarks with the Bill under discussion.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The staple product, the essential product that this Bill deals with, is, so to speak, cornered, and has to be sold at a fixed price, at a flat rate, and those who are called upon to eat this commodity, have had no say in the matter, either through their representatives or through Parliament, whereas in connection with every other commodity, the position has been entirely different. I desire to enter my protest that there is no provision in the Bill whereby we can deal with the sale of wheat for local consumption. I have an amendment on the Notice Paper and I propose during the Committee stage to ask members to agree to a provision which will place discharged soldiers in that paramount position they held during the war and extend to them consideration regarding the handling of wheat.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South) [4.32]: There are a few things I wish to say regarding this Bill, which seeks to give the Westralian Farmers Ltd. the handling of the wheat harvest. I have said here before, and I repeat this afternoon, that I consider the farmer is entitled to as much consideration as the manufacturer. I have always had a certain amount of consideration and sympathy for the farmers in any undertaking which will give him the benefit in the world's market. When we have regard to the consideration shown to every other industry, I do not think we can afford too much assistance to the farming community, although I believe that the public is also entitled to full consideration. Some time ago I asked the leader of the House several questions as to whether preference to returned soldiers would be considered in any agreement made by the Government with outside bodies. I particularly mentioned the Wheat Marketing Bill. On that occasion the leader of the House said that it would be done. I do not see any reference in the Bill, or in the schedule, under which preference may be given to returned soldiers. I think the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are to be complimented upon the endeavours they have made to assist the farming community by way of co-operation. During the last 12 months, however, since the late manager, Mr. Murray, went to England, matters in connection with that firm have not been as satisfactory as formerly, with regard to the treatment of returned soldiers. After Mr. Murray went to England a manager was appointed who, I believe, was a man of enemy origin. He made things unpleasant for the returned soldiers employed by the firm.

Hon. J. Cornell: I should think he would take advantage of the opportunity.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I would like to ask how many returned soldiers were discharged while that individual was in charge of the firm?

Hon. H. Stewart: Who was that man?

Hon. J. E. DODD: I have a great regard for Mr. Murray, who, I believe, has recently been reappointed managing director. I went on the recruiting committee with that gentleman and I believe he would be willing to give every possible consideration to the returned soldiers of the State. Seeing that he has been reappointed, I think the position regarding returned soldiers will be much better in the future. During the past 12 months at least, the returned soldiers have not had a fair deal from the Westralian Farmers Ltd. Seeing that we are handling over the whole arrangements for the wheat harvest to the Westralian Farmers Ltd., I think we should insert the amendment which Mr. Cornell has given notice of, not only to secure preference to returned soldiers, but to provide that there shall be no discrimination against them. That is what I am afraid has happened regarding this company. I have frequently stated my opinion as to the handling of the wheat by private firms. I know what those firms have made out of the farmers and out of the workers, and I shall always be willing to give the farmers' co-operative company all possible consideration in managing their own affairs. I shall support the second reading of the Bill and, if present, will endeavour to secure the passage of Mr. Cornell's amendment.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Ewing in the Chair; the Honorary Minister (Hon. C. F. Baxter) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Extension of Acts to wheat harvested in 1920-21:

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I move an amendment—

That the following further proviso be added to the clause:—Provided also that wheat acquired under the agency agreement authorised by this Act, or under any agency agreement ratified by "The Wheat Marketing Act, 1916," or any Act extending the operation thereof, and made available for local consumption shall be sold at a price or prices, wholesale or retail, as the case may be, not to exceed the price or prices if any, lawfully fixed under "The Prices Regulation Act, 1919," and applicable to the sale; but if no such price is fixed, or a sale takes place elsewhere than in an area proclaimed under that Act, the price to be charged for such wheat on the sale thereof, shall not exceed 7s. 8d. per bushel. Penalty: One hundred pounds.

We have a Prices Regulation Commission to fix prices in connection with the wholesale or retail trade. I desire to bring under the jurisdiction of the Commission the power of fixing the price of wheat for local consumption. It is not to the advantage of the people of Western Australia that an agreement should be entered into and the price of wheat fixed by a tribunal sitting in the Eastern States, on which the consumers of the State are not directly represented. In justice to the consuming public, it would be fairer if the price for local consumption were fixed by the Prices Regulation Commission. The proviso sets out that wheat for local consumption shall not be sold at a figure in excess of that fixed by the Prices Regulation Commission, or if not fixed by that body, shall not exceed 7s. 8d. per bushel.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I oppose the amendment. I regret that I missed the opportunity to reply to questions raised by members during the second reading debate. I was discussing matters with the leader of the House and missed my opportunity. Some members have asked how the price of 9s. was arrived at. A conference of representatives of the Governments in the wheat producing States was called. The conference sat in Melbourne and, after a long discussion, decided to acquire enough wheat for the coming year for the different States. A request was placed before the Australian Wheat Board, who were asked to quote a price. The board asked for 9s. per bushel and that price was accepted. In arriving at that decision the board considered what sales they had effected and they had up to that time sold a very large quantity. The Bill confers only the power to market, and arrange for the transport of, wheat. The sales we have made at 9s. per bushel, deliveries of which extend over the coming year, have been made to eight or nine different countries. This shows that the price of wheat is practically stabilised for the coming year. It would not be reasonable to suppose that all the wheat purchasing countries, including Great Britain, would make purchases at 10s. per bushel if there were not a very great likelihood of that price being maintained. Hon. members have said that the price should be fixed from time to time on world's parity. The first to be found objecting to that would be those members who advocate it. If it were applied to wheat for local consumption it would mean 10s. 2d. per bushel.

Hon. J. Cunningham: Where did you get that information?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I get weekly reports of the whole of the world's wheat markets, and I am constantly notified of the positions of the markets of Chicago and England, which are two of the most important. There was no complaint when, in the early stages of the scheme, wheat was being sold at from 3d. to 6d. per bushel below world's prices, no complaint last year, when wheat was sold at 7s. 8d. per

bushel as against the average world's price of 9s. The farmers of this State realised 9s. a bushel for the wheat sold overseas last year, and supplied wheat for home consumption at 7s. 8d. Even at the present time they are giving the local consumers that benefit. On the facts before us, it is reasonable to assume that the average price of wheat next year will be 9s. per bushel. Some hon. members seem to think it a crime that the wheat growers should expect world's parity, notwithstanding that everybody else gets world's parity.

Hon. J. Cunningham: Then why did not the farmers stick out for it?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Boots and many other commodities are sold to the local consumer at prices much above world's parity. The wheat-grower has to pay world's parity for all that he requires, yet hon. members would deny him world's parity for his product. Of course the present price looks high, but we have only to go back a few years to see that in one season the wheat-grower did not get his seed, and that for the next two years he got very poor returns indeed.

Hon. V. Hamersley: He got only 2s. 6d. and 3s. per bushel.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, I myself have sold wheat at 2s. 3d. per bushel. It takes a few years to pick up those bad seasons. We know that many of the clients of the Industries Assistance Board are making good. But what is that to those who have been on bare necessities for the last ten or twelve years? What would be said if it were proposed to confiscate portion of the earnings of our merchants and doctors and lawyers?

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: In regard to the merchants you have already done that through the Prices Regulation Commission.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Nothing of the sort. The merchant's profit has been there every year. All that the farmers are asking for is world's parity. At present 9s. is below world's parity. What prompted the Premiers of South Australia and New South Wales to call the conference was the danger that the price should get too high before the thing was settled.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Suppose the world's parity falls to 5s.?

The HONORARY MINISTER: There is no chance of its coming down to that.

Hon. J. Cunningham: How do you know?

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is much more likely to rise to 14s. than to fall to 5s. There is still a shortage of wheat in the world. The price cannot come down to any great extent until Russia resumes wheat-growing.

Hon. T. Moore: Is there any price-fixing in Canada?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, the Canadian people are urging the Government to institute a pool, because it is badly needed. In the Argentine wheat was sold at

a few shillings per bushel and had to be repurchased at 14s. a bushel.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: What objection is there to the Prices Regulation Commission fixing the price of wheat for local consumption?

The HONORARY MINISTER: For one thing, the wheat has been bought for the people of Australia.

Hon. J. Cunningham: But you have not paid for it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: In the past the wheat has not been paid for at the mill, and the farmers have had to wait. Nobody has commiserated with the farmers on that point. But because the price is now a few shillings higher than some people think it should be, there is a howl. There was no complaint last year when wheat was being sold below parity price. If the world's parity were now to fall to 7s. 8d. the price of 9s. would only be giving the farmer back the loss he made last year. However, he does not ask that. He asks only for world's parity. I trust the Committee will not agree to the amendment.

Hon. T. Moore: I will support the amendment. I am not at all satisfied with the explanation given by the Honorary Minister. I should like his statements to be backed up by facts. I want some statistics, something to show us what the prices are elsewhere. The Honorary Minister has said that he gets weekly bulletins. I believe there are daily bulletins coming to Australia by cable. Why cannot the Honorary Minister tell us exactly what the price is to-day? I am not satisfied with the way in which the price has been fixed in Australia. If there is any one section of the community more than another against which the cry of one big union could be raised, it is the farmers. I am glad they have formed that big union, and rescued themselves from the hands of the middlemen, but I do not wish to see the farmers extorting more than a fair thing.

Hon. R. J. Lyning: That is the trouble with the one big union.

Hon. T. Moore: Unfortunately, amongst the workers the time has never yet arrived. It is unfair that any one section of the community should have the right to say what the price of their commodity shall be without considering the effect it will have on the rest of the community. The Minister declared that 15 or 16 years ago there was very little wheat, and he added that the farmers had been battling ever since then. He said that during that time the city dwellers were enjoying life. I am not supposed to represent the city dwellers; I am here to represent a big mining district as well as a lot of farmers.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I am one of your constituents.

Hon. T. Moore: That is so. The men who are pioneering the mining industry are not having a good time. They have been the poorest paid of this class of wage earner in Australia for the past five or six years. They received a small advance recently, but they have been called upon to pay increased

freights on their flour and these, in the outlying portions, are very heavy. The Honorary Minister said glibly the other evening that the local bread would be only sixpence. At Dwellingup, which is only a comparatively short distance from Perth, it now costs 5½d. at the shop. I am positive that the loaf of bread will soon be over 1s. in the outlying portions of the State.

Hon. H. Stewart: That is nonsense.

Hon. T. MOORE: If the hon. member would go into the figures he would find it is not nonsense. The hon. member knows how heavy is the freight over the 300 miles of railway to Geraldton. To-day a Bill to deal with the sale of margarine was discharged from the Notice Paper. Mention of this will cause members to recollect that, owing to the high price of butter, children have to eat margarine. It is a shame that in a country which produces so much milk and butter, the product should be sent away while Australian children have to eat a substitute. I have been wondering what substitute we shall get for flour. Perhaps we shall have to fall back on war bread similar to that used in England.

Member: Grow more wheat.

Hon. T. MOORE: There is no necessity to grow more wheat. There is plenty of wheat in the world to-day.

Hon. J. Cornell: There is plenty for us if we keep it here.

Hon. T. MOORE: All the evidence goes to show that wheat is on the down grade, and this is proof positive that there is a surplus. Only recently we saw by the paper that the price had dropped 6s. a quarter.

The Honorary Minister: That referred to last season's wheat.

Hon. T. MOORE: Still it is a reduction in price. In order to be fair we should consider every section of the community when fixing prices. The Honorary Minister was not right when he said that boots and other things that the farmers have to buy cost more here on account of the high tariff than on the other side of the world. When I was in England boots were twice as dear as they are here, and I believe the same difference exists to-day.

Hon. V. Hamersley: The price of boots is coming down.

Hon. T. MOORE: We have heard a lot about that, but whenever I buy a pair of boots, I find they cost about the same old price.

Hon. J. Cornell: They are coming down because people refuse to buy them.

Hon. T. MOORE: If it is a good thing for one section of the community like the manufacturers to have price fixing, it should be a good thing for all. Why should the farmers set up a price for themselves? The farmers have had their lean years, and I want to see them get a fair deal, but I do not wish to see them do well at the expense of the general public. Wheat farming land in Western Australia is very much cheaper than in other parts of the Commonwealth, and this makes

farming a better proposition here. That is why I have gone back to farming. The same class of land can be obtained here for almost half of what it costs in Victoria or South Australia, but within the next five or 10 years it will find its level. The price will then be double what it is to-day. The Honorary Minister said the deal had already been made. Who gave authority to make the deal? I want something more tangible as regards prices than the mere words of the Minister.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: While we are contemplating fixing the price for 12 months, it is probable that the price in other parts of the world will drop considerably. We should insert a provision that the local price shall not exceed the London parity at any time. If we fix the price at 9s. a bushel for local gristing apart from what is required for local consumption, we shall have very few opportunities to export flour. The wheat will be sold to compete with the price ruling in other parts of the world, and thus there will be a shortage of offal here. If we grist only sufficient wheat for local requirements we shall have to import offal.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We have read in the Press that a similar amendment was proposed in another place and was ruled out of order. What will be the position of affairs if this amendment is passed and is sent back to another place?

Hon. J. Cunningham: That is no concern of ours.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I am glad to have that assurance.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member should not refer to what has occurred in another place.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I do not propose to, seeing that I have had an assurance from one who is in the confidence of the Government. This amendment seeks to continue the insane system of price fixing. The Minister wants to fix 9s. and other members propose to fix 7s. 8d. I was pleased to notice by this morning's paper that price-fixing has been abandoned in Victoria. Now we come to the question of this scramble to look after the interests of the people who sent us here. The Country party have done their best for their supporters and have put up the price to the most extreme limit they could fix, namely 9s.

Hon. V. Hamersley: The Government have bought the whole of their requirements at that price.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We have no information on the question. We have to grope about almost in the dark for information which is essential before we can come to a sound conclusion. We should have a table showing the price of wheat in the London market during the last three or six months.

Hon. V. Hamersley: It is quoted in the newspapers.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It would be very much better to have a carefully prepared statement showing the fluctuations of the market. I am representing the poultry farm-

ers, the small men and the consumers, and I am voting for 7s. 8d. a bushel.

Hon. J. Cornell: The poultry raisers are being charged 12s. 6d.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We seem to have reached the stage when each member is going to look after the interests of his own constituents regardless of any other consideration. No doubt a very competent Government with the wheat in their hands could put up an admirable case for doing as they propose. It is simply a question as to how we are going to vote. That being so, I am in favour of 7s. 8d. a bushel, because that will suit the people I represent here.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Then you are repudiating the contract entered into by the Government?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I have not seen the papers on the subject, although the Honorary Minister promised that we should have an opportunity of fully considering any agreement that was made.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: He said we were to have it last September.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: What is the agreement, and who made it? Are the Government supposed to be looking after only the wheat and butter industries of the State, and completely ignoring the potato and fruit industries? We have seen their extraordinary performance in the matter of assisting the butter producers.

The Honorary Minister: We offered to assist the potato growers.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It seems to me we are getting worse and worse.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is digressing.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Will the Government give some freedom to the wheat grower to enable him to send a bag of wheat over the railways to some consumer in Perth if these two people desire to make a little deal on their own? Since I cannot see that we will be afforded an opportunity of fully discussing this proposal, I intend to vote for the 7s. 8d.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I was under the impression that the price of 9s. had been arrived at by experts in the Eastern States after full and mature consideration and investigation.

Hon. F. A. Baglin: The same argument applies to the Basic Wage Commission.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: That is not under discussion. If we adopted the principle contained in this amendment, and each of the States fixed their own price, we should not be able to do any business. If we adopted the price of 7s. 8d. and Victoria fixed upon 6s., Victoria could undersell us by sending flour to Western Australia. How could business be carried on under such conditions? The amendment is impracticable, and unless I am convinced by further argument I shall be unable to vote for it.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I would remind Sir Edward Wittenoom that another body of experienced men, delegates of the A.W.U., decided upon a certain wage for employees

in the farming districts of Victoria. Had that body of men come before the hon. member he would doubtless have told them to go to the Arbitration Court, that being the proper tribunal for the fixing of wages. The same thing applies to the price of wheat. The proper tribunal to fix that is the tribunal appointed to fix prices.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Wheat has been purchased by other countries for delivery over the next year at a price exceeding 10s. a bushel. We have sold more than one-third of the exportable surplus of wheat for next year. The market price to-day is 9s. 6d. a bushel. The States fixed the price at 9s. on the advice of the Australian Wheat Board, which is made up of men most competent to speak on the subject. They also acted on the advice of the London board, which is composed of the wheat selling agents who represent Australia. The daily papers supply hon. members with the latest information regarding the price of wheat. If any important changes take place we always get word.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: Was it the wheat board who fixed the price, or the conference of Premiers?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The conference of Premiers of the States—except myself representing Western Australia—met in Melbourne some time early in November. Western Australia did not join in until some time after my return, but we joined in later because it would have been impossible for the States each to fix different prices for wheat. This conference discussed the position of acquiring wheat. The wheat board were asked at what price it should be acquired. After mature consideration and acting on the advice of their advisers, and their knowledge of the world's markets, they fixed the fair average price at 9s. a bushel, and the representatives of the States accepted that. I think they were very pleased when the price of 9s. was fixed. If there is no common price, the pool must go by the board. Similarly, a pool would not be possible in the absence of the element of compulsion. This wheat will be paid for as delivery is taken of it.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Now we are getting some information.

The Honorary Minister: No more than you had before.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We have had six or eight important Bills to deal with during the last month. The Honorary Minister has been dealing with nothing but wheat, and he should have all the information on the subject at his finger-ends. Western Australia is a sovereign State. The Western Australian Government send a representative, the Honorary Minister, to Melbourne, and thereby seek to bind us. The Honorary Minister comes back here and says, "This is the agreement; you cannot repudiate it because we have agreed on it with the other States and the Commonwealth." If that is the case, what is the use of our discussing the agreement here? I am not concerned

as to whether any decision of this Chamber, in the interests of Western Australia, puts the Government of this State or any other State or the Commonwealth, in an impossible position. The Honorary Minister tells us that 9s. is equal to world's parity. The question of the amendment is whether the local price shall be 9s. or 7s. 8d. We are in just as great a difficulty as were the great board of experts in Melbourne in arriving at a fair price. Whom were the board of experts considering? The farmers. The board were asking themselves how far they could push up the price of wheat in the interests of the farmers. One can put up with the ups and downs in the world provided the dice are not loaded. But when it comes to pulling strings with Ministers or Cabinets in order to raise a price and put money in one's pocket, then there is a feeling of injustice on the part of the general public. We members who represent the consumers, if we are true to their best interests, will unquestionably vote in favour of 7s. 8d. The "impossible position" which will arise with regard to the Australian Wheat Board and the Commonwealth need not concern us at all.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The Honorary Minister has not even attempted to justify his Bill as against the present amendment. How is the world's parity to be fixed at present? The wheat crop is just being harvested, and some months must elapse before any of it can reach London.

The Honorary Minister: Does not the hon. member know that the wheat crop is always purchased long before this period?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: Yes, but I am getting at London parity. In the meantime, on some basis adopted by the Honorary Minister in Western Australia's behalf, by some manipulation of figures, 9s. per bushel here has been arrived at as representing world's parity. That price has been arrived at by the Eastern States Premiers and the Honorary Minister.

The Honorary Minister: The Premiers of the other States have had nothing to do with the price.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I understood the Honorary Minister to say that he attended a conference which was also attended by the Premiers of the other States, and at which the price of 9s. was fixed.

The Honorary Minister: Twice already have I said to-day that the Premiers met and decided to acquire the wheat, and then referred the question of price to the Australian Wheat Board, who, in consultation with their advisers, fixed the price of 9s.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The position is becoming clearer. Now we know where the State Premiers came in, and how the Australian Wheat Board fixed the price. Earlier in his remarks the Honorary Minister stated that the world's parity to-day was 10s. 2d. per bushel. Last Friday he said that the world's parity was 9s. 6d.

The Honorary Minister: What I said to-day was that 10s. 2d. was the price represented by the sale of the 36 million bushels.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The Honorary Minister says it is plain that there is a world's shortage of wheat. But America is reported to have an exportable surplus of 314 million bushels, Canada 116 million bushels, the Argentine 19 million bushels, and Australia 90 million bushels. Yet the Honorary Minister has the assurance to stand up here and say that there is a world shortage of wheat! We know that, on the contrary, there is a world surplus, and that wheat prices are falling. So much is plain from the Press reports. In Chicago wheat is selling at 5s. per bushel.

Hon. A. Sanderson: At 5s. per bushel?

The Honorary Minister: That is absolutely incorrect. The lowest price at which wheat has been sold there is 10s. per bushel.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I am merely going by the reports published in the Press. Sir Edward Wittenoom seemed to be under the impression that if the price of wheat was fixed at 7s. 8d. in Western Australia, and at 6s. in Victoria or New South Wales, we would lose a large proportion of our trade. However, it is not a question of this House fixing the price at 7s. 8d.; it is a question of handing over the issue of price to the Prices Regulation Commission. I am sure that Commission will not fix a price which would be in any way detrimental to the interests of our traders in wheat. The same thing applies to bran and pollard. We know that the Prices Regulation Commission previously fixed bran and pollard prices. Now the amendment asks that the Prices Regulation Commission shall, after making the necessary investigations and taking the necessary evidence, fix the price of wheat for local consumption. The price of 7s. 8d. is merely to apply in any area which has not been proclaimed under the Prices Regulation Act as an area where a certain price shall rule, and also in any area in respect of which the Prices Regulation Commission have not fixed a price for wheat. The same position obtains relatively to other commodities. The Prices Regulation Commission cannot deal with all the areas of the State simultaneously, and therefore must take the areas one by one. I advise hon. members to read the amendment before making statements that we are fixing the maximum price at 7s. 8d. per bushel. I can see that there is little hope of getting from the Minister the real reason which actuated the board in fixing the price at 9s. If it is good enough to ask the man who is producing potatoes to go to the Prices Regulation Commission to have the price of that commodity fixed, it should be good enough also for the wheat grower to allow that same body to fix the price of wheat.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not know whether Mr. Cunningham has closely looked at the Act of 1916. The amendment will have

the effect of altering an Act which was framed for a particular purpose, and in that connection it is important to read the preamble. If hon. members will read the preamble and read Section 5 as well, they must arrive at the conclusion that the amendment is not in order. The 1916 Act is confined to the purposes mentioned in the preamble and Section 5, and whatever action has to be taken in connection with the fixing of prices or otherwise must be concerted action between the States.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Then the preamble rules the Bill out of order.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The marketing of the wheat has to be carried out under a concerted scheme.

Hon. T. Moore: When does the Act expire?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The Act is renewed each year.

Hon. T. Moore: We are just commencing a year; when does the Act end and begin?

Hon. H. Stewart: The 1915-16 pool is not yet closed, and the Act cannot end until it is closed.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The instance quoted by the hon. member with regard to potatoes is hardly comparable. Potatoes do not come under a scheme such as the Wheat Scheme. Wheat is the subject of an agreement between the States and the Commonwealth, and we must be bound by the terms of the 1916 Act. The amendment is to fix a certain price, and that would need the ratification of all the States. Whilst I have every sympathy for the amendment I feel in the circumstances that I cannot support it. I am desirous of seeing wheat supplied for local consumption at the cheapest possible rate.

Hon. H. Stewart: At a fair rate.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I venture to suggest that the point I have raised is worthy of careful consideration. The amendment might seriously impair the provisions that have already been entered into.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: As a legal point has been raised that we have no power to do what the amendment suggests, the matter should be discussed and settled. To tell me that this Chamber cannot carry the amendment does not seem to have any force at all. Mr. Nicholson concluded his argument by stating that he had every sympathy with the motion. In that case why not hand over the question of fixing the price to the Prices Regulation Commission? What I object to is that the meeting in Melbourne should have fixed the price at 9s., and the question is now whether we should agree to that. If we are here to register the decisions of this incompetent Government the sooner we get away the better. I am going to repeat to the Minister that those people in Melbourne were sitting there in the interest of the wheat growers, and they pushed the price of wheat up to the highest possible point.

Hon. V. Hamersley: You are absolutely wrong.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Was it after full consideration of the desires and wishes of the people in the different parts of Australia, and

the wishes of the consumers, that they fixed the price at 9s.? If that was their attitude they were doing an impossible job. I am still under the impression that these people met in Melbourne primarily to secure a benefit for the wheat growers. My hon. and learned friend has raised a legal point. I do not agree with him. That, however, does not settle the matter.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Honorary Minister has told us how the price was fixed at 9s. The conference apparently said, "We want enough wheat for the year; how much do you want for it?" The wheat board said 9s., which the Ministerial conference accepted and the deed was done. I do not take any exception to the price, but to the way the transaction was fixed up, and the scanty facts which have been made public regarding it. As a representative of a wheat eating part of the State, I am as much entitled to get from the Honorary Minister a full statement as to how the 9s. was arrived at, as the Honorary Minister is to give that statement to the wheat growers whom he represents. The amendment will only result in wheat not being sold below 7s. 8d. If the Prices Regulation Commission fix the price at 12s. it will be sold at that. The Commission would be an impartial body. Another argument advanced against the acceptance of the amendment is that the wheat has been sold already. What are we here for? Why are we asked to ratify this agreement if the wheat has already been sold? Assuming that Parliament agrees to the amendment, what will happen?

Hon. J. E. Dodd: It will not be disposed of at less than 9s.

Hon. J. CORNELL: My objection is to the method in which the price has been fixed and also that we are asked to validate an action which was taken two months ago.

The Honorary Minister: There is nothing in the Bill about that.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The transaction has been taken without statutory authority and the amendment will give a statutory authority and repudiate what has been done without statutory authority. It does not appeal to me whether the farmers get 7s. or 12s. I have an objection to the method by which the farmer has got his 9s. I want to see if we can provide against the perpetuation of the iniquity of making the poultry farmer, the pig raiser and others buy what was really wheat husks after the weevils had done with them at a higher price than the miller was asked to pay for f.a.q. wheat. The miller was asked to pay 7s. 8d. for f.a.q. wheat while the poultry farmer was asked to pay 12s. 6d. If any body of men can say that that was a fair and honest deal, then they would not be fit to enter a public institution like this. It was not fair, and it reeked of Tammany Hall and corner methods. It is not fair to make men, some of whom went away to fight in order to make the industry possible, pay such exorbitant prices. The miller has the price of his flour fixed by the Prices Regulation Commission and the

price of bread made from the miller's flour is also assessed by the same body. While I am not enamoured of the Prices Regulation Commission—it has kept a lot of people quiet—they should be given the power suggested. At the same time I am reverting to the opinion that the old open market was a good deal better than the system to-day.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Cornell has drawn attention to the very point which tells against his argument. He says that the pig raiser and poultry farmer have had to pay 12s. 6d. for wheat while the miller got his f.a.q. supplies at 7s. 8d.

Hon. F. A. Baglin: Whose fault was that?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The millers were supplied with f.a.q. wheat at 7s. 8d. for the consumer's benefit, and the poultry farmer and pig raiser and so on were supplied on the basis of the export price at that time and not on the basis of the highest market rate. As a matter of fact, we sold a fair amount of wheat last year at 16s. 3d. during the time the poultry man was asked to pay 12s. 6d. The price of 7s. 8d. for human consumption was agreed upon last year and the poultry farmer and pig raiser could not be supplied at that price.

Hon. T. MOORE: I am surprised at the Honorary Minister's statement because he said that the price paid here for wheat was 9s. as adopted by the board, and now we hear that wheat was sold to men in this State for the requirements of the industries mentioned at 12s. 6d. We are getting a little light to-day.

The Honorary Minister: That is ridiculous; you do not understand it.

Hon. T. MOORE: I can understand the facts as they are put to us. We are told how the price was fixed at 9s. and yet we are told that some of this wheat has been sold to pig raisers and others for 12s. 6d. That is a remarkable state of affairs.

Hon. H. Stewart: You are all mixed up about it. That price was the average for the whole of the local consumption.

Hon. T. MOORE: I have gone on what the Honorary Minister has said.

Hon. H. Stewart: The pool got up to 16s. 4d. f.o.b.

Hon. T. MOORE: That included freight and other charges.

Hon. H. Stewart: Not at all.

Hon. T. MOORE: The sooner the public know the position, the better. It is suggested that the whole averaged 9s. That is a ridiculous proposition. It has been said that some wheat has been sold at a much lower price and that 16s. 6d. was the highest figure.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: There could not have been much at 16s. 6d.

Hon. T. MOORE: The legal point which has been raised is one upon which we require more information: We should know how long this Act is to be continued. It is said that the amendment will amount to repudiation as sales have already been effected. I do not agree with that contention. The present position could not go on for all time. We have given these people power to sell wheat

and if they have sold it, I am not in favour of repudiating their action. We must stand to the deal if it has been made, but we can at least ask: What about next year?

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: The Government will come down with the same tale in the closing hours of the session and tell us the same thing, that the wheat has been sold already.

Hon. T. MOORE: That is the point we should consider. How long is the Bill to continue in operation? I do not know what we can do to get out of the present difficulty and prevent the perpetuation of this for all time. The Act needs amendment. I have every sympathy with the farmer, but I object to the manner in which he set about raising the price of wheat for himself.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. CORNELL: When I contended that pig and poultry raisers should not be compelled to pay an unreasonably high price for their wheat, the Honorary Minister said the price paid by those people was the world's parity. But is it reasonable to enter into an agreement to supply f.a.q. wheat at 7s. 8d. for home consumption, and say that the inferior wheat for pigs and poultry shall be sold at world's parity? The Minister has not explained why the pool should exploit the pig and poultry farmer requiring inferior wheat. What is to be the future position? Is it proposed that the pig and poultry farmers shall pay more than 9s. for their wheat if the world's parity should exceed that figure?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Pig and poultry feed will be supplied on an f.a.q. basis at 9s. If there is a very large quantity of wheat below f.a.q. value, it will be supplied at pro rata prices.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Will it be compulsory on the pig and poultry farmers to exhaust the inferior wheat before they can draw on the f.a.q.? If so, they will be in the same position as before.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There will be a fair quantity of inferior wheat available, and necessarily that will have to be cleared before f.a.q. wheat is used for pigs and poultry.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I want to know whether the pig and poultry farmers will be able to get wheat at 9s. per bushel?

The Honorary Minister: Yes.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That is a distinct statement. Now I want to know whether, in order to get wheat, they will have to write to the Minister, or whether they will be able to send to a friendly wheat farmer and pay him 9s. per bushel for the wheat.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Provision is made this year for the pig and poultry farmer to deal direct with the wheat farmer and so save the expense of distribution.

Hon. A. Sanderson: This news is so good that I can scarcely credit it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have given you that assurance.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Yes, yes, I know.

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

Ayes	..	..	9
Noes	..	..	12

Majority against .. 3

AYES.

Hon. F. A. Baglin	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. A. Lovekin	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. R. J. Lynn	Hon. J. Nicholson
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Authority for agency agreement. Schedule:

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I will ask the Committee to strike out the clause. Last year and the previous year the Honorary Minister gave us an assurance that no further agreement would be entered into until Parliament was first consulted. We are again in a position that leaves us no option but to agree to the proposition contained in the Bill; otherwise the wheat cannot be handled. The Government are treating this House in a farcical manner. What is the use of any assurance given by the Honorary Minister? Just now he gave an assurance to Mr. Sanderson that pig and poultry farmers would be able to obtain wheat at 9s. per bushel. What is that assurance worth? We have had previous assurances from the Honorary Minister, not any of them worth the paper they might have been written on. I will vote against the clause.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There certainly is ground for complaint in this. I did give Mr. Miles an assurance last year, but events have happened over which I had no control. In the first place, the Prime Minister stood out for 10 or 11 weeks and so matters could not be finalised until very late. Moreover, the Bill has been held up for a considerable time in the Assembly. I did my utmost to have it brought down at an early date. The wheat must be handled by somebody, and if the clause is struck out, we shall be in a most unfortunate position and will have to incur considerable additional expense.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I am not satisfied with the explanation submitted by the Honorary Minister. He proposes to give the Westralian Farmers Ltd. another one-eighth of a penny for handling the wheat, and also

to release them of some of their liabilities. It seems that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are running the Government of the country. I protest against the Government entering into these agreements without first consulting Parliament.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Honorary Minister has told us that if we do not pass the clause something desperate will happen. It could not be more desperate than what is happening now. We are permitting the Minister, year after year, to bring down a Bill of this kind, while we simply register the edict he puts before us. On page 914 of the "Hansard" of 1916 the Honorary Minister, who was not then a member of the Government, said—

I think the Government should step in and handle the scheme. Why should they not do so. I see no difficulty in the way. We have a general staff to handle the wheat.

To-night we have had a paltry apology from the Minister that circumstances have prevented him from bringing down the Bill earlier, but we have had that apology every year. On the 18th December, 1918, "Hansard" page 1711, the Honorary Minister said—

I regret it is so late in the session to bring down this Bill. The delay has arisen through having to enter into two difficult agreements.

We have had this proposition of wheat handling before us for the last five years. Surely the Government could have brought down a Bill at the beginning of the session. The explanation this year is that the Prime Minister has been responsible for the delay. If we reject the clause, what catastrophe is likely to happen? I cannot imagine any great difficulty in arranging for the handling of the wheat if it has to be brought to the railway siding and a certificate given for it there. For this House to be asked, in the last week of the session, not once or twice but three or four times, to register this agreement, is tantamount to handing over the whole of this affair to a most incompetent Government.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If the same conditions as obtained in 1916 prevailed to-day, I would still be of the same opinion. In 1916 the wheat was handled by different agents, and it was a very costly method. By the appointment of one agency, we have made a tremendous saving.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Why not let private enterprise do it?

The HONORARY MINISTER: There is no firm who could organise and undertake the handling of the wheat.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Other firms offered to do it at a lower rate than that paid to the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

The HONORARY MINISTER: They had a reason; they were quite prepared to lose money in order to get the handling of the wheat. They admitted it.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: That does not exonerate you.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I cannot oppose the clause, because the Bill gives the Government power to acquire the wheat, and it merely becomes a question as to who shall handle it. I would suggest the insertion of a proviso that no further agreement shall be entered into until it has been ratified by Parliament.

The Honorary Minister: This is subject to the approval of Parliament.

Hon. J. CORNELL: If Parliament struck out the clause, the Minister would have to get someone else to acquire the wheat. If we refused to pass the clause, the Minister could not logically go on with the agreement, but he could enter into an agreement with someone else. I have heard no charge against the Westralian Farmers Ltd., and I would sooner see them handle it than a number of firms. I move an amendment—

That the following proviso be inserted:—“Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, or in any section of the principal Act and its amendments, no further wheat acquiring agency agreements shall be entered into by the Minister until presented to and ratified by Parliament.”

The HONORARY MINISTER: I offer no objection to the amendment.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I should think not; there is no reason why the Minister should. I congratulate the Government on their method of dealing with this Chamber. It seems that members are prepared to hand over the control of everything to them after a few protests. I am prepared to harass and embarrass the Government as much as I can on one condition, that no injury is done to the welfare of the country. The amendment is identical with the clause, and I ask the Committee to reject the amendment and the clause for the same reason. The Honorary Minister and his sagacious colleague offer no objection to the amendment. If we struck out the clause the country would not be embarrassed. In any agreement the Minister makes with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., or with other agents, the interests of the country would not be sacrificed, and the effect would be to show that this Chamber dissociates itself from the action of the Government in bringing these measures down so late in the session.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I hope the amendment will not be accepted and that the clause will be passed. If we strike out the clause the farmers will be left in a very unfortunate position. I have no sympathy with the Government for having brought down this measure so late in the session. The farmers looked forward to a Bill being presented and passed two months ago. They have had their wheat bagged in the fields and the white ants have been eating it, and there has been no one with authority to handle it. The wheat is being put on the trucks and carried over the railways, and who is responsible?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Railway Department.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: And everyone will have to sue the Railway Department for loss. The farmers are in a very unfortunate position; they are in a position they should never have been put in.

Hon. T. Moore: Are the Westralian Farmers handling the wheat now?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Not that I know of, but they are probably ready to deal with it. The farmers are already sending their wheat down, trusting to luck that it will be reasonably carefully handled by the Harbour Board. In the past they have lost wheat by the truck, by the ton, and by the bag, and have never been able to get any redress from the Railway Department; neither have they any guarantee that they will receive credit for the weight of wheat they send away. If the clause is struck out the farmers will be in a worse position than ever, and this may be intensified at any time by a railway strike. The Government promised months ago to have the Bill brought down, but now it comes before us at the end of the session.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Have the Westralian Farmers' people posted at the different railway stations waiting for railway wagons to come in to be loaded with wheat? If so, it is an extravagant way of doing things.

The Honorary Minister: Wheat is being carted in all day long. The agents take delivery of it from the farmers and load it on the trucks.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The fruit people have to dump their own fruit down, and it is very often left lying on the station for a long time. I protest against Parliament being associated with this agreement. If we strike out the clause the Honorary Minister would still complete his negotiations, but he must do so on his own responsibility.

Hon. V. Hamersley: We could have done something like that two months ago.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We are assured that already the Westralian Farmers are collecting the wheat. The striking out of this clause would not prevent the Honorary Minister signing the agreement with the Westralian Farmers. If we ratify this agreement we associate ourselves with the proposal, but if we cut it out altogether we throw the responsibility on the Honorary Minister. When one is interested in, for instance, a bag of wheat, one is apt to brush everything on one side so long as the particular bag of wheat reaches the market in good order and condition. How will the striking out of this clause damage the arrangement between the Honorary Minister and the Westralian Farmers?

The HONORARY MINISTER: If this clause is struck out I shall take it as a direction that I am not to enter into an agreement with the Westralian Farmers. Hon. members' objection to the clause is on the ground of the late introduction of this Bill, for which

I am exceedingly sorry. Can they show any other reason why they should object to it? What good can they do by rejecting it? To do so will only place the Government in the position of finding some other and more costly way of handling wheat. The saving under this agreement will be tremendous. Has there been anything wrong in the past, or has the work been done in a faulty manner? Out of pure cussedness members say that this most important clause in the Bill should be cut out. If they think they are doing right let them prove it.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: They would be doing right. One reason why I am opposed to the clause is that I wish to show the Government that they cannot treat this Chamber with contempt. That is what they have done for the last three years. Each year the Honorary Minister has assured us that no agreement would be entered into without this Chamber being consulted. It is about time we showed the Government we do not intend to be treated like a lot of school children. I hope the clause will be rejected, and that we shall put the Government in their place.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The rejection of this clause will not be an indication to the Government that they are not to make a contract with the Westralian Farmers.

The Honorary Minister: I shall take it as such.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That shows how foolish the Honorary Minister is. In his arrogance he is going to take it that the Westralian Farmers should be cut out. I do not object to the Westralian Farmers doing the work, but if I knew more about the matter I might do so. It is an amazing attitude for the Honorary Minister to take up after we have given our assurance that the rejection of the clause will not have the meaning he would give to it. We do not wish to be associated with any of these measures which are brought down so late in the session.

Hon. T. MOORE: Whilst the Honorary Minister has had power to sell the country's wheat and to fix a price for it, he had no power to make an arrangement with the Westralian Farmers for the handling of it. Last year's measure only dealt with the 1919-20 harvest. When he entered into the present agreement he did so without any authority. We should fix now what is to be done next year.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	7
Noes	..	..	..	13

Majority against .. 6

AYES.

Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. F. A. Baglin
Hon. T. Moore	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. J. W. Hickey	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. R. J. Lynn	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	8

Majority for .. 7

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. J. W. Hickey	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. R. J. Lynn	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. J. Mills	(Teller.)

AYES.

Hon. F. A. Baglin	Hon. J. W. Kirwan
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. A. Sanderson
	(Teller.)

Clause thus passed.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 10 of principal Act:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: What is the meaning of this clause?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The object is to make the control of illicit sales simpler and more effective. Under Section 10 of the existing Act the Government have not the necessary power.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Do the board furnish an annual report to Parliament?

The Honorary Minister: No.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I ask hon. members to note that reply. The clause gives further extraordinary powers to the Minister. Surely it is not unreasonable to ask for a report from the board at the end of each 12 months.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: This clause proposes to insert a new subsection, to be numbered 3, in Section 10 of the existing Act, which already has a Subsection 3. I agree with Mr. Sanderson that the power sought under this new clause is extraordinary, and altogether too great. A fine of £500 for an illicit sale of grain is sufficient penalty without voiding the contract of sale.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I move an amendment—

That the words "unless the Minister shall otherwise determine" be struck out.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Move to strike out the whole clause.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I want to go carefully. Why should the Minister have power to determine these questions? Why should the Minister have power to say to a farmer, "You can sell to Tom Jones, because it suits my party, or my constituency"? Suppose "A" and "B" want to make a contract which is against public policy, what would they do if this clause passed as printed? Go and fix the matter up with the Minister. The Honorary Minister shakes his head, and I do not suppose that he or anyone else in this Chamber would be guilty of such conduct; but with the general election coming on, and with political pressure at work from every direction, the proposed discretion would be most dangerous.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I hope the Committee will not strike out the words. There may be contracts of sale, and they would then be declared void, unless the Minister was given some discretion.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—Amendment of Section 13:

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: We are giving great power to the Commissioner of Railways in this clause. It seems to me that it will be possible to block all trading in the State. What are we coming to? Are we handing over everything, lock, stock and barrel to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and to the Commissioner of Railways? I protest against the wording of the clause.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We are handing over to the discretion of the Commissioner of Railways to determine whether he will carry wheat or not. Why not say at once that he shall refuse to carry wheat? The clause says that the Commissioner may refuse to carry wheat unless consigned to the Minister. The Minister for Railways I understand has gone away. I can hardly credit that that can be so. In fact I refuse to believe it, until I hear it officially announced.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He is busy winning a game of bowls in Tasmania to-day, all the same.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I cannot take notice of any statement until I get it officially.

The CHAIRMAN: We are not discussing the Minister for Railways.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I should think not. The matter is too disgraceful to consider. Reverting back to the clause, to give discretionary power to the Commissioner of Railways is worse than giving it to the Minister, because we can meet the Minister here fact to face and discuss the matter with him.

Hon. J. MILLS: The Honorary Minister assured Mr. Sanderson that poultry and pig farmers could make their purchases direct from the farmers. If the clause is left in, before they can take that wheat over the rail ways, they will have to get the permission of the Commissioner. I will vote against the clause.

The HONORARY MINISTER: We have been operating a similar clause for four

years and the amending clause in the Bill is to make the position more clear. Section 13 of the Act provides that the Commissioner may, on the request of the Minister, refuse to carry any wheat or flour owned by any specified person except as prescribed. The clause in the Bill is only to make the position clear. There will be no difficulty about the sale of wheat to poultry and pig farmers. Our desire is to have full control, so that there shall not be any trafficking by agents. What control can we have if we leave the matter open? It will be possible for agents to transport wheat in opposition to the scheme. An embargo exists now and the amendment will only make the position clear.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: Assuming there is a man in the country handling a truck of wheat, and he is distributing that wheat to poultry or pig farmers, will he not be allowed to get that wheat at the lowest price? Is the proposal not a restraint of trade? The man outback is taxed out of existence, and now in connection with this matter, he has to get his wheat through the Westralian Farmers in Perth. It seems to me that the Government have not considered the position: they are only looking at it from their point of view and that of the Westralian Farmers. No other section of the community is taken into consideration. I protest strongly against the way Parliament is being treated, and I hope the clause will be deleted.

Hon. J. CORNELL: What the clause proposes to do is to allow the Commissioner or any of his servants to say that a truck of wheat cannot be touched unless it is consigned to the Minister or his agents. It seems to me, however, that it is Section 13 that should be amended by the clause instead of Section 10. Then again, Section 13 of the Act is an amendment of the Railways Act. That section provides that the Commissioner of Railways may refuse to carry wheat or flour notwithstanding anything in the Government Railways Act. If we carry the clause in the Bill we make the Commissioner a sort of Dick Turpin of the road, and he will be able to stop any wheat that is not consigned to the Minister or to one of the parties to the agreement. I am going to vote against the clause.

Hon. F. A. BAGLIN: The Honorary Minister gave an assurance that pig and poultry raisers would be able to deal direct with the farmers, but he should have said that they must get over this fence first.

The Honorary Minister: They are operating under it to-day.

Hon. F. A. BAGLIN: I think, with Mr. Sanderson, that we have been "let down."

The Honorary Minister: Not at all.

Hon. F. A. BAGLIN: The wealthy poultry farmer and the big pig raiser can send along for their truck loads of wheat, but the small man, who requires a bag or two, will find that his costs will amount to more than the value of the wheat he requires. It will give preference to the man who is able to take the larger quantity. There will be a good deal of red tape involved in the trans-

action and by the time the small man gets his lot, he will be sick and tired of the business. Unless there is a protecting clause to say that the man who is a distributing agent can forward his few bags, the difficulty will be continued. Why should the small men not be able to purchase through these agents? If a man is a legitimate agent, he can secure a lot of six trucks or so and distribute them to the small men who require a bag, two bags, or three bags as the case may be. This distributing agent, however, is cut out of it, simply because he is an agent. The Government are settling men on the Peel estate at Fremantle and yet the settlers there will not be able to get cheap wheat for their poultry or pigs. It may be true that these people will be able to deal direct with the farmers and secure wheat at 9s. per bushel, but by the time they get the wheat, it will cost them nearly another 9s. We should reject this clause and then we will see where the Minister stands regarding his assurances. If we reject the clause, the Honorary Minister will be placed in the position of either having to break his word or carry out his assurances.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We will have to vote against this clause and also delete Section 13 of the Wheat Marketing Act as well, before we will relieve the situation. I accept the Minister's explanation but I think the position is that the Commissioner of Railways, although he has been acting under these powers, is not quite satisfied that his position is legally tenable. The Commissioner, therefore, asks for these extended powers. Although the Commissioner has been exercising these powers, the small pig raisers and poultry farmers are not in a position to test the legal aspect. The position is unsatisfactory. I wish the Committee to understand, as I will make the small growers understand, that if this clause is agreed to, the small man will not get his wheat at 9s.

The CHAIRMAN: We are not discussing the price of wheat, but the carriage of wheat over the railways.

The Honorary Minister: It does not affect the price of wheat at all.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I know the difficulties of these small growers. They may require a single bag of wheat for their poultry. Although they may have a friend in the eastern districts who is quite willing to send them a bag, the railway people will refuse to carry the bag of wheat.

Hon. J. Stewart: That is not the position under the clause at all.

The Honorary Minister: No, certainly not.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: This clause will give the Commissioner of Railways increased power in connection with Section 13 of the Act, under which he is acting now. If the pig and poultry keepers are incommoded at present, they will be in a worse position if the clause is agreed to.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This clause will not affect the small man any more than he has been affected during the past four years.

Hon. A. Sanderson: But he has been adversely affected.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Of course he has; that is the trouble.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If a small grower requires a bag or two of wheat, all he has to do is to communicate with the scheme and they will send an order to the railways for him, and he will get his bag of wheat forwarded. That is all he has to do. Mr. Baglin desires to get cheap wheat for the people in his province. The clause will help him to procure cheap wheat. He need not worry about my assurances.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: You say the man can buy it. You say the agent cannot buy from the grower; he must buy from the scheme.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Members must realise that we cannot allow indiscriminate trading by the agents. If we do, the whole scheme breaks down. If we permitted it, the agent would go into the country and offer the growers 6s. 6d. for the wheat, pointing out at the same time that the growers were only to get 2s. 6d. advance against the wheat in the pool, with 2s. 6d. a little later on. The result would be that the agent would secure whatever quantity he desired and bring it down to Fremantle. The agent would require his full pound of flesh and take advantage of the protection of the scheme.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: You only look at the matter from one little centre. This is a big State.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There is not the slightest difficulty confronting any genuine user in his effort to get wheat. The agent can purchase his requirements from the scheme from inferior wheat up to that for which the price is fixed at 9s. The small poultry man can buy direct from the farmer by getting an order from the scheme, and the order will be sent to the railways for him. That system has been carried out for four years and has been very successful.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Successful! That is interesting.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There have been no complaints where the dealings have been direct with the farmers. The complaints have been in the metropolitan area, where the agent has gone down to the yard, picked up a large quantity, and disposed of it at higher prices.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not know that members should discuss the monetary aspect under this clause.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The clause does not affect the price, either increased or decreased. It is simply a matter of the scheme having the control of the wheat. If we allow trafficking by the agents, the agents will be able to take advantage of the scheme.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: People are handling wheat in the goldfields district, in the North and elsewhere. They desire to buy a few trucks for despatch to the outer portions of the State but they cannot buy at 9s. and are charged 12s.

The Honorary Minister: They could buy from the scheme.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: You do not give an assurance that they could buy at 9s. You say they could buy at the world's parity.

The Honorary Minister: Nothing of the sort. I gave you the assurance that they could buy at 9s.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: It has cost up to 30s. a bushel, when people in the back country have wanted their supplies. The scheme wants to bleed these people for a few more shillings. The men in the back country should be able to secure it at the lowest price. The Honorary Minister will not give us any assurance on that point and if he does give us an assurance, it is not worth a snap of the fingers.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I am rather amused at the turn the discussion has taken. Members had an opportunity of fixing the price at an earlier stage and I do not see how that question arises under this clause. There must be a reason for it and if the Honorary Minister would give us a full explanation, there would be very little opposition to it.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Despite the discussion that has taken place, I am still in a dilemma. Under the 1916 Act full power is given to the Commissioner of Railways, on the request of the Minister, to refuse to carry wheat which is not the subject of an Interstate contract. I do not see why dealings between parties who require this wheat should be altogether debarred, and why it should come through one channel, so long as it is not going outside the State. If the wheat which is subject to an Interstate contract has been bought by some enterprising person, and is to be conveyed away, we would find the Commissioner of Railways refusing to carry it. However, I am not so much concerned with that aspect as with the position of the small growers in and around Perth. If there is a clear explanation of the reason for the clause, I may change my views. At the present time, my view is that this provision is not a wise one and should not be passed by the Committee. The Honorary Minister and the Commissioner are fully protected under Section 13 of the existing Act.

The Honorary Minister: The Commissioner says he is not.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The Honorary Minister says the clause is inserted with the object of preventing agents handling wheat with a view to exporting it. If the Commissioner has an idea that large quantities of wheat are being trucked with the object of being exported, it will be easy for him to put the train-load of wheat into a siding for a few hours and telephone to the Minister for instructions. I think that power is quite sufficiently wide.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The provision will not interfere with people buying small parcels of wheat in the country. All it will do will be to prevent merchants buying direct from the farmers and so taking an undue advantage of the scheme. The Commissioner of Railways says that Section 13 is not sufficiently clear, and the Crown Law Department have drafted the clause to meet the position. Under Mr. Nicholson's suggestion the Railway Department would be required to act as police. It would not necessarily be a train-load of wheat, for a single truck would yield a tempting profit. Any person desiring to get a small parcel of wheat from a farmer can easily secure permission from the scheme.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That is too roundabout a way.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I want to prevent agents taking advantage of the scheme to make huge profits. This has been very carefully thought out.

Hon. A. Sanderson: It has indeed.

The HONORARY MINISTER: My advisory board has brought forward a strong recommendation that the clause should be inserted.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: No doubt this thing has been very carefully thought out from the point of view of the authorities. I want it as carefully thought out from the point of view of the pig and poultry farmers. If the railways are left open, the small man will get his feed for pigs and poultry much cheaper and quicker. The action of the Railway Department must have an effect on the price of wheat to the small poultry farmer. If the man at Doodlakine knows that the railways cannot hold up his wheat, he will put a single bag on a truck and send it down to the man in the metropolitan area.

The Honorary Minister: How will that make it cheaper?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The hon. member does not seem to know how these unfortunate people live. Why should not the small poultry farmer be able to send a private order to the man at Doodlakine for a bushel of wheat?

The Honorary Minister: Let the hon. member show us how that will save expense.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not propose to allow the hon. member to proceed on those lines. The price of wheat has nothing to do with the clause.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: But, by giving the Commissioner of Railways undue control over consignments, the clause will result in an enhanced price of wheat. Is it any wonder that the poultry farmers are in such a bad way when they are tied up in the manner proposed? As a matter of fact the clause is already in operation and requires only clear confirmation in the Bill.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That after "carrier" in line 4 the words "more than one ton of" be inserted.

This will serve to keep down the parcels to a minimum. At a later stage I will move a further amendment, restricting it to any one consignment.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I am not clear about the intention of the amendment. A one-ton parcel could be sent in each of two or three trains per day.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I will make it a hundredweight.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: But the principle would be the same.

The Honorary Minister: Would the hon. member accept a smaller quantity?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I would be prepared to make it five hundredweight.

Hon. T. MOORE: The difficulty is that five hundredweight is just short of three bags.

The Honorary Minister: Make it five bags.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I will accept that.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I suggest that it would be an improvement if we made the clause read that the Commissioner of Railways may refuse to carry any consignment of wheat exceeding five bags.

Hon. J. CORNELL: With a view to accepting Mr. Nicholson's suggestion, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That after "carry" the words "any consignment of" be inserted, and after "wheat," the words "exceeding five bags" be inserted.

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

Clauses 6, 7—agreed to.

Schedule:

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Clause 3 the words "without the authority of the Minister first obtained" be struck out.

If the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., are given this contract, they should act as agents for the farmers and for them only, and should not have authority even with the permission of the Minister to deal in wheat.

Hon. H. STEWART: The amendment might make it difficult for farmers to get seed wheat. Surely we can leave it to the discretion of the Minister to see that avenues for obtaining seed wheat are not closed, especially as we have many new settlers including returned soldiers, going on the land. Perhaps the Minister can tell us what arrangements are likely to be made to see that ample supplies of seed wheat are obtainable.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Apparently Mr. Miles and I have been defeated on the main issue, and I ask him whether he thinks it reasonable to push the opposition any further. If the words were struck out, the whole schedule might be upset. Doubtless the Minister has been well advised and has made the best possible terms.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Westralian Farmers, Ltd., make a speciality of importing seed wheat. If these words are struck out, they will be unable to handle seed wheat. It should be sufficient to leave the matter in the hands of the Minister. Only seed wheat would be involved.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I must enter my emphatic protest against the manner in which this Bill is framed for the convenience of one company only. If we give them the right to handle the whole of the wheat, we should debar them from trading in wheat. It would be scandalous to allow the schedule to go through without any comment or protest.

The Honorary Minister: I am not very strong on the point.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: Well, I am. The Westralian Farmers, Ltd., should be prevented from trading or dealing in wheat.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I endorse what Mr. Miles has said but I ask him to consider my suggestion. Can the Minister lay on the Table to-morrow the latest report and balance sheet of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd.? When we are concluding an agreement with these people, we should know who they are and what their financial position is.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Hon. members seem to think that I am closely associated with the Westralian Farmers Ltd., which is not the case. I have no power to request them to furnish a balance sheet so that it may be placed on the Table of the House, but I am sure that hon. members could get one on application at the office of the company.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Surely it is not unreasonable to ask that before we conclude a most important agreement with the company we should know with whom we are dealing. I do not suggest that the Honorary Minister is connected with this company, but I cannot believe that he would find any difficulty in getting the papers I have asked for.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I hope the Committee will strike this out. If a Labour Government were in power and had an arrangement with the Trades Hall for the handling of the harvest, would hon. members agree to pass the clause in an agreement such as this? The Westralian Farmers are a political organisation, but notwithstanding this the Honorary Minister, without the consent of Parliament, enters into an agreement with them for the handling of the wheat.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That in Clause 7 paragraph (a) the following be added: "Provided also that when engaging employees, servants, or workmen, the agent or any person deputed by the agent for that purpose, shall, all things being considered give preference of employment to discharged soldiers."

The HONORARY MINISTER: Seeing that this is the principle I have always fol-

lowed out in the operations of the wheat scheme, I have no objection to this amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: Why has the remuneration to the agents been increased by one-eighth of a penny?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The agents will derive no benefit from this increase. The money will go to the sub-agents operating at the country sidings. The cost of everything has gone up from what it was when the rate was fixed four years ago. It is now impossible for the sub-agents to carry out this work without extra remuneration.

Hon. T. Moore: The agreement says nothing about sub-agents; are they to get the increase?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes.

Hon. A. SANDERSON. Will the Honorary Minister ask the company to furnish the report and balance sheet to which I have referred?

The Honorary Minister: I will try to get it.

Hon. T. MOORE: In the absence of Mr. Hickey I move an amendment—

That in Clause 12 subclause 2, all the words after "handling" to the end of the sub paragraph be struck out, and "shall be paid for by the agent" be inserted in lieu.

It is not right that the Westralian Farmers should be at liberty to go in for any wild proposition they like. We should avoid any possible extravagance on their part and be in a position to throw the responsibility upon them.

The HONORARY MINISTER: At the time when this work was first let to sub-agents the wages were, I think, 14s. a day; they are now 18s. The increase of one-eighth of a penny just about makes up for that difference in wages.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: What profit did the company make last year?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know, but it could not have been great.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: We get no information at all.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Most of the sub-agents lost money, and the agents had to make them an allowance of one-eighth of a penny per bushel to tide them over. This is an important amendment, and if it is carried it will mean that the agents will want more remuneration than they are at present asking for.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: This is an important amendment, from the point of view of the successful operation of the scheme, the Westralian Farmers, and the industrial peace of the State. We have heard a great deal about strikes in connection with the handling of wheat. Different members have stated that they would be only too pleased to do anything they could to get over future difficulties in this respect. If it could be ar-

ranged that the organisation, to which those who do the labour in connection with the handling of the wheat belong, dealt direct with those responsible bodies that are paying the wages, a better state of affairs could be brought about. That condition will secure peace more certainly than will dealing with any Minister. Let us eliminate the Minister, whoever he may be. The employer here is the Westralian Farmers Ltd., a body having many representatives in this Chamber. The Westralian Farmers get not less than 27s. per 100 for lumping the bags, and for that work they pay the men who actually do it about 7s. per 100. The profit to the Westralian Farmers on this work is fully £1 per 100 bags. If the workers and the Westralian Farmers could be brought into immediate contact, a reasonable arrangement would speedily be reached and industrial peace ensured. But probably there will not be industrial peace if the amendment is defeated.

[Hon. W. Kingsmill took the Chair.]

Hon. R. J. LYNN: The last speaker's argument really goes to show that the agreement should pass as printed. Any increase in wages which may be granted will have to be borne by the pool.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: But that can only be arranged by leave of the Minister.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: To ask that any addition wages payable to the men handling the wheat should be borne by the Westralian Farmers is unreasonable. The company would refuse to accept such a condition, saying that they base their contract price on ruling rates of wages. The Westralian Farmers are the only organisation in this State capable of handling the wheat harvest. If the agreement is altered now, the company will probably demand an increased price, if only as the result of this discussion, which will be regarded as an intimation of an imminent rise in wages.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Does not Mr. Lynn think it a reasonable requirement to ask that the Minister should tell us what was the profit made on this contract last year? We know nothing whatever about the company, or about the profit which has been made. I agree that to interfere with the agreement, unless we have the fullest knowledge of the circumstances, would be most dangerous, if not merely futile. I urge Mr. Lynn to use his influence to get the Committee some information on this subject.

Hon. F. A. BAGLIN: The extraordinary remarks of my senior colleague are causing me gradually to wake up. From those remarks it seems that a wheat combine is being created. Mr. Lynn tells us that if we are not very careful what we do and say here to-night, the State will find itself at the mercy of the Westralian Farmers Ltd., possibly for evermore. But how was the wheat harvest handled before the Westralian Farmers came into existence? By a number of agents.

Hon. H. Stewart: But not nearly so cheaply as now.

Hon. F. A. BAGLIN: It was being handled, and the country was not in the hazardous position of being at the mercy of one company for the handling of its wheat. Apparently, we must be very careful how we speak on behalf of the men who do the bullocking, lest we offend the powerful Westralian Farmers Ltd. Personally I favour co-operation, and I assisted in the formation of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. Even at that time I had a suspicion that the founders were not real co-operators, and now it appears that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. represent a bastard form of co-operation. We find, however, that this concern is stretching out to grip the whole of the wheat trade, and getting its grip on the Wheat Scheme as well, so that, in fact, we cannot do without it. If we do not protect those men who are doing the hard work, then we will find ourselves placed in a very bad position. We should not allow a concern to develop so that it will grip the whole community. If it is attaining those proportions, surely it is time that we commenced to get rid of it. If it is such as has been indicated, we should get rid of this concern at the earliest possible moment. I still have to believe that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. has got a hold over us, and that we must rid ourselves from its grip. The statements which have been made, furnish a revelation to me. If this concern is stretching out in every direction to secure greater power, we must deal with it. I am afraid that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. runs the Country party and has a good hold on the Honorary Minister in this Chamber. We should see that this trading concern does not secure any additional advantages in the State to-day.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I am astonished to hear the remarks by Mr. Baglin. Had he been in this House a few years ago when other acquiring agents, including Dreyfus & Co., Dalgety & Co., John Darling & Son, and James Bell & Co., submitted their prices for handling the wheat, he would realise that the agreement before us to-night provides much lower rates.

Hon. T. Moore: They used to buy the wheat.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The hon. member does not know what he is talking about. They did nothing of the kind. They put in their prices just the same as the Westralian Farmers. Judging by the relative prices these agents put in compared with the price submitted by the Westralian Farmers, it is astounding to me to find that the last-mentioned concern, for whom I hold no brief, is able to put in such a low quotation.

Hon. V. Hamersley: It is the lowest quote in Australia.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: It is astonishing that we have been able to make such a good arrangement. If we stayed here till to-morrow morning, we could not improve on the agreement embodied in the Bill. If any altera-

tion were to be effected it should have been made in August or September last, and we should not have waited until the present time, when the wheat is coming into the city and there is no one responsible to take over the handling.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What chance had we of dealing with it in August? The Bill is only just before us.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: We had just as much chance of dealing with it then as now. It only required some member to table a motion indicating that it was necessary, and the subject would have been considered and dealt with. I was at first opposed to the Westralian Farmers, and I introduced a deputation from the acquiring agents a few days before tenders closed for the handling of the harvest. Those agents could not come down to the price offered by the Westralian Farmers.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: They offered to do the handling at a lower rate.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Only after they knew they had no chance of getting the work. They were out to get the biggest price they could.

Hon. T. Moore: And so does this firm, now.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I am astonished that the Westralian Farmers, instead of quoting 1½d. did not put in at 1½d.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We are not discussing that.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The clause as it stands in the Bill deals adequately with the position. It is equitable to the farmers who have to pay the piper; it is agreeable to the Government and I see no reason why we should not accept it. Under the agreement we will get the wheat handled far cheaper than is the case in any of the other wheat-growing States of the Commonwealth.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Mr. Baglin could not be expected to be au fait with matters relative to these handling agreements. This is the first which has been before the House since he became a member of this Chamber. At the inception I was one of the bitterest opponents of the Westralian Farmers. I considered at the time that they had no right to come into the wheat handling business and divert it from the ordinary channels of trade.

Hon. T. Moore: Your conversion was rapid.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: For the past four or five years the Westralian Farmers handled the wheat to the entire satisfaction of the Government, and trade has been diverted into a co-operative concern. In the circumstances, I cannot do anything but attempt to keep the trade in the present channels. To-day the Westralian Farmers Ltd. comprises practically 90 per cent. of the producers of wheat in the State. What could be more fair or equitable than that the people who toil in order to produce the wheat, should have the handling and disposing of their commodity?

Hon. T. Moore: Are they the same people?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: They are. The subsidiary co-operative concerns are merely part of the parent firm. The shareholders are producing 90 per cent. of the wheat. No one has more right to handle it than the growers themselves. As I have already indicated, I was opposed to the Westralian Farmers securing the business at the outset because I considered it was equitable that the agents, merchants, and storekeepers who had supported the farmers should retain the trade in ordinary channels until the framers had discharged their liabilities. Assistance was given through the Industries Assistance Board and Parliament granted a moratorium. The movement to enable the co-operative companies to take over the handling of the wheat seemed to me to be an interference with the ordinary channels of trade. However, new conditions arose and the Westralian Farmers has developed into a profitable concern in the interests of the growers themselves.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It has grown into a combine.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: If it is a combine, it is a co-operative combine and the shareholders, who are the growers, secure the advantage of the profits.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: And the consumers pay.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Would the hon. member suggest that the agreement should be cancelled and Dalgety's and the other agents should take over the work?

Hon. F. A. Baglin: Give them a chance.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I can imagine what sort of a chance the hon. member would give them. We would hear about the tentacles of the octopus, of this concern battenning on the community, and so on. Some members say the remuneration should be so based that the middlemen could traffic and fleece the farmer as in the past. If I could have my way there would be no middle men, and the worker would get his full pound of flesh. I ask the Committee to leave the agreement as it stands. It is the best ever made in the Commonwealth.

Hon. H. STEWART: It is easy to see that this agreement has been fixed at bed-rock prices and provides that any increase shall be borne by the pool, not by the consumer, but by the producer of the wheat. Mr. Miles knows in his own mind that the firms opposing the Westralian Farmers Ltd. had a fair deal, notwithstanding which he still maintains an illogical attitude inconsistent with his knowledge. As for the inculcus mentioned by Mr. Baglin, let us make a comparison of the rates paid in New South Wales, South Australia, and Victoria. In South Australia for the whole average service the price is 2 3-16d. In Victoria and New South Wales it is 2 1/4d. In this State it is 1 3/4d. That shows how the contract has been cut down.

Hon. T. Moore: It shows the class of workers we have in this State.

Hon. H. STEWART: For the first service, concluding with the stack, if we call

South Australia 18, the ratio is Victoria and New South Wales 17, Western Australia 14. For the second part of the service, from the farmers' wagons into trucks, the relative ratios are 18 for South Australia, 17 for New South Wales and Victoria, and 9 for Western Australia.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: Is the hon. member discussing the amendment or the agreement?

The CHAIRMAN: I have allowed considerable latitude, but the hon. member must confine himself to the amendment.

Hon. H. STEWART: I was doing so. I pointed out that here, if we paid for a service, it was understood to be on a certain basis of wages, and it was necessary for me to cite those figures. The rate is cut so fine that there is absolutely no margin to allow of any increase in rates being borne by the agent.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: It is well known that the hon. member is the Perth representative of the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Hon. H. Stewart: I take exception to that.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will withdraw it.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: Yes, I withdraw, but certainly the hon. member has the interests of that company at heart in common with those of his constituency generally. None of his remarks had any bearing on the amendment; if they had, they were really in support of the amendment. He referred to the inability of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. to pay this amount. There is nothing in the amendment asking the Westralian Farmers Ltd. to increase their payments. If a request were made to the Westralian Farmers for an industrial agreement, no doubt the firm would accede to that request. I am only asking that the workers' representatives shall be entitled to deal directly with the employers.

Hon. H. Stewart: Who is in charge of the farmers' wheat? The Minister, not the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: The Westralian Farmers Ltd. are the agents for the time being, and the wheat lumpers want to deal directly with the firm. The manager of the wheat scheme says it is not his business, that the workers have to deal with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. Under the Bill they cannot do this, but have to deal with the Minister. They do not want that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Hickey has told us what is in his mind. If he had a thousand men employed under an agent at Kaigoorlie, would he agree to the agent saying what should be paid those men without reference to him? That would be ridiculous. Yet he would like the Westralian Farmers Ltd. to be able to say to the men, "Yes, you may have a pound a day; we do not mind." It is apparent that he thinks it less easy to get an increase from the Minister than from the agents. The amendment would necessitate an increase of the present rate of remuneration paid to the agents before they would accept any such liability. The agents at present

have no chance to meet any increase in wages.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: Leave the agents to say that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: But they would refuse to operate under the agreement. If it is decided later on that an increase of wages must be paid, there should be some way to meet the increase. There will be no way to meet it if the amendment is accepted.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The object of the amendment, I take it, is that in the event of a dispute the men wish to deal with the agents who employ them, instead of negotiating through another party. Whether the increase should be passed on and borne by the pool is another question. Most contracts contain a clause to cover any increase of wages or cessation of work. Whether the wording of the amendment will achieve what the hon. member desires, I do not know.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: The best amendment I was able to frame is the one I have tabled. All I ask is that in connection with industrial arrangements the men engaged on the job should be able to deal exclusively with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. I do not want the agents to say that they cannot deal with us, but that we must deal with the Minister. I do not say that the agents can pay more than they pay at present, but personally I believe they can. I merely wish to give them an opportunity to say whether they can or not without referring us to the Minister. If we cannot deal with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. the Minister must take the responsibility for what might happen in future. In the past our experience with the Minister has been most unsatisfactory. I do not want a recurrence of that, but there will be a recurrence if the amendment is not passed, because the Minister is not the best man to deal with this sort of thing.

Hon. A. Sanderson: He is not in charge of the scheme.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: He is entirely in charge of this portion of it. The Minister made a mess of things before and he wants to repeat the dose.

The Honorary Minister: Of what part did I make a mess?

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: The Minister kept a lot of good men tramping about the country. He said they would not get work again under the scheme, though a lot of them did. He posed as being a strong man, and a hero. He kept them tramping about for a time, but they got work afterwards.

The Honorary Minister: It was their own fault entirely.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: I regret that the Minister's interjection has led me to digress somewhat.

The Honorary Minister: You introduced the subject.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: It does not reflect great credit upon the Honorary Minister. My object is to enable the men to deal directly with the representatives of the people who are employing them. When the Westralian

Farmers are to get say, 29s. per 100 bags for handling the wheat, to give the men 7s. for lifting it 20 bags high is not giving them very much. No Minister should have the right to dictate to a contractor as to the terms he shall make with his employees. Either let the Westralian Farmers do this work entirely or let the Minister do it as representative of the Government. Let us have it one way or the other. If the amendment does not give satisfaction I shall have done what I could to prevent the difficulties of the past from recurring in the future, but if the Committee reject it they must take the full responsibility for their action.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: If this amendment will overcome an industrial difficulty, it is entitled to the fullest consideration. The proposal put forward by Mr. Hickey seems a very reasonable one, though it may mean the redrafting of the agreement.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I take it this agreement was framed on the current rate of wages.

The Honorary Minister: That is so.

Hon. J. CORNELL: We have here a round-about way of doing business. The agreement should be altered so as to provide that any negotiations for increases in wages must be between the men and the Minister, and that any increase granted must be a charge upon the pool. In this respect I would eliminate the agent. Even as the agreement now reads, the final decision regarding higher wages rests with the Minister. I fear that the amendment, even if carried, will not get us much further forward.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I regret that I cannot support the amendment. I am opposed to the agreement, and especially to the manner in which the whole question has been handled, but the Westralian Farmers are only agents for the Minister, who represent the pool. Are the Westralian Farmers down to bedrock in their quotation? Have quotations been obtained from any other quarter? Has the Minister that information? Is he withholding it intentionally?

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: I am surprised at the remarks of Mr. Miles, on whose support I was counting. My amendment merely asks that the Westralian Farmers shall have the opportunity of dealing directly with the men. If they find they have not sufficient margin to meet an increase in wages, they will appeal to the Minister. I know that I can get an increase from the Westralian Farmers on the rates now being paid. The company, if I understand their objects rightly, do not desire to make a large profit on this contract, but aim chiefly at handling the wheat efficiently and cheaply for the growers.

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

Aves	..	..	..	8
Noes	..	..	..	11
Majority against	..	..	..	3

AYRS.

Hon. F. A. Baglin
Hon. J. Cunningham
Hon. J. W. Hickey
Hon. A. Lovekin
Hon. T. Moore

Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. A. Sanderson
(Teller.)

NOSS.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. H. P. Colebatch
Hon. J. Duffell
Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. R. J. Lynn
Hon. G. W. Miles

Hon. J. Mills
Hon. E. Rose
Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. C. McKenzie
(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: Clause 18 of the schedule provides for a bond. What form does this bond take? Does the company put up cash?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: In Clause 19 of the schedule, why is the liability decreased although the value of the wheat has increased and there has been an increase in the charges for handling the wheat?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The liability is carried by the agent, not the sub-agent. The reason for the reduction is on account of the increase in the prices and wages, and if the agent has to carry more liability we must pay him for it.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: Can the Minister say whether anybody else was prepared to handle the wheat? Can he give us the date of the agreement with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd.? Apparently the Government have seen fit to carry on and have made the conditions easier for the firm, making their liabilities less and increasing the remuneration. The Committee is entitled to more information and we should increase this liability to the same rate as obtained last year. I move an amendment—

That in line 2 "one eighth of a penny" be struck out and "one farthing" inserted in lieu.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think the hon. member can move the amendment. It is out of order.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: It is not a tax on anyone; it is for the protection of the community in an agreement.

The CHAIRMAN: As it is an agreement, in the circumstances I will accept the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Schedule as amended put and passed.

Schedules A, B, C—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 11.6 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 21st December, 1920.

	Page.
Question: Westralian Farmers' Ltd.	2608
Select Committee, Opticians Bill, Extension of time	2608
Bills: Workers' Compensation Act Amendment, 3r.	2608
Divorce Act Amendment, 3r.	2608
Wheat Marketing, report	2608
Stamp Act Amendment, Com.	2608
Appropriation, 2r., Com., report	2619
Lunacy Act Amendment, 2r., Com.	2619
Dividend Duties Act Amendment, Assembly's Message	2628
Land Tax and Income Tax, Assembly's Message	2628
Industries Assistance Act Continuance, Assembly's Message	2628
General Loan and Inscribed Stock Act Amendment, 2r., Com., report	2628
Loan, £3,870,000, 2r., Com., report	2630
Dentists, 1r.	2645
Tax Collection, 2r.	2645

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—WESTRALIAN FARMERS, LIMITED.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (without notice) asked the Honorary Minister: Has he been able to obtain the report and balance sheet of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd.?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: No, it has not yet come to hand.

SELECT COMMITTEE—OPTICIANS BILL.

Extension of Time.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson, time for bringing up the Select Committee's report extended until next day.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Workers' Compensation Act Amendment.
 - 2, Divorce Act Amendment.
- Returned to the Assembly with amendments.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Report of Committee.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move—

That the report of the Committee be adopted.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: The Honorary Minister should first furnish us with the information asked for yesterday, as to the date of the agreement. I will oppose the motion until we get that information, and I hope the House will support me.

The PRESIDENT: I suggest that any opposition should come at the third reading stage. I do this merely with the object of