

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**WEDNESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 1922**

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WEDNESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER, 1922.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. Bertram, *Maree*) took the chair at 11 a.m.

REGULATION OF SUGAR CANE PRICES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

(*Mr. Kirwan, Brisbane, in the chair.*)

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eucham*): I beg to move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Acts, 1915 to 1921, in certain particulars.”

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

FIRST READING.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eucham*) presented the Bill, and moved—

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

Question put and passed.

The second reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

PRIMARY PRODUCTS POOLS BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eucham*): This Bill is of considerable importance to Queensland. As I have already explained, the object of the Bill is to give the Governor in Council power to proclaim any primary product a product within the meaning of the Act, and to bring into existence a committee or pool to control that industry. It is not experimental, because we have two Pool Acts already in existence in Queensland. The first was the Wheat Pool Act and the second the Cheese Pool Act, both of which, I think, have justified their passage through this Parliament. A section of the Council of Agriculture thought it was necessary to create a banana pool, and they brought the matter before the Council of Agriculture, which decided, after I had explained the matter, that it would be preferable to pass a general pooling Bill to enable the Governor in Council, if a majority of the producers in an industry desired it, to create a pool without the necessity of passing a special Act similar to the Wheat Pool Act and the Cheese Pool Act. The Bill is a simple one and is largely based on the Wheat Pool Act, which was the first of its kind passed in the Commonwealth, so far as I know. We had nothing to guide us in preparing that measure except the regulations under the War Precautions Act, passed by the Federal Government, under which various pools were created during the war. The Bawra wool scheme was created in the same way. The success of the wheat pool and of the cheese pool has justified the Government in coming

forward with a general pooling measure, which will enable them, by Order in Council, to create a pool in any industry. One of the advantages of the pooling scheme is that it is an extension of the co-operative principle, bringing the whole of the producers in any section of the agricultural industry together, enabling them to handle their commodity in bulk, and financing the business as it can only be financed under such a scheme. It should be remembered that the State Government, by a guarantee, enabled the Wheat Board to finance the wheat crop. In fact, we went further than that, and we backed the Wheat Pool Committee by a guarantee of £10,000 to enable them to finance the canary seed scheme. I say a scheme of this kind can only be financed under the pooling system. One of the great advantages of the pooling system is that it enables a committee, on behalf of the producers, to finance the scheme, to store in bulk, if necessary, and to regulate the market so that the producers will get the best possible price for their product. I understand the Victorian Government passed a Wheat Pool Act in 1915, which was amended in 1916, 1917, and in 1918. The other States have had wheat-pooling schemes, but no State has gone as far as we are going now in passing a general pooling Act whereby the Governor in Council can create a pool in any industry where it is considered necessary.

MR. BRAND: Have you not lost any money through making advances in connection with any pool?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think we have lost any money. In regard to the expression “losing money,” I would like to say that, when I was at the Agricultural Conference in Perth, the question of pooling was brought up by the Minister from South Australia, who evidently was against the pooling system. In fact, I found myself the only Minister there in favour of the system, with the exception of the Minister in Western Australia, Mr. Maley, who was in a very difficult position, because he had to admit that the pooling system had been a great success so far as wheat handling in Western Australia was concerned. Mr. Ball, the Secretary for Agriculture in New South Wales, when arguing against the pooling system, said, “In New South Wales we lost over £1,000,000 this year under our pooling system in connection with wheat.” I immediately asked what he meant by “losing the money,” and said, “Who gets the £1,000,000?” He replied, “The farmers.” I do not know what is in the mind of the hon. member for Burrum. If you lose something, and another important section in the community gains something, it cannot be said to be a loss to the State. It is like the old Tory newspaper argument, when they point out how much the working man has lost over strikes, but they do not explain what the working man may have gained through them; so that, after all, if the Government lose something over the pooling system, and it goes into the pockets of the farmers, I say the money is not lost. I would like to call attention to a cable which appeared in the “Courier” of 30th May last, pointing out what they are doing in other parts of the world—

“A GREAT MARKETING ORGANISATION.

“New York, May 28.

“Plans have been completed for an organisation of farmers in the United

*Hon. W. N. Gillies.]*

States, with a capital of 100,000,000 dollars (£20,000,000), the purpose of the organisation being to sell wheat and to eliminate speculation. It is described as the greatest agricultural marketing organisation in the world, and it is hoped that it will succeed in eliminating middlemen and increasing the farmers' profits."

That is really what the pooling system means—eliminating as far as possible the middleman, the idler, the man who creates no new wealth, but who lives in almost every case in a better house than the farmer lives in. It goes on to say—

"In the event of its proving successful it is planned to form similar national farm organisations for the marketing of all crops."

That indicates that the people in America and other parts of the world are recognising the necessity of properly organising farming operations by cutting out the middleman—the man who does not create any new wealth, and who, under a proper system of organisation, is practically unnecessary. Of course we can understand the hostility and alarm of those people who in days gone by lived well on the products of the farmer. The Premier, in one of his speeches, pointed out the very important fact that probably only a little over 30 per cent. of the price paid by consumers for commodities produced by the farmer is received by the farmer. In order to do away with the middlemen, and cut out the speculators, and enable the farmers to handle their own produce right from the farm to the consumer, we think the pooling system has come to stay. I recognise that it may be possible by the pooling system for a section of the community to be able to hold up and improperly demand an unreasonable price from the rest of the community; but should that position of things be brought about, it will certainly react on the heads of those who bring it about to a much greater degree, and such power will not be used, I think, unjustly.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: When the Premier made that statement last month, you might have noticed where one of the co-operative companies paid 2s. 6d. a pound to the farmers for their cream, while in Brisbane butter was selling for 1s. 1½d. a pound.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not speaking of that, but of the products of the farm, many of which are manufactured into foodstuffs. It was stated recently that certain tinned stuffs made in Australia had changed hands nine times before they reached the consumer. Each of those nine middlemen had their "cut" before the articles reached the consumer. Why should there be this hostility from hon. members who claim to represent the farmers against cutting out the middleman? (Opposition dissent.)

Mr. BRAND: That is not true.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Only by that means can the farmer get full value for his labour, and the consumer purchase the commodity at a reasonable price.

Mr. CORSER: There has been no hostility on this side.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: In connection with the organisation of the agricultural industry by the Government, there has been a general attitude of hostility adopted by hon. members opposite; first of all, because Labour must not get the credit

[Hon. W. N. Gillies.

of doing anything good for the farmers; and, second, because of the section opposite who represent middlemen, and who have got into the House with the votes and financial assistance of the middlemen. (Opposition dissent.) The principal clause of the Bill is clause 3, which provides—

"The Governor in Council may from time to time by Order in Council declare that any grain, cereal, fruit, vegetable, or other product of the soil in Queensland, or any dairy produce or any article of commerce prepared other than by any process of manufacture from the produce of agricultural or other rural occupations in Queensland, is and shall be a commodity under and for the purposes of this Act."

After declaring it to be a commodity, the Governor in Council, by Order in Council, shall declare what class of persons shall be deemed to be growers of this particular commodity. It is provided that, in declaring the constitution of the board and the number of representatives to be chosen, the Governor in Council shall have due regard to any representations by the growers, made to the Minister in any petition or memorial. The object of that is that the growers shall be given the opportunity to say, first of all, whether they want to form a pool, and when they decide that they do want a pool, then the methods are provided under which that pool shall be carried out. Notice of the intention to make such Order shall be published by the Minister in the "Gazette" at least twenty-one days before the Order is made. Within twenty-one days after the publication of that notice in the "Gazette" fifty or more growers of the commodity residing in the district can petition the Minister and ask for a poll to be taken before the Order is made. If at least three-fourths of those interested in the matter do not vote in favour of the pool, the pool will not be carried out. The object of that is obvious. For instance, we are taking a poll at the present time in connection with the banana industry. This vote is being taken at the request of the fruit section of the Council of Agriculture. If 75 per cent. of the banana growers vote in favour of the creation of a pool, then it will be created. The Government do not wish to force a pool on any section unless the majority of the growers require it, and they think that it is quite sound to make the minority of 25 per cent. agree to the pool when the other 75 per cent. require it. If a pool is formed in connection with the banana industry then the whole of the bananas grown in Queensland will become the property of the pool. That is in the interests of the growers themselves. It is reasonable that at least 75 per cent. of the growers interested shall say that they are in favour of a pool before it is granted, because after all, minorities have rights.

Mr. MOORE: You have discovered that.

Mr. CORSER: Minorities have no rights in this Chamber.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They have their rights, and they have a great many privileges, too, in this Chamber.

Mr. VOWLES: On paper.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I think that principle is sound. After

a good deal of consideration, the Cabinet thought that a pool should not be created unless 75 per cent. of those engaged in the industry concerned voted in favour of it. When 75 per cent. of the growers ask for a pool, it will be granted.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: Must 75 per cent. of the growers ask for a pool?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Three-fourths of the growers interested must vote in favour of it. Regulations are provided for conducting the ballot for the board. Unless there is some very good reason, the members of the board must be chosen by ballot. For instance, the Council of Agriculture suggested that the executive of the Southern Queensland Fruit Growers' Association should be chosen as the board for the fruit section. The Minister was satisfied that they would give satisfaction to the growers, and decided that a poll need not be taken for the election of that particular board. Under ordinary circumstances, however, an election will have to take place, and we are following the practice of the elections laid down for the Wheat Board and the Cheese Board.

Mr. SIZER: Who will vote for the members of the board?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Those interested. The Order in Council will declare the class of persons who are deemed to be growers of such commodities. In the case of the banana growers we are including the whole of the banana growers so far as we know them. Under our present system of collecting statistics it is difficult to get a complete list of growers in any agricultural industry, because it is purely voluntary for them to send in their names. We are getting the names from the Government Statistician. When we set out to take a poll of the banana growers, we had to rely on the list supplied to us by the Government Statistician. In the case of the banana growers quite a number thought that they were entitled to vote, and they evidently were entitled to vote, but they were not on the list.

Mr. CLAYTON: Would you take a poll in each district?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The word "district" is used in the Bill, but in the case of the banana industry all the growers in the State would participate in the poll, and have a right to vote.

Mr. CLAYTON: Would you take a poll throughout Queensland in connection with every pool?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. For instance, if it were desired to establish a pool of maize-growers—which has been suggested, and which is very difficult, because the maize-growers are scattered all over the coastal areas, and there are thousands of buyers, whereas in the case of the wheat-growers, perhaps, only half a dozen buyers of wheat for milling purposes—a poll would be taken of all the maize-growers in the State of whom we have the names.

Mr. SIZER: Would they have to be members of the Primary Producers' Association in order to have a vote for a pool?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Not necessarily. They may not join the association, and this legislation is quite dis-

tinct from the Primary Producers' Association.

I think I have explained the essential clauses of the Bill. It contains many machinery clauses, and, as I have already explained, is largely copied from the Wheat Pool Act and the Cheese Pool Act. It is a very simple measure, and I have pleasure in moving—

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

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I am rather astonished that the Minister has given us such meagre information on such an important Bill. He seemed to start out with the intention of charging this side with hostility to the Bill. Certain questions were asked of him, and he gave replies. One hon. member asked him whether money had not been lost on the wheat pool, and he said, "What do you mean by losing money?" and he replied by referring to some Minister in Western Australia or some other Minister, and told us that we should be ashamed of saying that money is lost when it goes from one section of the community to the other. He might just as well say that money is not lost when an embezzler takes money and loses it on the raccourse, because it has gone to the bookmakers. That would be just as sensible a reply as that which the hon. member gave to us.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The bookmaker does not produce any new wealth.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member also said that he desired to do away with the middleman. Is there any desire on the part of the Government to do away with the middleman? They started a State Produce Agency, but they only created a new class of middleman.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Not at all.

Mr. VOWLES: We were told that that agency was going to do away with the speculator, but it is a speculating agency, and it loses on almost every occasion it goes in for speculation.

Mr. BRENNAN: Why?

Mr. VOWLES: Because of bad management. The Government are simply creating a new class of middleman, and there is very grave danger that they are going to imperil the co-operative principle which we are trying to put into effect.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In this Bill?

Mr. VOWLES: Not in this Bill, but as regards your policy. I am not too keen on the Bill, as we have it to-day; it is open to a good deal of adverse criticism. In the first place, I do not believe in compulsory pools—I do not say that this Bill makes provision for compulsory pools. I take exception, in the very beginning, to the definition of "commodity." It appears to me that it is rather too comprehensive and too vague. It says that a "commodity" is—

"Any grain, cereal, fruit, vegetable, or other product of the soil in Queensland, and any dairy produce and any article of commerce prepared other than by any process of manufacture from the produce of agricultural or other rural occupations in Queensland, which in each case has been declared to be a commodity under and for the purposes of this Act."

Mr. Vowles.]

What the latter part means I do not know; it is horribly vague, and may cover anything. When the Bill was foreshadowed, we were told that it did not include beef or mutton. I understand also that it is not supposed to include wool; but it would appear that everything else grown in Queensland that can be manufactured can be brought within the operation of this Bill. The Governor in Council may declare that any grain, cereal, fruit, vegetable, dairy produce, or article of commerce shall be a commodity for the purposes of the Act. Then they constitute a Board. That Board has very great powers. So far as I can see, it is going to be governed, not by the representatives of the people, but simply by the Minister, the officers of his department, or possibly by the Council of Agriculture. Once a Board is established, it says that—

“By any such Order in Council the classes of persons who shall be deemed to be growers of such commodity and the method of choosing the representatives of such growers may be declared.”

It will be noted that it may apply to certain localities. On page 3 it will be found that—

“In declaring the constitution of the Board and the number of representatives to be chosen, the Governor in Council shall have due regard to any representations by the growers made in any petition or memorial to the Minister by them.”

So far as the Board is concerned, the Bill says that—

“The Minister shall, as soon as practicable after the application of this Act to a commodity, appoint a Board of such number of representatives of the growers of the commodity as prescribed, and shall appoint one of them to be chairman of such Board.”

He also has the power further on to decide what remuneration is to be given to the members of the Board. Further, he has the right to fill vacancies if they occur upon that Board. No provision whatever is made, nor is any indication given, as to whether the growers are to have any right to vote for the representatives on future Boards. It would appear to me that this is going to be a continuing Board, constituted originally by the Minister—who has the right to appoint a chairman, to determine the remuneration to be given to the various members, and to fill vacancies when they occur from time to time. Under the Bill, there is no term fixed for the life of the original Board. As vacancies occur, either by members voluntarily retiring or by death, they will be filled, not by the representatives of the growers but by the Minister. What rights have the growers, once a commodity is declared to come within the operation of the Act and to be the subject of a pool? A “Gazette” notice will appear. That “Gazette” notice, so far as the Minister is concerned, may have application to his own particular district in North Queensland. What rights have the growers under those conditions? A pool may be started in respect of different localities. It may be necessary to create a pool in North Queensland in connection with maize. What will be the position of these growers? They will be presumed to see this notification in the “Gazette.” I do not know how many days it will take for the “Gazette,” which is

printed on a Saturday, to get to where the hon. gentleman's maizegrowers reside.

Mr. BRENNAN: It will be published in the newspapers as well.

Mr. VOWLES: It may not be a matter for the newspapers, though they are presumed to see what is in the “Gazette.” It is not to be advertised in the locality where the growers interested are located; it merely appears in the “Gazette,” and they are presumed to see it. Such people as will be affected by this Act do not live in towns, and do not get their papers immediately. It would be almost an impossibility for many of the growers in the Minister's own locality to receive a “Gazette,” go round with the necessary petition to obtain the fifty signatures required, and send it back so that it will be in the hands of the Minister within the stipulated twenty-one days. The Minister says he does not believe in compulsory pools. If a petition is presented to him by fifty persons in the maize-growing industry and a ballot is taken, how is the Minister to discover who are to vote for the whole of Queensland when there is no registration and no record of maizegrowers or persons to whom the rights are to be applied?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We will take steps to overcome that difficulty. We are getting rolls prepared.

Mr. VOWLES: There is very great difficulty in connection with the matter. If fifty people ask for a pool, and only 100 record their votes throughout Queensland, then seventy-five of those people voting will have the power to bind the whole of the rest of the growers of that commodity in the State. Unless very great care is taken, many men deeply interested in that commodity will not have an opportunity of voicing their opinions. There is no machinery whatever for dealing with the matter.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Why are you hostile?

Mr. VOWLES: I am not hostile; I am merely pointing out some of the defects in the Bill. This Bill will interfere with a man's own private belongings. Supposing we are going to have a pool to deal with fodder. We know that Queensland is a very large State, and we might safely say that at any time in the year a drought is prevailing in some portion of it. We might have abundant rains in and around the Brisbane area, and yet when we go 100 miles away we find a district suffering from drought. Take the country about Gatton, at the foot of the Main Range, and other places where fodder is produced. Through the lack of rain they may not have an abundance of fodder, but the people in the district may have been provident enough to conserve fodder for their own requirements. Supposing that I have in my shed 50 to 100 tons of fodder. Supposing I had followed my usual custom of being provident enough to conserve my own fodder for my own purposes: is that fodder to come into the hands of the pool?

Mr. BRENNAN: Do you say the farmers will be dishonest amongst themselves?

Mr. VOWLES: If a man is provident like that, it is his own business, and we should not interfere with him. Once the Order in Council is issued, the whole stock, whether it is for home consumption or for

[Mr. Vowles.

purposes of trade, is commandeered. This fodder is held, not for purposes of trade, but for the owner's personal convenience.

Mr. BRENNAN: We are now paying more for butter than it costs to produce.

Mr. VOWLES: The Commissioner of Prices, when he went into the matter, discovered that the dairy farmers were selling their produce under the cost of production. He fixed the price at 1s. 7d. per lb., so that they would not receive less than the cost of production.

Mr. BRENNAN: The farmer is well off now.

Mr. VOWLES: He may be well off in certain localities, but I know many places where he is not doing well. I cannot understand the Minister creating himself the grand Pooch Bah in connection with this matter. In every piece of legislation that comes forward we find the Secretary for Agriculture as the head and shoulders of it. If he is able or not able to conduct the affairs of the various councils on which he will sit in a better way than he is able to explain legislation to this House, I am sorry for those councils that he is going to be associated with.

Mr. BRENNAN: The legislation explains itself.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: To any intelligent person it needs no explanation.

Mr. VOWLES: It needs a lot of explanation, more especially when we are dealing with the farmer. He is one of those persons who are very suspicious, and you always want to be very frank when dealing with him. The Board will have power to arrange for financial accommodation to provide the commodity for consumption in Queensland where there is a shortage and to make provision for export. I think the Minister, in this Bill, has taken notice of the shortcomings in the Wheat Pool Act, under which many people were compelled to hand their wheat to a controlling board, and they have been very serious losers through the inaction of that board.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Some of the millers have lost a good deal.

Mr. VOWLES: I am talking about the growers. I have seen where wheat has been dumped and subjected to all sorts of weathers, and where it can be seen to-day rotting. Some wheat of the very best quality on the Downs has been brought into the railway sidings, and the owners have received practically nothing at all, through the inaction or unbusinesslike methods of the pool.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is a reflection upon the farmers who asked for the pool.

Mr. VOWLES: I am talking about the methods adopted. I am glad to see the Minister is endeavouring to put those matters right. I am glad to see that the wheat-growers who are big losers, or who are losers in any degree at all, owing to the inaction of the board, are to be recompensed. When an agent of the Board takes delivery, technically or otherwise, the commodity becomes the property of the Board, and no loss is to be charged against the person who has no control over it. The Bill provides—

“All the commodity delivered to the Board shall be delivered in the name of the grower thereof, and, if so prescribed,

such growers shall tender with each consignment of the commodity intended for delivery to the Board a certificate . . .”

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What is wrong about that?

Mr. VOWLES: Absolutely nothing. There are a lot of good principles in the Bill; but how is it generally to be put into effect? The Bill further provides—

“The board shall pay to every grower the value of so much of his commodity which has been stacked, stored, or otherwise dealt with in the prescribed manner so as to be ready for delivery to the board, and which thereafter, through no fault of the grower, has been damaged or destroyed before such delivery.”

That is very good. That has been put in as a result of experience, and the experience has not been a bitter one for the board or the Department of Agriculture, but only for the unfortunate grower. I would like the principle of payment to be the same as is contained in the Wheat Pool Act—that is, by the delivery of certificates. There was a provision whereby those certificates would not get on to the Stock Exchange and be trafficked in. I would like to know why the hon. gentleman is not adopting that principle here. I think a man was only entitled to sell the certificates at par, or to hand them over to his bank, and the bank could accept them after deducting the usual bank discount. If we are going to get the certificates provided here, and allow them to be thrown on to our Stock Exchanges, we are going to bring about such a state of affairs as obtained in New South Wales not so very long ago, when legislation had to be passed to deal with the matter. In that State there was speculation, not in the commodities but in the certificates. Protection is required in that direction as well as in other directions.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The consent of the board will have to be obtained before the certificates can be transferred.

Mr. VOWLES: It should be definitely stated, as in the Wheat Pool Act, that that cannot be done. Why throw the whole onus on the board? Why should this House not accept the responsibility and say that it shall not be done? Although that is a very fine clause in regard to existing contracts, I think we are likely to fall foul of the common law there. We are told distinctly that, once the board has published a notification in the “Gazette,” all existing contracts are void, but it is provided that this does not apply to interstate contracts. For a very good reason. This House is not competent to pass legislation which will affect interstate contracts or rights. But there are other rights. Take the case of individuals who have contracts with the old country. Take the leading established businesses; take butter; take cheese; and in many other directions you have agencies which have liabilities to complete certain orders. Do you mean to tell me that the legislature can override the civil rights of individuals who live in the old country and other places, and that you can exempt the parties to those contracts from liability? The common law will insist on certain rights being protected, and we are very liable to fall foul of common law in that respect.

Mr. BRENNAN: Contracts made in Australia are liable.

*Mr. Vowles.]*

Mr. VOWLES: Suppose the contract is made in England, can you make such contract null and void by a clause such as this? You have no chance in the world of doing it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member for Drayton does not object to protecting a producer from a contract made to his detriment.

Mr. VOWLES: It is a very dangerous thing to give the legislature power to cancel contracts. Many of our agents have to carry out their contracts very often at a loss, and they do it honourably. Of course, at other times they make a profit.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Can the Bill be effective without that provision?

Mr. VOWLES: The thing is open to a great deal of criticism from that point of view. That is one of the pitfalls into which any legislation is liable to fall. You cannot by legislation undo all existing contracts and arrangements simply by a clause in an Act of Parliament. I am warning the Minister that there is trouble ahead of him there, and that, when these pools come into existence, he will need to be very careful so far as existing contracts are concerned.

Provision is made with regard to liens under the Mercantile Act. That is very desirable, and it is incumbent on the grower to notify the board of any charge on his property, and that charge is protected.

Then we come to the question of evidence, and there seem to be some innovations there. Subclause (3) of clause 20 reads—

“The averment on behalf of the board in any complaint that anything was or is a commodity to which the provisions of this Act are applicable or was or is such a commodity mentioned or included in any notification, direction, or order, or that any place is a place in Queensland, or that any person is a grower of such a commodity, or is an authorised agent, shall be sufficient evidence of that fact.”

I do not agree with that. That is a matter which should be left open to the court, because there are certain commodities and certain by-products of commodities in respect of which prosecutions may take place, if they are not specially stated as coming within the ambit of the Act. If it does include these things, that is the end of it, but I say it should be left open to the court. The next subclause deals with the admission of documentary evidence that comes from the subordinates in a concern. It reads—

“Any document or anything purporting to be a copy of or extract from any document containing any reference to any matter or thing alleged to be done in contravention of this Act shall, upon proof that it was produced by or came from the custody of a person charged with the offence, or a responsible officer or a representative of that person, be admissible in evidence against that person, and evidence of the matters and things thereby appearing, and that the document (or, in the case of a copy, that the original thereof) was written, signed, despatched, and received by the persons by whom it purports to have been written, signed, despatched, and received, and that any such copy or extract is a true copy of or extract from the original or from which it purports to be copy or extract.”

[Mr. Vowles.

That, to my mind, is going a little bit too far. The object of that clause is to try and compel people to disclose their private affairs, and, if they do not feel inclined to do so, you can bring forward bogus documents, like we have seen documents recently brought forward in this Chamber, and they have to stand to what is disclosed in those bogus documents. That is one way of manufacturing evidence, and it is one of those things that I object to. The policy of the Country party is to try and foster co-operation.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We are very pleased to hear that, if it is true.

Mr. VOWLES: There are many products to which the Bill will be applicable which do not need interference from anybody—Governments or otherwise. Take our butter industry. Is that not being carried on efficiently from a management point of view? How much butter is produced in Queensland to-day that is not the property of co-operative institutions? I think only about 2 per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: A lot of butter is produced in the other States by private companies.

Mr. VOWLES: This Bill does not in any way affect the property of the proprietary concerns in Victoria. The hon. gentleman cannot, by any stretch of imagination, tell us that this Bill is going to prevent the importation of Southern butter.

Mr. BRENNAN: We do not expect it to do so.

Mr. VOWLES: Then, why worry about Southern proprietary concerns? I am dealing with the local concerns to which this legislation will apply. I say only about 2 per cent. of the butter manufactured in Queensland is manufactured by private companies, and the rest is manufactured by co-operative concerns, and the shareholders and producers are satisfied with the management of those concerns; so why should we interfere? We should stabilise the industry so far as the export trade is concerned, and I hope the Government will give support in that direction. We are told that the Council of Agriculture considers this Bill necessary. No doubt the fruitgrowers thoroughly understand their own business, and, if they have asked for it, we have no objection, because that is not compulsion. But in the clause whereby any fifty persons can present a petition and there is no machinery provided for the registration of the producers, and they do not have the opportunity of recording their opinions, we are treading on very dangerous ground. Every facility should be given to allow every person interested to have a voice in the matter.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: So they will.

Mr. VOWLES: I sincerely trust they will, only there is no machinery provided.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Can you imagine the Secretary for Agriculture doing something that a majority of the growers do not want?

Mr. VOWLES: Some enthusiast who has received the benefit of some pool may come along and tell a story, which, on the face of it, may appear perfectly right, and he may be believed by both sides. In his enthusiasm and his desire to do good to the

industry, he may take certain action which may eventually turn out to be a curse to the industry. It may be the means of many men losing the benefits of their labour and the profit to which they are entitled. I say that everybody in the industry should be given reasonable opportunity, and in my opinion twenty-one days' notice is insufficient. If it is going to apply to local districts I urge the Minister not to worry so much about the "Gazette" notices, but to see that the advertisements are published locally, so that everybody will have the opportunity of finding out. If he does that, it will be a step in the way of overcoming the difficulties.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You seem to assume that I, as Secretary for Agriculture, want to do something that the majority of the producers do not want.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. gentleman has assumed that the Opposition are all hostile to the measure. Surely a measure like this can be argued from every point of view. We know that if the Minister does not want to alter the Bill we cannot alter one letter in it, but we can put different phases of the matter before the hon. gentleman which he has probably not considered up to the present, which may be of benefit to the Bill and in the interests of the producers. That is all we want. We are impotent so far as actual results are concerned. All we can do on the second reading is to make suggestions, which should be considered on their merits. If the Minister rejects them he takes the responsibility; if they are accepted we take some of the responsibility. All we are here to do is to see that legislation which is introduced is the best class of legislation which we can put on the statute-book.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): I think that the concluding remarks of the leader of the Opposition may well be considered by the Minister. In a Bill such as we are considering now, unless very great care is taken when it comes into operation, the results may be simply disastrous, although the intention is to assist the primary producer. Personally I think that the less Government interference there is with the primary producer, and the less compulsion imposed upon him in carrying on his industry, the better it will be in the interests of the community.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The more he will be at the mercy of the middleman.

Mr. TAYLOR: That remark of the Minister's about the middleman just shows the attitude of the hon. gentleman, and how small his mind is. He spoke sneeringly of what he termed middlemen, whom he represented as men who did not create wealth in the community. What wealth has he created?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: More than you.

Mr. TAYLOR: Are there not tens and hundreds of thousands of persons in the community who are not on the land, and who could not be said to be creating wealth in the same way as the primary producer? The remarks of the Minister are not worthy of him. If he wants this Bill to be discussed as it should be, and to operate in the best interests of the community, his remarks with regard to middlemen are not worth noticing. There are thousands of men on

the land to-day who owe their position to the unsecured credits that have been given to them by middlemen.

Mr. BRENNAN: They pick their marks in each case.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They are charging them cent. per cent. too.

Mr. TAYLOR: If I was a trader I should not pick the hon. member for Toowoomba. I should take care to keep a long distance from him. I would not pay my accounts with dishonoured cheques.

Mr. BRENNAN: No; you would rob the farmer.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: The hon. member for Windsor does not rob widows.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member for Toowoomba accused the hon. member for Windsor of having robbed the farmers.

Mr. BRENNAN: By taking the tallies off the trucks.

The SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member to withdraw the statement.

Mr. BRENNAN: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: I would ask the hon. member for Pittsworth if I correctly understood him to say that the hon. member for Toowoomba had robbed widows?

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I simply said that the hon. member for Windsor had not robbed widows.

The SPEAKER: Does the hon. member say that he did not imply that the hon. member for Toowoomba had robbed widows?

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I simply said that the hon. member for Windsor had not robbed widows.

The SPEAKER: I would ask the hon. member for Pittsworth, if he did make the implication, to withdraw it.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: All right, I will withdraw it.

Mr. TAYLOR: I regret that any personal recriminations have taken place, as there is no need for them. We are here to discuss the Bill, and the Minister is responsible for the scene which has taken place, by the interjection which he made. I hold that hon. members should try to conduct the debate as it should be conducted, so that the best interests of the primary producers and the community generally may be considered. I do not think that anyone on this side of the House has any objection to the co-operative efforts of the farmers. We believe in the farmer getting as much as he can for his produce; but we have to consider whether this measure is going to return him a higher price for his produce or whether he will not get a lower price than he is receiving at the present time. We all know that certain States in the Commonwealth have cut out compulsory pools. I do not know about New South Wales, but they have done it in Victoria. In States where there is a large export of wheat, why should they cut out compulsory pools if they have been successful?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They have been successful, so far as the farmers are concerned.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The farmers asked for them to be cut out.

*Mr. Taylor.*]



The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They did not.

Mr. TAYLOR: Under this Bill we are constituting boards which will take delivery of the farmers' produce and dispose of it. Certainly there is provision in the Bill for a ballot to be taken; but, as the leader of the Opposition pointed out, what guarantee have we that, when the ballot is taken, the majority of the growers are going to vote? There is nothing in the Bill providing for that. Although a requisition may be sent in signed by fifty growers, 100 growers may impose their will on 400 or 500 growers. I think that the ballot should be thoroughly representative of the growers' interests in an industry. Co-operation has had quite a troublous time in Queensland; but in quite a number of directions it is successful. For instance, when you come to deal with a pool in connection with fresh food, you are dealing with a very ticklish problem, and it is difficult to say what may be the result of it. Two co-operative companies in the Carnarvon electorate failed disastrously last year in their efforts. The one which was established by the returned soldiers lost between £1,000 and £2,000, and a week or two ago the co-operative company in Stanthorpe controlled by the growers there presented a balance-sheet at their annual meeting showing a loss on the year's transactions of about £2,000. These are the difficulties which men have to contend with in carrying on co-operative enterprises when they are dealing with fresh food and perishable articles. Therefore, unless we are very careful in regard to this legislation, instead of finding a way out for the farmer and providing a market for his products, we are going to make our position ten times worse than it is at the present time. As a man who has been in business for many years, I say emphatically that the primary producers in this country

[12 noon] have had a fair go from what is called the middleman. The primary producers have not been robbed by the middleman, as we have been told in this Chamber time and again. You have only to remember that a few years ago the Government started a produce agency of their own. They started the State Produce Agency, yet we find to-day that the men who were in business when that State Agency started are still doing business. Not one of them has gone out of business, notwithstanding that the Government started in opposition to them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Every anti-Labour member in this House did his best to kill the State Produce Agency, because it was against his personal interests.

Mr. WARREN: That is not true.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Every member sitting on that side tried to kill it.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is a rather remarkable admission for the Minister to make that members sitting on this side tried to kill any Governmental enterprise. There is no doubt that any individual or any Government that carries on business in a way that will suit the farmers the best will get that business. If the Government can show by their handling of the farmers' business, and by everything else associated with the business, that they are going to do better and give more satisfaction to the producer, then they will get all the business. Anyone who knows anything about the butter industry in Queens-

land, and anyone who has seen it grow to what it is to-day, knows quite well that not 2 per cent. of the butter manufactured in Queensland is manufactured by private companies. When the butter industry first started, it had to depend on private individuals and private companies. It was the private individuals who gave the industry its first start. They gave it the kick-off as it were, and put it on a good foundation. It is to the early efforts of those private individuals that the success of the butter industry is due. The co-operative companies came in afterwards and reaped the benefits of the labours of those private individuals. Exactly the same remarks apply to the bacon industry. Before the bacon industry could be properly started, tens of thousands of pounds were lost by private individuals who were endeavouring to establish that industry. By continuing their activities and specialising in business they were able to place the bacon industry on a very solid and sound foundation, with the result that to-day the co-operative companies have come in and are doing exceptionally well. I say "Good luck to them." There appears to be room for the whole lot of them. They are carrying on their activities, and doing well for the primary producer. Reference was made by the leader of the Opposition to the storage of the products of the farmer. After a man has gone to the trouble of storing a considerable amount of lucerne and fodder of any kind, it hardly seems a fair thing that the votes of the people in his locality should oblige him to decide on a certain course with regard to that commodity. But, according to the Bill, if a certain number of votes are recorded in favour of a pool in that district, that producer can be compelled to hand over his fodder to the board for disposal.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They can't make him, and he won't.

Mr. TAYLOR: It does not strike one as being a fair thing to bring that man under the operation of the Act and allow his produce to become the property of the board when it is constituted. With regard to the boards, it seems to me on reading the Bill that the Minister will have far too much control. If a member is absent from a meeting on account of illness or anything else, he cannot nominate another person to take his place.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If a member is absent through illness, someone can be appointed to act in his place.

Mr. TAYLOR: My reading of it is that the Minister makes the appointment for the deputy to act for the absent member. This is the subclause that I referred to on page 4—

"(5) In the case of the illness, suspension, or absence of any member of the board, the Minister may appoint a deputy to act for such member during his illness, suspension, or absence; and every such deputy shall, while so acting, have all the powers and carry out all the duties of such member."

The Minister can put some outside person on the board. I contend that these powers should rest with the board, and not with the Minister. The matter of contracts has been arranged. Anyone who is familiar with the butter business will know the procedure they adopt. I may say that I am not interested in the butter business. I do not do anything in dairy produce at all in my line, but I

[Mr. Taylor.

have sufficient knowledge of the butter business to know that contracts are made for some months ahead. It is the same with cheese. Contracts are made for months ahead, so that they can inform the people in Great Britain as to the time of arrival, and they will know when they can get their supplies. The arrangement is also made so that the producers will be able to strike a favourable market for the disposal of their produce. Under this Bill the board has power to nullify any contracts entered into. I do not think that is a fair thing. That should be cut out altogether. I must confess that I do not like many of the principles of the Bill. I believe in the principle of voluntary co-operation by the primary producer and letting the Government assist him as much as possible in the way of financing him and that kind of thing. If the Government do that, and let the primary producer run his own business, and cut out the compulsory clause, then the Bill will do good.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If that is to be a voluntary matter there is no need for the Bill.

Mr. TAYLOR: It would be better not to have any Bill than to place these restrictions on the primary producer. Let the primary producer work out his own destiny. He can work out his own salvation much better on his own account than if he has to comply with Government regulations and Government supervision.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): Members of the Opposition, particularly the Country party, are desirous that those engaged in the primary producing industry shall have control of the marketing and handling of their own products. Therefore we welcome a Bill similar to this. I cannot see what the object of the Minister was in contending that the Opposition were opposing it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat made no secret about it.

Mr. CORSER: I am referring to the Country party. We have noticed of late that the Country party have been accused of opposing Bills that they really supported. It seems really unfair tactics on the part of the Minister, by innuendo, to refer to the fact that the Opposition, or Country party, are opposing Bills when really we welcome them or invite them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The leader of the Opposition did not say much in favour of the Bill.

Mr. CORSER: The leader of the Opposition supported the Bill, and from a technical point of view he gave some very wise information for the guidance of this House.

Mr. BULCOCK: He said he was not keen on the Bill.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. gentleman was not here.

Mr. BULCOCK: I was here the whole time that the leader of the Opposition was speaking.

Mr. CORSER: Speaking for myself, as a member of the Country party, I welcome any Bill that will give to the primary producer the handling and marketing of his own products. I am afraid that this Bill will not altogether do that. I hope, when we get to the Committee stage, that the Minister will give that control to the primary producers. In support of my argument I will refer to the clauses of the Bill—if I may,

because it is not usual to refer to clauses at this stage. Clause 4 provides—

“(1) The Minister shall, as soon as practicable after the application of this Act to a commodity, appoint a board of such number of representatives of the growers of the commodity as prescribed, and shall appoint one of them to be the chairman of such board.

“(2) The board shall not be deemed to represent the Crown for any purpose whatsoever.

“(3) The board shall be called the ‘Wheat Board.’”

I am taking the Wheat Board for example—

“and shall have the powers and perform the duties conferred and imposed upon them by this Act. The members of such board shall be paid such remuneration as the Minister thinks fit.”

They should certainly be remunerated, but the part I cavil at is that which prevents the producer from controlling the marketing of his product. The producer should have the right to say who shall be on the Board, but this Bill provides that the Minister shall appoint the Board.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Political interference.

Mr. CORSER: The maize-growers, for instance, should have the right to handle the marketing of maize, if they desire.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The Minister will appoint; the farmers will elect.

Mr. CORSER: The Bill gives the authority to the Minister, and not to the farmers. In the same way the butter producers should have the right to handle butter, and the wheatgrowers the right to handle wheat; but this Bill provides that the power is to be vested in the Minister.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No.

Mr. CORSER: The Minister cannot say that clause 4 does not say exactly what I have said. That is the provision of the Bill, and, if the Minister wishes to avoid that result, let him amend the Bill to provide what he claims is the intention. We want that power vested in the men who produce, and we believe that by that means we shall get nearer to the co-operative control which we desire. It can only be secured by allowing the people in the industry to control their own industry.

The Minister has referred to the middleman. That is the old bogey that is always put up at the time of an election. There should be no such cry to-day if the Minister's State Produce Agency had achieved what they claimed it was going to do—that is, to cut out the middleman. They said that under their system there would be no fear of the farmers being taken down by the middleman. Either it has been a failure, or there is no excuse for raising that bogey now. But, if there are better means in the hands of the farmer, allow him to use them. We wipe out all possibility of the middleman robbing the farmer if we carry a Bill on true co-operative methods.

Certain members on the Government side have claimed that the farmers are doing well. That is far from being a fact. Unfortunately, most of our country districts are suffering from want of rain, and most of the farmers are at their wits' end to know how they are going to meet their obligations. We might just as well question some of the provisions of the Bill, because the Minister in

Mr. Corser.]

charge of it is the Minister who not long ago stated that the platform of the Labour party aimed at production for use and not for profit. Whilst some of the machinery of this Bill can evidently be stretched in the direction of the desire of the communistic agitator, we are certainly not going to allow ourselves to be drawn into any system which says that products are to be grown for use and not for profit.

Mr. GLEDSON: Do you believe that the farmers should get all the profits?

Mr. CORSER: We believe that the farmer should get the profits. What does the hon. member think he goes out into the country for?

Mr. GLEDSON: I thought he went there to make a living.

Mr. CORSER: He wants to make a profit whilst he is making a living. Many of them are not making a living for themselves; they are making a living for the people opposite. They have been the victims of the policy of the Government in regard to the Commissioner of Prices, who reduced the price of their butter; and we remember also the butter seizures.

Mr. GLEDSON: Do you want London parity now?

Mr. CORSER: We want a fair return and a fair remuneration for our labour. We do not want interference by the Government. We want control by the producer.

Mr. GLEDSON: Do you want to get Melbourne prices now?

Mr. CORSER: We want a price in keeping with the work put into the industry, and the hon. member wants to keep us from getting that.

One important point which can be dealt with on the second reading is the question of how the Minister is going to get a roll of maizegrowers or the persons engaged in producing any other commodity. The Minister admits that there are difficulties in the way, but says that action is being taken, or can be taken, to overcome them. The difficulty would have been overcome already if the amendment of the Opposition on the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill had been accepted. We pointed out then that we believed in sectional organisation. We claimed, for instance, that the maizegrowers should be brought together in one organisation, and should not pool their interests in an organisation or Council of Agriculture composed probably of men engaged in raising other commodities. Had that idea been carried out then, the Minister would not find confronting him the difficulty which he has mentioned, as the maizegrowers would have been already organised as maizegrowers. It is not right to twist the Opposition, as was done on the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill, with opposing such measures as this. The truth always comes home to the people themselves. We supported that Bill, and we are supporting this Bill.

Mr. GLEDSON: I thought you were opposing it.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. member knows that those statements are only made to deceive. In 1920 I moved for the insertion in the Wheat Pool Bill of the very same provisions which the Minister now claims are embodied in this Bill.

[Mr. Corser.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It could not have been done in the Wheat Pool Bill.

Mr. CORSER: It could have been done.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It would have meant postponing the Bill.

Mr. CORSER: Had the Minister been sincere then, and agreed to the advocacy of the representatives of the farmers on this side, he would not have been in his present position. We are still hammering at the principle that the farmer should control his own industry, but we now find this Bill does not go all the way. On the Wheat Pool Bill, as will be seen on page 177 of "Hansard" for 1920, I moved the insertion of these words to enable the provisions of that Bill to be extended to other commodities than wheat—

"or to maize or any other agricultural product harvested during the season 1920-21, or any subsequent season."

Had that amendment been accepted, any commodity could at the desire of the farmer have been proclaimed a commodity under the Act, and its machinery could have been used. On that occasion I said—

"The amendment will have the effect of making possible, under the machinery of this Bill, provision for a pool for maize or any agricultural product for which one is required. We should know that in Queensland to-day there are more individuals engaged in the production of maize than in connection with wheat."

I also said—

"Maize to the extent of over 4,000,000 bushels yearly has been grown for at least two or three seasons."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It is not true.

Mr. CORSER: That is taken from the records of the department, and, if the hon. member says it is not true, he had better correct his own departmental records.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You will not find that in the records of the department.

Mr. CORSER: The official "Year Book," page 266, shows over 4,000,000 bushels grown in Queensland in three different years. One year it went to 4,460,306. There are more people growing maize in Queensland than there are growing wheat, and they are growing it on smaller areas. It is a fair thing to apply the same principle to maize production as was contained in the Wheat Pool Bill. I said further at that time—

"There will be no time for a separate Bill to be brought in to deal with this matter during the present session."

That was in 1920. My amendment sought to include provision for forming a maize pool or any other pool under the machinery of the Wheat Pool Bill, if the farmer desires.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You moved the amendment for the purpose of obstructing the Bill.

Mr. CORSER: It is only the Minister's warped and unfair mind that makes him say that. In the warped mind of the hon. gentleman no statement can be made and no action taken by a member of this party from a proper and good motive. He cannot see fairness in the action of any individual on this side on behalf of his constituents.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You admitted that a maize pool was impossible at that time.

Mr. CORSER: No such thing was impossible. After the House adjourned, the maize people in the Southern part of Queensland came together and expressed a desire for a pool. Representatives of the men engaged in the maize industry met in Brisbane on two occasions, and requested the Minister to form a compulsory maize pool. The Minister turned down the request with the statement that there was no Act which would enable the doing of such a thing. Yet a month or so previously he had turned down the provision which was asked for under the machinery of the Wheat Pool Act by a member on this side. The maize people could not secure their pool in a year when it would have been most advantageous to them. To-day the Minister comes along and three times has stated that this Bill is modelled on the Wheat Pool Act.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Largely.

Mr. CORSER: The same machinery is contained in it. Why could he not have made the same machinery applicable in 1920, when it was asked for? Had he done so a special Bill would not have been needed to-day.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Something more than a Bill is required.

Mr. CORSER: The amendment asked for on that occasion only provided for the creation of these pools where they were desired by the producers. We knew that it was a Wheat Pool Bill, but we contended that it could have been made to apply to other products, just as the Sugar Acquisition Act provided for the seizure of cattle as well as of sugar. The Minister asked how we could secure a maize pool under a Wheat Pool Bill? How did the Government seize cattle under the Sugar Acquisition Act? Surely maize is more allied to wheat than are cattle to sugar? Previous to this line of thought of the Minister—which has been brought about by the persistent advocacy of members of the Country party—we asked that something should be done to try and make it possible for the producer to get a fair thing for his commodity. Whether right or wrong, it shows that a line of thought existed here in that direction, and many hon. members had made requests. In 1917 I asked this question—

“Will the Government take what action is necessary to provide a guaranteed minimum price per bushel for this season's maize, to enable the farmers to secure a fair return for their labour and some compensation for the late bad seasons?”

So, right along the line, we have advocated something in the nature of a pool, or some control to enable a fair remuneration to be made to the primary producer. That consideration has controlled our thoughts right along. Unless we can stabilise prices to some extent, where possible, by legislation, we are not going to have a successful rural community; and, if we have not a successful rural community, how are we going to have a successful State? We should look after the people in our country districts, particularly those who are growers of maize. No doubt maize will be in the forefront as the commodity which will receive the greatest attention under this Bill. It is grown in my district chiefly by people who are new settlers. The first year after falling the scrub it is planted after the first ploughing of their virgin land. They are not in the

position to obtain a price that will cover the cost of production and enable them to pay their rent and the interest they owe to the Crown. Hon. members opposite to-day are levying a 10 per cent. fine on those people who are late payers of their rent. Surely it is up to us by legislative means to secure to them a fair price for their commodity to enable them to meet their rent and interest payments and be more comfortable in their home surroundings—which to-day are worse than those of any other section of our people. It is idle for the Minister to insinuate that we are against the Bill, when we not only support it, but in 1920 moved for provision to be made, and have advocated it since 1917. We do not believe in the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange; we are not going to allow the machinery of this Bill to be used later for the carrying out of the communistic platform passed by the Brisbane Labour Conference. If the Minister intends to carry out that objective we are not with him; we are supporting this Bill in order to give a fair remuneration to the producers, and we are against his principle of production for use and not for profit. Does the Minister mean that under this Bill production will be for use, and no profit shall go to the producer?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What is production for?

Mr. CORSER: For profit.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: For the middleman?

Mr. CORSER: For the producer. In the Trades Hall, the Minister, waving his arms, told those worthy people that they must remember that the policy of the Labour party was production for use and not for profit. Now he comes along here with a Bill, and says that this is something that the farmers have asked for. It is what the farmers' representatives have asked for; but we are going to see that they get a profit from their work and that they are not sent out into the blackblocks with their families to work long hours and get no profit out of it. We hope that this endeavour to improve the conditions of the farmer will bear some fruit. We believe in the principle of the Bill, and we want to make certain that a fair remuneration shall go to the primary producer.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You believe in compulsory pools, do you?

Mr. CORSER: No; we believe in the producers voting themselves in or out of a pool. I have told the Minister that one big principle which we oppose in the Bill is that the Minister shall have control, instead of the primary producers themselves having control. Clause 4 provides that. Who controls the pool except the Board? The Minister has the right to appoint the Board.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The farmers elect the Board.

Mr. CORSER: The Minister controls the position. We are going to fight that; we are going to try and secure control for the primary producer himself.

Mr. GLEDSON: You are not controlling the Government.

Mr. CORSER: We want the Bill to be framed on fair and just lines, and we believe that the commodity should be handled by those engaged in the industry.

*Mr. Corser.*

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*): I am pleased to see the Minister following out as far as possible the policy of the Country party, but it seems to me that he has got hold of something he does not know how to use. At one time I was in the Zoological Gardens in Sydney, and I saw a [12.30 p.m.] gentleman with a very nice silk handkerchief in his coat pocket, and, while passing one of the monkey cages, a monkey drew out the handkerchief from his pocket and put it under his feet. Evidently he had no use for it and did not know how to use a good thing when he had it. That is exactly the case with the Country party's policy in the hands of the Minister. He snatched at a good thing, but he does not know how to make use of it. He finds that it is quite the opposite of the communistic policy that he is sworn to. There is such a thing as getting hold of something that you do not know how to use. The Minister stated that the Council of Agriculture said that this Bill was necessary. The Council of Agriculture is not as good an authority as the sectional council within the industry. It is not as good an authority on sugar as the sugar organisations. The Minister should have submitted this Bill to the House before he allowed it to be sent up and down the country to become a public nuisance. He should not have allowed people outside to consider the Bill before it came into this House. That is a wrong principle, and I object to it. I hope this will be the last time that will be done, and that in future all Bills will be submitted to this House first. We expect his own party to have a Bill, and we also expect the Opposition to be allowed a fair amount of discussion on it. This Bill has already been discussed by the Government in caucus. With past Governments the Bills were thoroughly discussed at the party meetings before they came into this Chamber, and there was no necessity for Government members to take up the whole time in discussing those Bills again, and most of the discussion came from the Opposition. I hope that in future the Minister will allow the Opposition time to discuss Bills they have not seen. I believe that pools in some way or other are necessary to protect the producers who are not in a very financial position, just the same as labour laws are necessary to protect workers so that they will not be compelled to work for only what is just sufficient to live on. The farmer is a worker, and he has a right, in common with other workers, to receive a sufficient price for his labour to enable him to live and rear his family in the way that they should be reared. Probably the farmer who has bought a farm finds that on account of bad times he is under some liability to his storekeeper and is anxious to pay his debts. Very often he may be disposed to sell his produce at a less price than he should receive for it because of his anxiety to pay his way, and I believe in those cases it is necessary to have a pool. This Bill does not go far enough. Take the case of the butter industry. There can be really no benefit extended to the butter producers unless we have an association of the factories throughout Australia and New Zealand. The hon. member for Stanley went to New Zealand to inquire into the working of the industry there, and he was there told by the producers that they were not in a position to control the industry unless there was a co-operative association of Australian and New Zealand factories.

[*Mr. Bebbington.*]

Mr. GLEDSON: The hon. member knows that New Zealand butter is being landed here at a less cost than the production of Australian butter.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Immediately big cargoes of butter are shipped overseas, the dealers in the foreign markets are aware of it, and they force down the price of the commodity so that, when those shipments arrive, they are able to buy our butter at a low price. The only way in which the co-operative associations of Australia and New Zealand can deal with this matter is to have cold storage in foreign markets in which to place shipments on arrival, to be kept there until a reasonable price is offered.

Mr. GLEDSON: In other words, you advocate one big union for the farmers.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It does not matter what it is called. Everything that will allow a man to get a fair price for his labour and enable him to live a respectable life is right, in my opinion. I do not believe in slavery or low wages, or anything that will compel a man to live below the standard of living for a decent white man. Under the Bill, unless the board agrees, no provision is made for the sale of a commodity for feed purposes or for seed purposes. I know of farmers at the present time who have come through six or seven months of dry weather and a winter and have fourteen or fifteen lucerne stacks still in their paddocks. They would not sell one of those stacks. They keep them to feed their stock. Under this Bill the board will have power to compel those farmers to sell those stacks, which are really an insurance against drought. I do not think the Minister intends that. I intend in Committee to move an amendment granting an exemption in such cases, and I am sure the Minister will accept the amendment. There may be a paddock of 40 or 50 acres of wheat, all new land, containing no noxious weeds or foreign matter. Farmers will go over a dozen miles to look at wheat to make sure that the wheat is clean, and that is one of the reasons why the farmers should have the right to hold their wheat for seed purposes. Another reason is that the boards are too slow. I know of instances where applications were made to the Toowoomba Wheat Board for seed wheat, and it was not supplied for weeks. In some instances the farmers had to wait as long as three weeks for their seed. Such a state of things as that should not be allowed to exist.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is an argument against the pool.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Don't be foolish. That is acting like a school child.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It is an argument against what is wrong, and not against the pool. You would have a pool filled up with any rubbish.

The SPEAKER: Order! I shall have to ask the hon. member to resume his seat if he continues in that strain.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: We do not want this kind of thing. When rain comes along, the farmer wants his seed straightaway; he does not want to wait five weeks for it. Therefore the farmers should have the right to sell in their own districts to any man so long as it is for seed purposes. The hon.

gentleman talks about arguments against the pool. We want to make the pools efficient.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: By what means.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: In connection with the first wheat pool. The first objective of that pool, irrespective of the farmers' rights and irrespective of the price, was to clear the guarantee to the Government of 8s. per bushel.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is wrong. That is a lie.

Mr. SIZER: I rise to a point of order. Is the Secretary for Agriculture in order in saying that a statement made by the hon. member for Drayton is a lie?

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in saying that, and I must ask him to withdraw.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I withdraw.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The Minister knows that what I am saying is right. Was an instruction not given to the members of the Wheat Board that their first duty was to clear the Government of their guarantee of 8s. per bushel, irrespective of any other interest?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Who is your authority?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The Minister knows perfectly well that there was a trap in connection with that guarantee under the wheat pool. The Government did not guarantee 8s. per bushel for all f.a.q. wheat, which they should have done. It was proved to be prime milling wheat. It should have been for f.a.q. wheat, but there was a trap in that.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We should have consulted you first.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: If you had done so, there would have been no trouble to-day. There is a big difference between f.a.q. wheat and prime milling wheat. The Minister knows there were thousands of bags of wheat of fair average quality—really good milling wheat—that were sold at 6s. or 7s. per bushel, whereas the guarantee was 8s. per bushel, and the price should have been 9s. per bushel. To enable the board to pay 9s. per bushel for the whole of the f.a.q. wheat the officers of the pool classified some wheat a lower quality than f.a.q. and thereby cleared the Minister of his guarantee for prime quality wheat. I defy the Minister to deny that. If he does, I will give the very best evidence you can get in Australia. There were samples of wheat sold at 5s. 6d. per bushel in the market here which should have been sold at 8s. or 9s. per bushel.

Mr. KIRWAN: That is not so. There was none sold at all.

The PREMIER: Do you say the hon. member for Bulimba bought some of that wheat?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He bought it at auction. Why should he not buy it? Did not other merchants in Brisbane buy it?

The PREMIER: Was that f.a.q. wheat?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Yes.

Mr. KIRWAN: I say there was no f.a.q. wheat in the market that day. The "Daily Mail" said so.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: What do you know about it? I got samples sent to me, and I brought them down to the Opposition room

here and I got Mr. Hill, chairman of the Australian Wheat Board—who is the highest authority we can get in Australia—and submitted these samples to him, and I said, "What do you think of these?" I did not tell him anything about the wheat, and he replied, "That is f.a.q. wheat."

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Did Mr. Hill see you take those samples?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: That has nothing to do with it. He saw the samples, and he said they were f.a.q. wheat. I put another sample before him and said, "What about that?" He replied, "Samples like that should never have been sent to the market. The wheat is composed of three qualities—chick wheat, rubbish, and f.a.q. Probably it contains 30 per cent. of f.a.q. wheat, and it should have been cleaned and the f.a.q. wheat separated for milling purposes and not sent down to the market here and sold at auction so cheaply." These boards have not been a success, and, when we want to make them efficient, the Minister says it is an argument against the pool.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: By what means would you make them efficient.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: By cutting out what is inefficient and making them efficient in every way possible. (Laughter.)

We are certainly in favour of pools and co-operation, and of anything that will prevent the man who is short of money, like the man who is short of labour, being sacrificed by being compelled to sell his labour under its value.

The PREMIER: You have a peculiar way of showing it.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You say what our peculiarities are.

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

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I would like the Premier to explain our peculiarities. He does not know. If the Premier had been here when I started speaking, he would have heard me deal with the Minister's attitude in connection with the policy of the Country party. I am sorry to say that private holders have a very big influence in the sending away of our primary products, such as butter and cheese, which they ought not to have, and that influence is maintained for financial reasons. As I pointed out through the Press yesterday, the only way out of that position is to have an association of co-operative factories; and, if the Government are wise, they will, in the interests of the primary producer, do all they possibly can to assist the establishment of such an organisation in Australia, with a view to having cold stores erected in foreign markets. We know that, when large shipments leave our shores, foreign merchants wait for the arrival of those shipments, so that they can buy them up cheaply. The only way to contend with that difficulty is to have cold stores in foreign markets, and to see that markets are opened up in every possible way.

Mr. W. COOPER: What do you call foreign markets?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Any market outside Australia is a foreign market to us. The conditions are the same in London, New York, Paris, or other places outside Australia to which we have to send our products. We have no control over the markets outside

*Mr. Bebbington.]*

Australia unless we have cold storage there. Then, the financial aspect comes in. We have had a good lesson in connection with our co-operative factories, which have been built up on the personal guarantee of the directors, without which we would not have made half the advance which has been made. I have never known yet of the director of a factory being called upon to pay 1s. of his guarantee. The directors of those factories have the control of the output, which is their security. That position should obtain from a national point of view. We say that the producer is entitled to the assistance of the nation's credit to market the nation's goods, and that is a very easy principle to put into operation. We might have an organisation of co-operative associations embracing Australia and New Zealand, and shipments made from different ports here to foreign markets would all have the same protection. This is a business matter, and we are entitled to get the best return we can for the labour of our producers. We should fix a fair price, and say to buyers, "If you want this produce, you will have to pay this price for it." That is the principle I have advocated in connection with co-operative factories. That was done in connection with the cheese industry, and now Queensland exports more cheese than all the Australian States put together. If that principle had not been applied to the cheese industry, it would not have been in the prosperous condition it is to-day. Where we have co-operation and large shipments are made abroad, in order to prevent merchants bearing down the prices and buying up our produce cheaply, we should have cold stores in foreign markets where the goods can be held until a better price is obtainable. Of course, the producer wants his money quickly, although his butter, cheese, or other products may be held in other countries in cold storage, and the Governments of the States concerned should guarantee the producer the price of his goods. Mr. Hughes last year guaranteed up to £75,000 in connection with a certain industry. The guarantee was not required, but immediately the Commonwealth Government gave their guarantee the banks advanced the money required. If the banks, on the guarantee of the nation, advanced money to market our products, they would have a first charge on those products, and the purchaser would take all the risk. If there was a slump in prices, and the full amount was not realised, the banks would get their money, the nation would get its share next, and the farmer would have to take what was left. There is no risk to the nation. It is the business of the nation to assist in the marketing of produce in the interests of the producers and of the nation; and, as producers, we have a right to the assistance of the nation's credit in that direction.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): This Bill is an important one; but, after all, it is not altogether a new principle. Co-operative societies have been working on this principle for some time, though not altogether successfully. There are many points to be considered. Before we can go in for a scheme such as this is, we want to see exactly where we are getting to. There are two or three things which want to be specially looked into. We want to see whether the restraint on individuals by the creation of pools—and, perhaps, hardship has occurred in connection with pools—is going to be of benefit to the producers as a whole. We also want to see

[*Mr. Bebbington.*

whether the pooling system is going to be of benefit to the community as a whole, or whether it is going to be a benefit to the producers but detrimental to the general public. These are all matters which have to be considered when you bring forward a pooling system to apply to all classes of produce. After all, there has been a good deal of misconception, and pools have been formed which have not been for the benefit of the producer, and have certainly been detrimental to the general public in some cases.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There are weaknesses in them.

The PREMIER: You cannot get perfection in this world.

Mr. MOORE: In bringing in a general pooling Bill, we can endeavour to remedy the weaknesses of which we have had experience in the past, but this Bill does not attempt, so far as I can see, to get away from those weaknesses at all. It is full of weaknesses, as the first wheat pool was. There is no attempt to get away from the weaknesses disclosed in that Bill, and also in the Cheese Pool Bill.

Hon. W. FORGAN SMITH: What do you say are the weaknesses?

Mr. MOORE: I will tell the hon. gentleman as I go along. The whole principle of this Bill is effectively carried out by farmers and co-operative associations. We had one association, which was practically a pool, for selling produce in Victoria. I will quote what a conference of growers in Victoria said on the subject—

"(a) The conference decided that all onions grown by shareholders shall be sold through the company for a period of five years.

"(b) Bringing the producers and consumers into a closer trade relationship.

"(c) Selling direct to any organisation having for their object the cheapening of the cost of living—to act purely as a regulating body and sell the produce on commission only—it was precluded from purchasing.

"ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION.

"(a) To endeavour to bring producers and consumers of onions, potatoes, and other farm products into closer trade relationship with a view to stabilising production and cheapening food for the consumer."

That was a laudable object; but when it came to be a question of carrying this into effect there were great difficulties in the way, because there was a larger

[2 p.m.] production than they anticipated.

They had practically controlled the whole of the growers; but they were not able to market the commodities themselves. They were then very much in the same position as the wheatgrowers in Queensland in connection with the Wheat Pool. They were unable to sell their wheat, and they had to hang on to it for a long time. Eventually the position became so bad that one or two of the growers broke away from the association and sold their produce outside of the organisation altogether. Then the organisation to which these men were bound applied for an injunction to restrain them. Judgment was given by Mr. Justice Cussen,

and what he said was very much to the point and applies to the present case. He said—

“The present case is an instance of a very ambitious effort, maybe for the protection of a number of growers, made to bring about a certain result—to control the sale of onions, potatoes, and other produce so far as they can throughout the whole of Victoria. If this scheme were completely successful, I think it might very well result in a monopoly being created. It may be said that one of the objects of this form of company is to reduce the price to the consumer. Well, I think I may give the company credit for that; but I will say that if this attempt were successful it might very well result in prejudicing the interests of the public, for, of course, one cannot expect business men to act for any other than business reasons. I think, if any such result as this scheme apparently aims at is desired, it must be brought about by legislative action, and not by private contract of this kind.”

We have got legislative action in this Bill to bring about what they brought about in Victoria. The same difficulty arose in regard to the apple-growers in Tasmania, when the Full Court gave practically the same decision as Mr. Justice Cussons. It was practically held that the organisation was a restraint of trade, and that the individual liberty of the growers was interfered with, while it was not of direct public benefit. Consequently, it is a very doubtful proposition. When we look at a Bill such as this, we may ask who is going to benefit. If the Bill is carried to its logical conclusion, and many kinds of produce are grown, they will all have to be separated into the different pools. These pools will hold the produce to stabilise industry, as it is called, in order to get the highest prices. Then wages will increase and also the cost of living, and the vicious circle will commence again. We must have something in the Bill that will enable the producers to terminate their agreements if the pool is not achieving the success they anticipated. I should also like to quote the opinion of Mr. Justice Isaacs on the same question in the Huon apple case—

“The whole question of restraint of trade is founded on public policy, and therefore, while the principle of the common law remains fixed, unless and until altered by legislation, the application of the principle necessarily alters so as to conform itself to the movement or sentiment of progressive society. True freedom of trade is not to be restricted, but a provision which, taken by itself, would amount to such restriction may, when considered in conjunction with and as qualified by surrounding circumstances, prove to be not really a restriction but merely part of a larger transaction, which, regarded as a whole, does not restrict but may even assist freedom of trade. To employ a simile—expenditure is per se a loss, but expenditure which secures greater benefit is not.”

I take it that the object of this Bill is exactly on those lines. It is an endeavour to bring about a modified restriction of trade, which will not really be a restriction of trade but which will benefit not only the producers but also the consumers. I am personally rather doubtful as to how it is going to work out, because, until I have

gone more fully into the effect of the operating of the parasites or middlemen, of whom we hear so much from members on the other side, I do not feel in a position to say which is the better.

Mr. BRENNAN: What about taking the tags off the railway trucks?

Mr. MOORE: That is only a very minor matter. I propose later on to quote some remarks made by the acting president of the Primary Producers' Association as to whether these so-called middlemen are such parasites as members on the Government side try to make out; but at the present time I am discussing the question of whether the pool system is likely to be satisfactory. We have had a certain amount of experience. The wheat pool has many faults, but it has certainly improved, and one of the reasons why it is better than the cheese pool is that it got as manager a man who was an expert at the milling end of the business, and, if we are to go in for pools for other commodities, we must have experts to manage them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is the farmers' own business.

Mr. MOORE: The success of the system all depends on who is appointed as manager. These pools go in for a certain amount of experimenting, and that experimenting is paid for by the producers. In the case of the cheese pool the producers have discovered it would have been advisable to secure the services of a business man to control the business side of it and the selling. The producers thought that they were going to benefit by that pool, and they have benefited, but mistakes have been made in many cases. For instance, the price was put up to such a height that the interstate market for a time was absolutely killed.

Mr. BULCOCK: That is an argument against government by an individual, not against the success or otherwise of the Bill.

Mr. MOORE: When you find interstate trade absolutely killed by the raising of prices as an experiment by a pool, it is a very serious matter. It takes a very long time to get back trade like that. We had the same thing in regard to the butter position a little time ago. In reference to that, I want to quote the following newspaper extract:—

“FARM AND DAIRY PRODUCE.

“The question may very well be raised whether Mr. O'Callaghan, the Commonwealth dairy expert, was directed by the Minister for Customs to raise at the recent conference of dairy-factory managers in Brisbane an issue that is essentially a tariff matter. Mr. O'Callaghan certainly said that he was not suggesting that the duty should be raised; but what else is he doing when he asks: ‘How are we importers and exporters at the same time? Why is it that New Zealand butter is being largely imported into Australia, notwithstanding a duty of 3d. a lb., whereas Queensland has to export its butter abroad to a much less remunerative market?’ It could almost be inferred that Mr. O'Callaghan lacked knowledge of what has been going on in the butter markets of the Commonwealth. Presuming he is conversant with the situation, he might have suggested to factory managers that it was not wise for the Queensland pool to attempt to squeeze the last farthing from Southern

Mr. Moore.]



consumers, and so divert buyers to other quarters. That is what happened to Queensland sellers, who thought they had the butter situation in their own hands. They set out to 'bleed' the Southern States. Negotiations were opened by traders in New Zealand, with the result that a quantity of butter was purchased there by New South Wales and Victorian dealers. Queensland even wanted to oust Victorian butter-makers from the Melbourne market. Large quantities of butter were sent here on consignment, but owing to favourable weather conditions production in this State increased, so that little of the Queensland butter was wanted. Consignees had a pill to swallow when they learned about this increased output. For a while their produce was difficult to sell, even at a substantial discount on the price of Victorian butter. The late advance in the London market, however, would stand them in good stead for any stocks that may have been held during the last week or two, as good butter is now scarce in Melbourne. In the circumstances, Mr. O'Callaghan could have done the Queensland factory managers a service by advising them not to force people to go away from Australia for foodstuffs."

That is the reason why we want to have an expert managing such things.

Mr. BULCOCK: Was Mr. O'Callaghan speaking about Victoria?

Mr. MOORE: He was speaking up here, drawing attention to the extraordinary feature that butter was being imported into Australia and exported at the same time. Exactly the same thing happened in connection with wheat. More wheat was being imported into Queensland than was being exported.

Mr. BRENNAN: And the wheat exported from the Downs to London realised less than they were paying here, and the farmers lost on its export.

Mr. MOORE: That shows the difficulty with which we have to contend.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The mills were partly responsible.

Mr. MOORE: The mills are in the business to make a success of it, just as the farmers are. A lot of people would have made a bigger mess of the business than Mr. Binns did. The Wheat Board were fortunate in securing him. Probably we would not have had a Wheat Board to-day had his services not been obtained, because he thoroughly understands the business. Everyone is liable to make mistakes, but the man who is used to looking after the milling end is not likely to make the mistakes which would be made by the wheatgrower who took up a position with the details of which he was not acquainted. He might be honest in his intentions, but he would not have the requisite knowledge or experience to fill the position. All sorts of questions are bound up with the question of pooling. Lord Birkenhead, talking about this question, said—

"Is the pooling system, and consequent restraint of trade, while being in the interest of the producer, likely to be in the interest of the public or a detriment to the public generally?"

What we have to discover is whether the pools comply with those two conditions—

[Mr. Moore.

whether they are reasonable as between the parties who are going to pool, and whether their operations are consistent with the interests of the public. If we can decide that, it is quite reasonable to go on with a measure such as this, which is going to make it possible to pool all the primary products of Queensland; but we must be careful to see that the public are not going to be affected detrimentally, merely for the benefit of one section; because, if that section is going to secure undue benefits, pooling cannot last; the public will soon see that it is put a stop to, and we shall get back to a worse position than we are in to-day.

Mr. GLEDSON: Do you suggest the dropping of the Bill?

Mr. MOORE: No, we are not going to drop it; but we are going to try to provide sufficient safeguards to see that the pools are managed properly by men who understand the business end of it if we are going in for selling—not for experiments to be made in which individuals may be sacrificed for the benefit of the pool. We have had that experience.

Mr. GLEDSON: You are only providing a back door to get out by if anything happens.

Mr. MOORE: I said years ago that the wheat pool was going to be an advantage to the wheatgrowers. All these pools have to be managed for the benefit of the whole community—not for the benefit of one section. We are rather inclined to lose sight of that fact in bringing in a pooling system such as this. Some people expect results which they are not likely to secure. I want to make it quite clear that, when they go into a pool merely with the object of stabilising the market and not in an endeavour to wring from the public the highest possible price, they should not expect too much. In a large number of cases they are going into it with their eyes shut. Mr. Justice Cussen, in his judgment on restraint of trade, further stated—

"In the old days all bargains which operated to restrain a man's right to dispose of his labour to the best advantage were declared by the judges to be against public policy, and void. The governing idea was, apparently, that the person restrained might become chargeable on the poor rate, and anything which might tend in such a direction was manifestly insupportable. Time has modified the strictness of the original law; its severity has mellowed under the influence of modern conditions. The test now applied is whether or not the particular restriction imposed is in the circumstances reasonably necessary and proper for the protection of the party in whose favour the restraint is created. It is recognised that some degree of restraint may be beneficial to all concerned. It may enable the party restrained to get much better terms than would otherwise be given. Reasonably applied, restraint facilitates trade; unreasonably used, it fetters and destroys trade. In reference to co-operative companies it is obvious that a limited amount of restriction may, by aiding co-operative effort, procure for the producer a better or more regular market and higher prices, but the system is liable to abuse, and the grower who is asked to bind himself will be prudent if he thinks twice before doing so."

A man might be bound down and placed in a very awkward position. Under the pooling system, a man has to surrender his right to do what he likes with his produce. On the Downs to-day a number of farmers have suffered considerably through not being able to do what they like with their produce. Many of them were prepared to sell at less than the pool price in order to get the cash.

**THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE:** The price might have been a great deal lower than they expected.

**MR. MOORE:** In years gone by, when there was very little wheat grown in Queensland, the farmers were practically at the mercy of the miller. The more wheat that is grown the better it is, because more people will endeavour to secure that wheat. If sufficient wheat can be got to make a shipment, there is no danger of the millers having it all their own way. Trouble existed some years ago in Victoria, but that has been eliminated to a very large extent. It is recognised that there is a market value for wheat, and that that market value can be secured. The pooling system down South is a voluntary one, and has worked remarkably well. The pool in Victoria has handled about 31,000,000 bushels of wheat, and I believe the farmers have received their final payments.

**THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE:** It must be remembered that the New South Wales voluntary pool followed on the compulsory pool.

**MR. MOORE:** Because the compulsory pool in New South Wales was not a success. Because of neglect and inexperience farmers suffered enormous losses under that system. Overpayments were made to farmers in some instances that should not have been made. They were made because of some mistakes in the books. I believe that the loss amounted to £1,200,000. The Minister does not call that a loss. The wheat was destroyed, and the overpayments that were made could not be collected again.

**THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE:** Does the hon. gentleman not think that the same thing would have happened under the voluntary pool?

**MR. MOORE:** No. Perhaps the experience they got under the compulsory pool made them more careful under the voluntary pool. In Victoria, owing to mismanagement, there was a loss, but it was only small in comparison with the loss in New South Wales. The voluntary pool has been decidedly successful—so much so that the farmers are going to continue it. Compulsion is not altogether desirable when it can be done without.

**MR. BRENNAN:** Only in connection with human lives.

**MR. MOORE:** Compulsion is exercised in various ways in Queensland. We have compulsory education. I do not think that compulsion regarding the marketing of produce is a thing that is altogether to be desired. I would much rather they did it on co-operative lines and made the co-operative system so successful that people will voluntarily come in, rather than compel them to go in for something that may be of doubtful benefit. In this connection I would like to quote the following comment upon the judgment of the High Court—

“THE RESULT.

“The consequences of the High Court judgment will be far-reaching. In relation to a large number of the primary

industries elaborate schemes of co-operation have been formed in all the States. The aim of the parties who started these devices was, no doubt, excellent. They desired to eliminate the middleman and to assure to the producers the full value of their produce. To this end legal ingenuity was expended in preparing a code of restrictions by which, when once the producer had agreed to become a shareholder, he was bound, hand and foot, to the will of the directors of the company, and could not even rid himself of his tie by selling his farm or orchard, for he was forbidden to alienate his holding unless he induced the purchaser to also take shares. Nor could he let his property, with a view to escape the restrictions, which, in different concerns, lasted for different times. But the authors of these schemes apparently forgot all about the law as to restraint of trade, and in weaving the net so close that no shareholder could get rid of his obligations they brought about their own undoing.

It is to be noticed, as a matter of practical business, that if a scheme of this sort has lasting inherent merits that will really serve the interests of producers, no shareholder will wish to break his bonds. But avoidance of the middleman may be purchased at too high a price, and liberty of personal action is at times preferable to united action by compulsion. Mr. Justice Cussen suggested that articles might be so drawn as not to unduly restrain trade, as, for example, no associations were bound to buy and pay within stated times, and the restraints were limited to a short period. The High Court seems to indicate that the only safe course for such an association is to let it be voluntary in duration, so that shareholders, judging the management of the association by its works, might sell produce to it, or refrain from doing so, at their option. Some such scheme as this seems to be the only permissible direction in which the co-operation system can be lawfully put into operation.”

That is just the point I take up. The co-operative system of selling should, by its inherent benefits, induce the producers to send their produce to the co-operative association without compulsion. Where there is compulsion there is always an element of fear on the part of a large number of producers as to whether they are going to be sacrificed or not for some doubtful benefit.

**THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE:** Some co-operative companies adopt compulsion in the matter of becoming shareholders.

**MR. MOORE:** Some of them do, but in four or five cases where compulsion was adopted the matter was tested in the courts, and in each case the Supreme Court decided in their favour, but the High Court reversed the decision. When people start a co-operative company in a district to help those in the district, it is morally right that they should have compulsion applied until the company is on its feet, but once the company is on its feet, if it cannot compete with other businesses, then the producers should not be bound to continue to send their produce to the company.

**THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE:** You know the methods adopted by proprietary companies in offering higher prices in order to break up the co-operative companies.

*Mr. Moore.]*

Mr. MOORE: I have had an unfortunate experience in the methods of private companies. When I started placing cheese on the market I had a very bitter experience. So much so that I was forced into the position that I did not have enough train fare to come down to Brisbane, and they held the whole of my produce up in Brisbane, and said it could not be sold unless I gave them a concession. Fortunately I was able to sell the cheese in Sydney, and, as soon as I started selling it in Sydney, they dropped all the concession business, and started selling it here. But I am prepared to say that there are very reputable companies in Brisbane who act in every way in the interests of the companies they sell for. I have never been able to discover which is the best method of selling. We have no reliable data to go on. Personally I send my produce to a co-operative distribution company. I am satisfied with my returns, but other people say that their returns are not so good as the proprietary companies can give them. In regard to that, I would like to quote what Mr. James Purcell said the other day at a meeting which was held for the purpose of discussing the question of proprietary selling. The Downs Co-operative Dairy Company is a big company, and Mr. Purcell is on the Council of Agriculture. I do not suppose he would be likely to sell Downs produce through what is called a middleman unless he saw that it was to the advantage of the company he represents. Mr. Purcell had some very illuminating remarks to make. I do not altogether agree with what he said, because I do not think he has sufficient data, and, being a director of a co-operative company in Brisbane, I am not likely to agree with his contentions. Certainly, his contentions are worth taking note of, and I do not think he would sacrifice the interests of the company he is interested in—

#### "LONDON MARKET.

"Mr. James Purcell, chairman of directors of the Downs Co-operative Dairy Company, stated that he had listened with patience to the champions of co-operative selling, but he was sorry to say that they had not impressed him, as he expected. . . . Mr. Mears had talked about fixing the price of butter in New South Wales, and that his company and other co-operative companies in New South Wales had control of the price. If that was so, he could not congratulate them on their achievement, for why were they in New South Wales not able to keep the price there as high as the Queensland Butter Pool was able to get it up to in Queensland. They in Queensland had kept the price of butter 2d. or 3d. higher in Queensland than they could in New South Wales, where there was co-operative marketing. He would like to hear an explanation on that point. Mr. McWhinney said that it was the duty of the factories here to support the federation floor in London. If that federation could show his company where they were going to be as well off, let alone better, his company would go over to them at a minute's notice; but so long as he was charged with the responsibility of marketing the farmers' produce, he was going to market the stuff at the best price. (Applause.) It had been proved that co-operation in Queensland had not done

[Mr. Moore.

all it should do. He thought Mr. McWhinney's own figures proved that he had miserably failed in holding his own in Queensland. During the history of co-operative selling in Queensland, 95 per cent. of their butter was on the Farmers' Co-operative Dairy Company's floor at one time or another, but it was not there to-day. What was the reason? Why had they left? That was something that Mr. McWhinney would have to explain. No co-operative company would have left had it been satisfied with results. They were all co-operators, and he (the speaker) had done as much for co-operation as anyone in Australia. Mr. Mears had boasted of his company making £20,000, but he pointed out that it was quite an easy matter to buy butter on a cheap market, store it, and sell on a rising market. It was absurd to say that the federation in London was going to control the market there. They could not do it. Denmark would control the price of butter in London, and always had done, and if Danish butter falls, the Australian butter would fall proportionately. That was a lifelong experience. He would also like to ask Mr. Mears, seeing that he had travelled 600 miles to tell them what a fine thing co-operative marketing was, why the North Coast Company, the biggest co-operative manufacturing company in Australia, and the biggest shareholders in Mr. Mears's company, did not send its butter to that London federation to be sold."

He went on further to state his reasons for not selling, but I think I have given the main part of his speech. It has been proved that private selling agencies in Australia have treated the co-operative companies in a fair and just way. Whatever remarks may be made about parasitic middlemen, we must admit that they have done better for the co-operative companies than the companies could have done for themselves. Mr. Mears says that they have done better for the companies than the co-operative agencies could have done.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Neither Mr. Purcell nor anyone else knows how the proprietary firms would have treated them but for the competition.

Mr. MOORE: I am prepared to admit that the co-operative concerns have considerably cheapened the cost of selling. If proprietary companies had been left on their own without any competition from co-operative companies and co-operative distributing agencies, I do not think we should have got the same terms that we are getting to-day. But we cannot get away from the fact that these people are doing well for the co-operative factories and for the State as a whole. I object to sellers being accused of being parasites, when there is no cause for such accusations. It is only a slur to say that the producers' interests are being sacrificed by the middlemen in Queensland. There are other things in this pooling [2.30 p.m.] system that have to be considered by the primary producers, if we are to carry it to its logical conclusion. It will be necessary for them to employ a competent business man at the selling end. There are farmers who think

they are just as capable of selling their products as the experts themselves are.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They are altogether wrong.

Mr. MOORE: They are quite wrong, but they hold that opinion nevertheless. They have not had the bitter experience that a good many have had in regard to selling primary products. A good many farmers imagine that, if they came down here, they would be able to sell their products just as well as the experts, but that is not so. The experts are up to all the tricks of the trade and they know the business end of it. They know where to get all the information. After all, information is one of the things that we want to secure in order to get a successful market. If we are going forward with this Bill, we must secure a competent business man to manage the selling end. We want to be careful that we do not do the same as the butter pool committee did. They endeavoured to squeeze the consumers for the purpose of raising the prices in Melbourne, but the result was that we lost that market altogether, as Victoria secured produce from New Zealand where previously it was got from Queensland. I am not speaking in a derogatory way of the Bill, but, if we are not clever enough at the selling end, it will take years and years before we have any success. In the case of Victoria we lost a market which we should have retained. I am not going to say that it was altogether due to the selling part of the business, because we have factories that sent an article that was not up to the required standard, and we lost the market there. We have to benefit by our experience, and we have to be careful with the markets that we secure, or we shall find that, instead of increasing our markets, we shall lose those we have already got. We want to have a good business man at the selling end.

There are some parts of the Bill that are indefinite. There is provision that, if three-fourths of the growers vote in favour of a pool, then the producers in that industry have to come in, whether they like it or not. I recognise that a great injustice may be done in that connection. If we have a pool over the whole of Queensland, we might have one solid body voting together in the North, or in the South, and the whole of the producers in the State will be bound by the majority. We do not want any section to be seriously inconvenienced in order to make a market for another section. It is a very difficult problem to deal with. I can quite understand the trouble that we shall have if we attempt to form a maize pool for the whole of Queensland. We shall want to pay a man a large salary to induce him to take over the management of such a concern. We do not want to establish pools and bring them into such a position that the public will be penalised, if I may put it that way. We know the public would be penalised if all these pools are carried to their logical conclusion, because it will mean that the cost of living will go up to a great extent. It is not the desire of this House that that should take place. It is the desire of the House that there shall be a regulation and a stabilising of markets so as to eliminate undue speculation. There will always be a certain amount of speculation, but we must eliminate it as far as possible. We want to make the Bill so that, if the primary producers find that the pooling system is not

all that was expected of it, then, by an ordinary majority—not a three-fourths majority—it can be knocked on the head and we can revert to the old system. It is far better to do that than to penalise the section of the community who will be affected by the pooling of produce for all time.

Mr. BRENNAN (*Toowoomba*): This Bill is part of the great scheme connected with primary production inaugurated by the Premier, and supported by the Secretary for Agriculture and other members of this party. This is certainly something which the farmers have been looking for for many years. We know the difficulties the farmers have had to contend with in connection with pools. In the Wheat Pool they could not dispose of their wheat and they could not get sheds, and that meant that they suffered losses on the crops they had sown. These are matters that have to be considered in connection with pools, and it takes time to get them working on a business basis. It will take some time, as the Premier pointed out, for the farmers to carry out the proposals of the Government. These ideas have been in the mind of the Labour Government for years, while the farmer was always contented to dispose of his produce in his own way. He was always led away by the people who pretended that they were the friends of the farmer. This Bill is very clear in its interpretation. The leader of the Opposition claims to be a lawyer, but he cannot interpret it. The Secretary for Agriculture interpreted it, so a man learned in the law, with a certificate of qualification, should be able to interpret clause 3. Clause 3 is quite clear and there is nothing ambiguous about it. The leader of the Opposition had the Bill on Friday last, and he comes here to-day and says that he cannot interpret clause 3. Either the hon. gentleman is not sincere, or else he is losing his memory. If we take clause 3, we find that an Order in Council has to be issued, setting out who shall be growers of the commodity referred to. It also lays down the method of choosing the representatives of such growers. It is fully laid down that the intention of the Governor in Council shall be published in the "Gazette" twenty-one days before the Order in Council is made. That is quite clear. Then there is provision that three-fourths of the growers concerned may, by ballot, decide whether they shall have a pool. Anyone looking at the other subclauses of clause 3 will see that they are all quite clear. If the pool is found not to be working for the benefit of those engaged in the industry, it can cease; therefore, it is practically a voluntary pool.

Mr. MOORE: How is it to cease?

Mr. BRENNAN: Subclause (6) of clause 3 provides that the Order in Council may fix a date when the functions of the Board shall cease.

Mr. MOORE: Who asks for it?

Mr. BRENNAN: The Order may be rescinded by the Governor in Council. Hon. gentlemen do not think that the Government will do anything to operate against the interests of those for whom this legislation is introduced. The Government would certainly take advantage of subclause (5), which provides that any Order in Council may be rescinded or amended. A notice will be inserted in the "Gazette," and then the whole thing can revert to private enterprise, so that, to all intents and purposes, it is a

*Mr. Brennan.]*

voluntary pool. Clause 4 relates to the appointment of the Board for the commodity concerned. The Government will have no interest whatever in the Board. The farmers themselves will be allowed to control their own industry. We have had requests to form a canary seed pool, and also a maize pool, and they can be formed under this Bill. Yet hon. members opposite make complaints about the Bill. Why do they object to the Bill? They do not give any reasons for their objections. Subclause (4) of clause 6 provides—

“The Board may, in such cases and on such terms and conditions as may be prescribed, exempt (either generally or in any particular case) from the operation of this section—

(a) Such small growers of the commodity as the Board think fit.”

So that the Board has power to exempt people in remote districts who may have a market locally for their produce and do not want to send it right in to where the Board is operating. Then, clause 9 deals with quality, but I think something should be inserted there to provide for farmers who have not a commodity of merchantable quality. It may be inferior, and provision should be made to enable them to sell it, as was done in the case of inferior wheat, which was allowed to be sold as chickwheat early in the season rather than that the farmers should be compelled to hold on to it too long. The farmers should have the right to dispose of inferior produce to anybody who will buy it.

The farmers have looked forward to this Bill for many years. It is only part of a big scheme to assist the agricultural industry. Anyone who has travelled or who has associated with co-operative companies on the Downs knows that the directors and shareholders are all very pleased with the Bill. Take the Downs Co-operative Bacon Factory. You find that the farmers are prepared to supply pigs to J. C. Hutton and Co. or Foggitt, Jones, and Co. if they can get an extra penny a pound, and ignore their own factory. I say that the company is doing wonderful work, and, taking the year's work as a whole, it keeps private companies in check and maintains prices. Were co-operative companies like that out of action, the private companies would keep the prices down to the producer and up to the consumer; yet we find the farmers will not altogether support it, and so we must be prepared to recognise that the farmers must have compulsion. Hon. members opposite say, “What! Compulsion on the producers?” They had no hesitation during the war about conscripting human life, but now they are not prepared to agree that the farmers should all be compelled by Act of Parliament to protect themselves against themselves by compulsory pools. They gamble in the farmers' produce, but they do not want the farmers to be protected by compelling them to hand over their produce to their own representatives, appointed for the purpose of seeing that their wishes are carried out. We know that the farmers are pretty well organised up to the point of distribution, but beyond that the business gets into the hands of these vultures, who are waiting like birds of prey for the carcass. These men, we know, have cornered markets. Six or seven years ago they cornered half a million boxes of butter in Sydney; and, though we had a

good season, butter went to 2s. 6d. per lb., although the producers were getting only about half what they are getting now for their cream. These are the people who the hon. member for Aubigny says are decent traders. They are there, not for the benefit of the farmer, but for the purpose of making as much money as they can for themselves. We find the leader of the Nationalist party coming in here with a beautiful smile and a sauve face and reminding us of somebody's lines—

“Beware of the man with the comely smile; it's like the polished nickel on a coffin lid—there is always a corpse beneath.”

He says he would not pay his bills with dishonoured cheques. Perhaps he would not, but he would tear the tags off railway trucks and write a secret letter to the Commissioner for Railways.

Mr. KERR: Did he write that letter?

Mr. BRENNAN: He signed it. He writes a secret letter to the Commissioner for Railways; and, with a sauve smile on his face, now says he would not do certain things. He goes to church on Sunday and prays on his bended knees, and he preys on the farmers for the rest of the week. This letter that he signed says—

“We understand the manner in which the representatives of the papers get their information is that they go and look at the little ticket which is attached to every truck, giving the truck number, and from where the truck comes. Might we suggest that these tickets should not be on the trucks at all, also that books of the railway giving information about the place of loading of trucks be kept private, and only furnished to such individuals as belong to our offices. You can readily understand it is very annoying, after our sending buyers to the country and paying the farmers spot cash at the places whence the stuff is grown, for the information to be flashed all over the place that their special lines of stuff made such and such a price. We don't object to farmers having a general idea that produce brought from such a price to such and such a price, according to quality, but we do strongly object to such information being published as would enable the farmer to identify his particular lines.”

I say that is thieving—nothing but thieving—

“We would esteem it a great favour if you would kindly instruct all officers of yours who have to do with advice notes, also those who are in possession of the books with the information regarding where the truck is from, to kindly keep this information strictly private and not to give it to any representatives of the newspapers.”

Mr. RIORDAN: Who signed that?

Mr. BRENNAN: It is signed by Charles Taylor and Co., and, to make assurance doubly sure, Charles Taylor, the leader of the Nationalist party, signs it personally.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will not be in order in referring as he has done to the hon. member for Windsor.

Mr. BRENNAN: Well, I am referring to Charles Taylor and Co., and the time has come when these things must be exposed. We find these people doing these things

[Mr. Brennan.]

under the veil of respectability—well-groomed, well-polished individuals walking about the city, and always with one of those unctuous smiles which they wear in church when they wash their palms with invisible soap and tell other people what terrible things the Labour Government are doing, whilst at the same time they think, "Don't let the people know how we rob the farmer. We are middlemen. We have to do it. It is our living." We know how in the early days the farmers went into the scrubs and hewed out a living for themselves, whilst men like Tyson kept to the rolling plains. Yet members like the hon. member for Aubigny, the deputy leader of the Farmers' party, says, "What is the tearing of tags off trucks? It is a mere detail."

Mr. MOORE: I did not say that.

Mr. BRENNAN: The hon. member says, "Tear them off; we don't mind."

Mr. CLAYTON: Do you believe in the middleman?

Mr. BRENNAN: Yes, but I believe he should be kept in his place.

Mr. CLAYTON: You were born and bred in a middleman's home.

Mr. BRENNAN: Of course I was, and I have learned all about them wherever I have been. I will tell the hon. member where he was reared. He was reared amongst the coolies.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BRENNAN: Black labour!

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BRENNAN: It is our duty to expose all these actions of the middlemen who appeal to the farmers as their friends, whilst at the same time they say, "We do not object to the Government's policy. Up to the point where selling commences you can be producers by co-operative means. Keep your co-operative concerns. They are good propaganda work for our future welfare." They go to meetings of shareholders from time to time, but, when it comes to the matter of selling the produce, they say, "Keep out. Your work is to produce co-operatively and keep wages down. If the selling part of the business is handed over to you, you will tear it to pieces." That is the policy of the man who says, "I will rob a man, throw the money over the fence, and let somebody else hang for it." The farmers have to be shown where their friends are. These middlemen, in most cases, are a fine class of people! They are always looking upon us with holy horror; everything we do is disgusting to them. They would not do a thing wrong. There are some decent middlemen who trade only for commission, and who do not remove tags from trucks; there are others to whom these lines of Essex Evans apply—

"Six days shalt thou swindle and lie,

On the seventh, though it soundeth odd,  
In an odour of sanctity

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God  
With a threepenny bit, a doze, a start, and  
an unctuous smile,

And a hurried prayer to prosper another  
six days of guile."

That is the policy of the middlemen—those unctuous smiling gentlemen who are always out to take down the farmer. They are backed up by the Opposition. Then the Opposition say, "We know nothing about

the Bill; we are not opposed to it; we have had it since last Friday, but we have no suggestions to offer you on it."

I now want to reply to an interjection made by the hon. member for Pittsworth. In 1915 or 1916 the hon. member for Aubigny wrote a letter to the Acting Minister for Justice on behalf of one of his constituents, a widow named Mrs. Troussel, of Crow's Nest, saying that she had come into a £100 estate, and that all she got out of it was £20.

Mr. MOORE: I said £150.

Mr. BRENNAN: The hon. member said that all she got back was £20, and that the solicitor was "Brennan." As a matter of fact, the firm was Garde and Brennan. I was standing for a plebiscite in the interests of the Labour party, and the other side attempted to use that case to my disadvantage in the plebiscite. Later the hon. member for Aubigny went to the Acting Minister for Justice and asked him to withdraw the letter as he had made a mistake.

Mr. MOORE: I did not.

Mr. BRENNAN: He went to the Minister and said, "I made a mistake about that." The facts of that case are very simple.

Mr. MOORE: What evidence have you that I said I had made a mistake?

Mr. BRENNAN: I have the evidence of actual facts. The realty in the estate was £577, the personalty was £1,536, and the insurance moneys £136. The widow was to get £100 as a straightout bequest. I was a member of the firm, but I did not handle the estate—they were my partner's clients. Later the costs were taxed, a bill was delivered for £106 14s. 8d., including £52 7s. 4d. money out of pocket. Costs were allowed totalling £97 0s. 2d., £5 5s. being disallowed for a valuation fee. I dissolved partnership with my partner, and he carried on the estate, and recovered a balance of something like £30 which was due to him. His conduct was perfectly honest. Yet hon. members opposite went to the people in my electorate and said, "Brennan robbed a widow."

Mr. MOORE: I did not.

Mr. BRENNAN: The hon. member has told hon. members on that side of the House an untruthful, scandalous statement. Hon. members are not game to go outside and make the statement—they whisper these scandalous statements just like thugs and garroffers.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): The hon. member who has just resumed his seat has dished up again this afternoon something of which I may speak very freely. He referred to a certain document which was signed by the leader of this party. I believe that that statement is perfectly correct; but the hon. member forgot to say that that document was signed many years ago. He forgot, further, to say that for many years past all the papers—including the "Daily Standard"—have repeatedly furnished the names of stations and the numbers of trucks, and have also stated whether the produce has been sold or not. By reading that letter, the hon. member gave the show away. My firm did not sign it. The request made was in respect of produce that had been purchased in the country with the firm's own money. I am not saying that it was a wise or a discreet request, but I do say that the hon. member for Toowoomba

*Hon. W. H. Barnes.]*

has absolutely misconstrued the action of the leader of this party. I do not know whether the State Produce Agency adopts the practice, but for years quite a number of firms have had buyers in the country, and, as the goods are brought in, they pay for them on delivery. That letter had to do with goods like that—not with goods which were sent down on consignment. The hon. member has prostituted his position in this House by making insinuations that men who are honourably engaged in business are rogues and vagabonds. The answer to that is clearly that the man who does a dishonest thing does not live long in business; he soon goes out of business. I speak as one who has been in business in Brisbane for over thirty years. There is a good deal of misconception about the men who are called middlemen. Who are the greatest middlemen to-day? Is the hon. member who charges 25 per cent. or 30 per cent. likely to be placed on the same scale as the one who charges 5 per cent.? Surely these men who seem to know every detail must do so as the result of their own touching of pitch. They are prepared, for political reasons—no others—to try and damage honourable men who have sworn to do their duty by this community, and have done it well. I have not been referred to personally, but I challenge any man in this House to go to my place of business and ask the men who come in there with their produce whether they are getting a straight deal or not. If it could be found that we did not play the game, that we did not act straight and deal honestly, I would be prepared to go out of political life. Further, I have been connected with a constituency for very many years, and it is a significant fact that the agricultural areas in that constituency have always given me the largest majority that I have got anywhere. I do not know that we can take any notice of an hon. member who has prostituted his position, and who has dragged Parliament down to the very dust. If the leader of the Nationalist party, the hon. gentleman whom I follow, did make a statement regarding the hon. member, it was brought on by insinuations and innuendoes. The Nationalist party try to raise the tone of this House, not drag it down to the very gutter.

MR. BRENNAN: Your leader brought it down.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The ideals of some hon. members are such as to make the rising generation feel that they have nothing to follow. Surely we have something better than that to do. We should try to raise the community to a higher level; we should do our bit, play our part. I hope that the hon. member may be able to leave behind him, when he has to "throw in the sponge," a clean name—a name that will stand investigation in every particular.

MR. BRENNAN: If you want me to tackle Barnes and Company, I will do it.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I know that some hon. members will say that there must be some open hostility on my part in regard to this Bill. Probably there are many hon. members on this side who will not share my feelings on the matter. My feelings are that this Bill is not going to be in the

[3 p.m.] interests of the farmers. The Minister, when moving the second reading, gave us practically no information, and I think very largely he is feeling his way.

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

He made one statement which I noted at the time in answer to the leader of the Opposition to the effect that the Bill required no explanation to an intelligent person.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It is a very simple Bill.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The Minister practically says that the Bill requires no explanation.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I gave a very full explanation of the Bill.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Has this Bill been endorsed by someone outside, and is that endorsement sufficient to carry it? That is what legislation is coming to. Are we going to have legislation thrown down and be told that it does not matter—this is the Bill, and it is going through.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: As a layman, do you not think a lawyer should understand the Bill?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I noticed this morning, Sir, that you did not permit cross-firing between hon. members, and I am not going to follow that practice here. I am going to speak for myself. The Minister had a right to give full information on the Bill as he proceeded. You would pull me up, Sir, if I took the Bill clause by clause; but there are some clauses which cannot possibly fit the Bill; they have been copied from some other measure. The hon. member for Toowoomba referred to clause 9, wherein reference is made to the prescribed quality of the product. Let me take wheat. As a result of the bungling of the Wheat Board, there were a great number of grades of wheat. I do not say that the Board deliberately made a number of grades. I am quite prepared to say that it did not, but, through its bungling, a considerable amount of the wheat that came into the city of Brisbane, which was originally "A" grade, had been ruined because of the want of proper care by the Board. I think the hon. member for Drayton made some reference to some samples of wheat. I bought some samples. There was some wheat that came into the Brisbane market which, if it had not come from the Wheat Board, would never have been put into consumption because of the shameful condition it was in when it arrived. The state the wheat was in amounted to robbing the farmer.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: This is the farmers' own Wheat Board. They sent the wheat in.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It was not the farmers who did this. I saw wheat come down that was unfit for milling purposes, and which was sent to the mill. Some wheat came down as chick wheat, and was sent to the mill. Other wheat was in such a condition that you would not pick it up off the street. I took the numbers of the trucks so that there could be no mistake about what I was doing.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. gentleman got a witness, too.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Yes. When I am dealing with men of the calibre of the Secretary for Agriculture, I take the opportunity of getting a witness. If necessary, I can have that witness sworn.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We have only got the hon. gentleman's word about the numbers on the trucks.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The witness and myself went and took the samples together. Does the hon. gentleman want to sidetrack the matter any further? I would urge anyone interested to go round to the various sales on Friday morning and see what is happening in connection with the produce that comes from the country. My business life and my business associations to-day, and any progress I may have made, have been the result of my associations with farmers either in Warwick or elsewhere. I venture to say that, if members would only take the trouble to go and find out what is happening to-day, they would say that this Bill is an impossible proposition. Someone may say that the hon. member for Bulimba is opposed to the Bill because he is afraid it is going to hurt him. No, Sir. It is not going to hurt me. I have got brains and ability, and it does not matter a bit. This Bill does not deal with one single product. It will open up the door and allow further opportunities for importation from the South, which is going to do a great deal of harm to the producers here. You are going to strike at something which is going to hurt the producer. You cannot do too much to help the man on the land. I remember travelling in the country, Sir, on one occasion with yourself, when we came across some men who were toiling without receiving any advantages. Any man who does not feel that he should do everything to help the man on the land is not worthy of a position in this place, whatever may be his brand of politics. Let any man follow the chaff market. I have often heard people say that it is a gamble. To a very great extent it is. A man might wire asking us how much we are likely to get for chaff, and, although we might reply as sincerely as it is possible to do, two or three things might happen. A good fall of rain like we had last night would knock the bottom out of the market. One has always to be very careful in advising clients. With all commodities, more especially chaff, we have not only one single sample, but we could have practically forty or fifty different varieties. I am quite sure that practical men who know anything about business will bear me out in that regard. You are asking in connection with this matter for something to be done which it is impossible to do. Then there is the expense that would be incurred. Some people will say it is no expense; but expense is going on in connection with this business. Do you mean to tell me that the Wheat Board is run without any expense? Do you mean to tell me that the Wheat Board has not employed outside agents? Do you mean to tell me that the State Produce Agency does not employ other agents? Of course, it does. Who sells a great deal of the wheat for the Wheat Board? Dalgety and Company, Limited, and other agents in the city. They do not do it for nothing.

MR. G. P. BARNES: Some is sold by their own agency.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Some small lines go to the State Produce Agency, but not very much. The fact remains that, whether in the office of the Wheat Board, or whether sold in Brisbane or elsewhere, commission is paid for the sale of the wheat, and these various agents, competing one with the other, are the very life of business to-day. I have no need to make any defence, but I wonder sometimes how it is that a business which, from the point of view of the percentage charge, is less than any in the community,

should be tackled by men as it is in this House. The man who goes out—I am not speaking disrespectfully—the man who goes out as the agent of the worker is surely a middleman. There is a gentleman going round the State to-day in the interests of the party opposite—Mr. J. S. Collings—he is a middleman.

Who is stirring up this fuss? I have heard a great deal with regard to members on this side of the House belonging to the Opposition parties. It is said they want certain things but they will not acknowledge it. Who is making the noise for political reasons? The Government opposite! The reason the Government are doing it is because, so far as city and suburban electorates are concerned, they are on their beam-ends, and they want to stir up something that is nasty and unsavoury in the hope of making the people in the country dissatisfied. What this State wants is not a Government who are out to stir up nasty things, but a Government who are thinking big, a Government who see the nation's needs, and who are prepared to try and help the community as a whole instead of running it in sections. That is what is wanted to-day in Queensland.

I have just had handed to me the result of the Banana Pool ballot, and I am assured by the gentleman who handed it to me that in the ballot there were 400 votes for the poll and 600 against it—a majority against the pool of 200.

MR. BRENNAN: That is all right.

HON. W. H. BARNES: All I am showing is that, in the light of facts, people are realising that the Government way is not always the best way.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Where did you get that information from?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I can only say that it was handed to me by the hon. member for Nundah, who assures me that it is correct.

MR. COSTELLO: It is quite true.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I give it as it was given to me—I cannot say more than that. Just before I sit down I wish to say—I am making no attack upon the management of the State enterprises, because they have as good men there as we have in any of our departments, and to come here and try to hit them behind their backs would be unfair—that, in competition, with Government money behind them, they have not been able to make the impression they thought they would make on private firms. If a man takes you down once, you will not allow him to take you down a second time. So it is in connection with business management, and, instead of trying to attack and run down this management, we should try to lift it up. We should endeavour to serve this great and glorious country in every way we can. This Bill will not do it. It is going to add expense to expense, disgust to disgust, and loss to loss, and ultimately it will have to be wiped off the statute-book of the State.

MR. NOTT (*Stanley*): It appears to me that this Bill is another measure after the style of the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill, and can be classed as experimental legislation. In Queensland we have far greater natural resources than any other State in the Commonwealth, and it is deplorable that legislation of this class should be

*Mr. Nott.*]



necessary at all. If a State with all the natural resources that we have in Queensland were properly developed, I am quite satisfied that this sort of legislation would be absolutely unnecessary, because the law of supply and demand would so regulate prices that the primary producers could make a good and substantial living on the land, and they would be enabled to develop the country. But under the present Administration the development of the State has lagged so far behind that it is evidently necessary for this sort of legislation to be brought in to make it appear that the country is in a prosperous state, or to bring about prosperity by artificial means instead of by natural means. It seems to me that the amount of expense that would be incurred in the administration of this Bill and some of the other Bills lately introduced will be very great, and, if even a proportion of that money were given to the Department of Agriculture, and that department administered the business in an efficient way, this legislation would be unnecessary, as the department, if it were efficient, could do more than this legislation sets out to do.

Mr. KIRWAN: How do you account for the necessity for pools in New Zealand? They are asking for them there.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: How was it that the proposal for a Banana Pool was defeated by 600 to 400?

Mr. NOTT: The co-operative movement has failed to make that headway in Queensland that it should, and, if co-operation were assisted financially, the benefit to the State would be far in excess of any benefit that is likely to come out of this class of legislation. The hon. member for Brisbane interjected, "How can you account for the success of the pools in New Zealand?"

Mr. KIRWAN: No; I said, "How do you account for the necessity for pools there?" You say they are only necessary under a Labour Government.

Mr. NOTT: The pools formed in New Zealand have been formed with the assistance of co-operative companies there. But for the fact that in New Zealand the co-operative companies are far in advance of co-operative companies in Queensland, the pools there would not be any more successful than the pools are in Queensland. I regret that this sort of legislation is necessary; but, if I may use an Irishism, I say that I am glad to see it coming forward, because the Government, by bringing in these pools, show that during the last seven or eight years the producers have not had a fair return for their labour in producing foodstuffs and helping to develop the State. I can quite understand that, once a certain class of legislation is passed, it becomes necessary to go further and bring in this kind of legislation, simply to put industries on an artificial basis which are not already so, because they have to compete with the few industries we have which are now on an artificial basis. The unions of Queensland, backed up by the Labour Administration, have for a number of years raised the wages of their industrial supporters to a very high rate, to maintain which it was necessary that the men producing foodstuffs should be kept on a low rate of wages. It would not have been possible to give them a high rate of wages, so the only way the Government could secure their object was to make the producers take

a low rate of wage. Then we had the legislation in connection with the sugar industry, which put that industry on an artificial basis. Very high rates of wages are being paid in the sugar industry, and, if the population increases in Australia as it should do, there will be no question about the prosperity of the industry being maintained, and the effect will be that men will flock to the sugar industry on account of the high rate of wages. It is only right that the workers should get the highest wages they can. The labourers from other parts of Queensland will naturally go to the sugar-producing centres; consequently the production of wheat and other primary products will lag behind, because there will not be enough labour to work the farms. We find that men are periodically leaving the agricultural districts to go to work in sugar districts, and there is a scarcity of labour for a time in the agricultural districts, which suffer accordingly. The sugar industry being established on an artificial plane, it becomes necessary for other industries to have artificial legislation in the direction of giving them pools. But, when we have got them all established on an artificial basis, will it be possible for them to carry on? I believe that all industries in Australia could be put on an artificial basis if the country was being developed at a sufficient rate to consume all the food we produce; but we have no hope of consuming all the produce we grow, so we have to export it. I say that the market in Australia should be the best market we have for our produce, and that only the surplus should be exported. The greatest danger I see in connection with these pools, after the experience we have had with them, is that they start work before they are ready. They have not got the machinery or the storage facilities necessary when they are called upon to handle the products; consequently they are not in a position to hold products in good marketable condition, and deterioration practically sets in from the day they are received. The hon. member for Drayton and the hon. member for Bulimba instanced cases where they had seen wheat sold in Brisbane which was unfit for human consumption, and in many cases for any class of consumption. It seems to me that, under the present Administration, we must expect that these pools will be carried out in a very inefficient way, because we cannot hope, in selection by the Minister of members constituting the Boards and in other directions, to find men who have always been and are dependent on the success of the business they are running. They will be men who are working on a salary; they will be doing a certain class of work, and will be exempt from competition; and that will encourage a great deal of slackness. With regard to the view which the public are likely to take of this matter, the statement was made a few moments ago that the banana-growers have turned down the banana pool. I will give an instance in connection with my own electorate which goes to show the suspicion with which farmers look upon these pools. I claim that the farmers in my district have not experienced very sympathetic treatment from proprietary concerns; notwithstanding that, when I was in Toogoolawah last week I found one of the organisers from the Primary Producers' Organisation at work there. He advertised for a week by circulating handbills and literature through the town and inserting

[Mr. Nott.

advertisements in the local newspapers that he would hold a meeting in the hall there, which, I suppose, will hold about 500 people.

At 3.30 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (Mr. Kirwan, *Brisbane*) relieved the Speaker in the chair.

Mr. NOTT: When I arrived I met this organiser. He was a good fellow, and he told me of his failure to obtain a meeting. A number of business people came out and asked me what was the strength of it? They said that he had been advertising and sending out bills all the week. There were about forty or fifty of them there, and I told them that, if they had gone to see the organiser, they would have known all about it. I asked the organiser how many people rolled up, and I found that, after all the canvassing and advertising, only six or seven rolled up, and only two went into the hall. I told them that the Bill had become law, and if they did not get their representatives on the different bodies they could not blame others for running the concern. They said that the advertisement said that the Bill set out to be non-political, and a little further down it mentioned the names of Mr. Theodore and Mr. Gillies, and they said to me: "Do you think we are going into that?" That was the reason that they absolutely stood off in that locality. However, I advised the organiser to hold another meeting. I explained to the people that, as the Bill had now become law, it was their business to make themselves acquainted with its contents. It will be the same in connection with the Bill that we are now considering, if it becomes law. We shall have to make the best of it. I hope, if it does become law, as I said when I was speaking on the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill and the Agricultural Education Bill, I hope that the Administration will not allow it to be a dead letter, but will use it to the very best advantage. If they do that, I am satisfied that it is going to put up the price of bread, butter, and other commodities by 100 per cent. It is just as well that the people of Queensland should know that the formation of pools can do nothing but put up the price of the various commodities concerned, in some cases to a very great extent.

Mr. BULCOCK (*Barcoo*): It is somewhat interesting to listen to the speeches of hon. members opposite. We have heard the Bill damned by faint praise, and we have heard it criticised and condemned altogether. We have also heard it applauded. There seems to be no unanimity of opinion amongst hon. members opposite. My own personal opinion is that any measure that has for its object the promotion of better economic conditions amongst the farmers is desirable; and the Government, in introducing this legislation to promote that well-being, are doing a laudable thing. Naturally the question arises as to whether the legislation we are discussing at the present time will fulfil an apparent want, so far as the farming community is concerned. Personally, I believe it will. I am broad-minded enough to believe that it is essential that the man on the land, in common with every other individual in the community, should have his interests safeguarded. It is with the object of safeguarding his interests that this Bill has been introduced. The Minister, in introducing the Bill, made use of the expression that it was not experimental legislation, because we had experience of it in the past. We have heard hon.

members on the other side condemn some situations that might arise out of our system of pooling; but we must profit by the experience of the past, otherwise what is the use of past experience? I notice that, as the result of experience of the Wheat Pool Act, certain things have been eliminated with the view of establishing a better system in connection with any pool that may be created in the future. The hon. member for Bulimba announced this afternoon that those engaged in the cultivation of bananas had rejected the proposed pool. I do not think the hon. gentleman would make such a definite statement unless he had facts to support it. Assuming it is correct, therefore, it simply proves that we are not desirous of imposing our will or our desire on those who are engaged in any branch of primary production. That shows that the proposition is essentially democratic, and those engaged in any particular industry, such as the cultivation of bananas or anything else, will have an opportunity of saying whether they require a pool or not. There can be nothing wrong in that. The opportunity is contained in this Bill for the growers to take any action they like in the direction of forming a pool. Although the Minister said that this legislation was not experimental, an hon. member opposite said that it was experimental legislation. The Parliament of Queensland, and other Parliaments, are confronted with extraordinary circumstances, and I think it is necessary that there should be experimental legislation. We should have experiments in the body politic, just as we have in science or any other branch of human endeavour. If we do not make experiments, we do not know if we are getting out of the rut or not. If we do not make experiments, we shall travel the time-worn road, and shall never be courageous enough to embark on new measures. We have very little opportunity of getting away from the beaten track without experimental legislation.

The argument has been freely used that this Bill excludes the middleman. My primary desire is to see the activities of the middleman lessened, especially when he prevents the primary producer from getting the fullest monetary recompense for the labour he expends in the production of the commodity he has to sell. The hon. member for Stanley pointed out that the cost to the public would increase.

At 3.38 p.m.,

Mr. COSTELLO (*Carnarvon*): I beg to call attention to the state of the House.

Quorum formed.

Mr. BULCOCK: It is regrettable that Country members—

Mr. COSTELLO: It is regrettable that Government members do not stay here to make a quorum.

Mr. BRAND: They were out watching the storm coming up.

Mr. BULCOCK: It is regrettable that Country members, who are returned to this House on a definite Country platform, and who, in season and out of season, profess lip loyalty to the primary producers of this State, have not got sufficient decency and sufficient appreciation of the value of the ordinary fitness of things to remain in the House to listen to a discussion on a matter which vitally concerns the primary producers.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

*Mr. Bulcock.]*

Mr. BULCOCK: When I was speaking I noticed an hon. member on the other side passing backwards and forwards with the object, apparently, of inducing Opposition members to leave the Chamber for the purpose, shall I say, of watching the approach of the storm, and, when an hon. member who has just come into the Chamber says that he was watching the storm, a little incident like that shows that these farming champions are more interested in such comparatively unimportant things than they are in a discussion which involves the wellbeing of the primary industries of this State.

Hon. members opposite have committed themselves to very definite statements on this Bill. The hon. member for Dalby, the leader of the Country party, said, "I am not keen on the Bill," and the hon. member for Windsor, the leader of the Nationalist party, said, "I think it would be better if we did not have the Bill." The hon. member for Windsor, in the course of his speech, said that, if fifty producers of a particular commodity memorialised the Minister and asked him for a board to govern their industry in the marketing of their produce, a vote would be taken on that question, and, if 100 producers of the commodity voted in favour, they would be able to impose their wishes on the great majority of those engaged in the industry. I have a more profound respect for the intelligence of the primary producers than has, apparently, the hon. member for Windsor. I believe that the farmer is intelligent enough to conserve his own interests, and I believe that he would not allow them to be sacrificed by a minority, no matter how militant it might be.

Another question which has been raised during this debate is: "Will the farmer who is producing primary products be able to control the destinies of his production?" A perusal of the Bill, taking certain clauses in conjunction, will indicate that he will, because paragraph (a) of subclause (1) of clause 21 provides that one of the functions of the Governor in Council shall be to make regulations for the following purposes, *inter alia*—

"Making all necessary provision for and regulating the conduct, by post or otherwise, of the election from time to time of members of the Board."

It is quite specifically stated that those engaged in primary production in any given direction will ultimately elect their own board of directors, and I have sufficient faith in the intelligence of the farmers to know that they will elect the men most fitted for the positions.

The question of expert knowledge and advice has been raised. I am pleased to know that the gentleman who is managing the wheat pool, Mr. Binns, is an expert in the marketing of wheat, and it is unfortunate that other pools have not been so successful in obtaining that expert advice and guidance which are so necessary for their wellbeing. That is not an argument against the principle of the Bill, but it may be an argument against the people who constitute the Board. It is necessary at this juncture to issue a warning to those men who may take an interest in the formation of pools to exercise their influence so that the most capable persons will be chosen to direct their activities and bring them to successful issues.

{Mr. Bulcock.

The hon. member for Burnett was more than usually frank when he said, "I will vote for the Bill." I think he was actually speaking on behalf of the primary producing interests of this State, because I believe that the farmers of the State will welcome the Bill, not so much because they will form pools under it, as because they will have opportunities to do so if they think their interests can best be conserved in that way. It is well here to discriminate between the formation of mandatory pools and the desire of the farmers to form pools. There can be no question as to the policy of the Bill, and, as it is being wisely left in the hands of the primary producers to say whether they will form pools or not, no exception can be taken to its machinery.

The hon. member for Drayton was accused by the Premier of some little peculiarities or eccentricities, and the hon. member asked the Premier to indicate in what direction he had been guilty. I think it is an instance of his peculiarities that we find him coming into this Chamber and voting for the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill, and, on the other hand, quite recently going out into the country and decrying the principle for which he voted. I have another instance. Some little time ago he intimated to this House that fair average quality wheat was being sold in the open market in Brisbane at a price below that fixed by the Wheat Board, and that he had taken samples and would produce them here. When the hon. member was challenged to produce his samples, they were not forthcoming. Having some knowledge of wheat, I asked him to let me see those samples, but the hon. member did not do so. Perhaps we can form only the conclusion that there is a little mental peculiarity on the part of an hon. member making such a statement.

The hon. member for Carnarvon, I think, represents a district where the fruitgrowing industry is going to attain a good deal of magnitude, and a district worthy of serious consideration in connection with this Bill. I am of the opinion that the fruitgrowing industry of the Commonwealth generally has been one of the Cinderellas of agriculture, and I know from experience that the interests of the growers have not been conserved in the past under the system of sending the product from the orchard to the middleman to dispose of it for a consideration. I have frequently seen not one quarter of the price which has been realised in the market returned to the grower, and I have frequently seen accounts go back to the latter showing that he was indebted to the commission agent. I have seen hundreds and thousands of cases—not in Queensland, but on the Sydney Fruit Exchange—of well-grown, matured, healthy fruit, such as any individual might consume with relish, sent to the "tip" in the summer season, simply because there was no organisation for the distribution of the fruit over the State, or because the middleman felt that he could not dispose of that fruit in a way that would be to his advantage. If that obtains, it is obvious, in the interests of the fruitgrowers, that some other system should be introduced. I have before me a copy of a paper read by Mr. R. Crowe, Export Superintendent of Victorian Department of Agriculture, before a meeting of the Chamber of Agriculture, Port Fairy, on 24th June, 1920.

It is entitled, "Some Phases of Pooling."  
He made this remark—

"I have no doubt of the necessity for establishing export packing depôts in every large fruitgrowing centre, where, for example, all the Jonathans could be graded according to quality and size, packed and sent away under the name of the district or registered brand. Likewise with other varieties. If this were done, higher prices would be realised in the export markets, and thus each and every fruitgrower concerned would benefit. To give some idea of what is meant, reference may be made to the first shipment this past season. The s.s. 'Borda' took a total of 50,000 cases, under 260 different brands. With a co-operative pooling system such as has been adopted by the Californian Fruit Growers' Exchange and the Western Pacific Exchange, the major portion of this shipment could have been shipped under about ten brands, and under normal conditions higher prices would be realised."

That is the opinion of an expert, and it is an opinion with which those who are engaged in the fruitgrowing industry, or who are interested in it, will readily concur. Those 260 different brands were the result of the private competitive system of marketing. It would be impossible to do away with that until such time as a fruit pool was established, which would lead, not only to better packing, not only to more equitable and, perhaps in some instances, honest packing, but would bring our brands of fruit into prominence on the other side of the world, with the result that we would establish markets that we shall not be able to establish so long as we continue our present haphazard system of exportation. Practically all the countries in the world at the present time are giving serious consideration of this question of primary production. Everybody is recognising that the wellbeing of the community depends on the prosperity of the man on the land. I do not believe that an election campaign is the time when we should say that the farmer is the backbone of the country. The place to say that is in this Chamber, where there is an opportunity of doing something for the farmer. I do not desire to profess lip-loyalty to the farmer, but I do desire that this Government should do something to promote the wellbeing and the interests of the farmer for the sake of the community in general, as well as for the farmer's own sake.

The question of pooling first attained some prominence during the war period. It is safe to assume at this distance of time that had we not adopted this system of pooling throughout Australia, it would have been impossible to arrange for the sale of our surplus products—wool, grain, dairy products, meat, etc.—during the war period. Canada, recognising the necessity for the pooling of a commodity, and confining her activities to wheat, perhaps, to a greater extent than to any other primary commodity, instituted a system whereby the farmers delivered their wheat to a silo, and received what are termed "store warrants." These "store warrants" were given in accordance with the grade and quality of the wheat delivered. That is an extension that we might well consider.

Mr. WARREN: They have been doing that in New South Wales for twenty years.

Mr. BULCOCK: I have in mind some very considerable scandals that arose out of the silo contracts in New South Wales not so long ago. That is one of those things which tend to discourage the farming community from participating in a pool. I do not think it is a desirable thing that those elements should be allowed to creep in, therefore I reiterate my belief that it is necessary to have efficient and sound management so far as these pools are concerned, otherwise they cannot possibly be a success.

The hon. member for Drayton raised the question of seed wheat, and said that the farmers should be allowed to dispose of their seed wheat in their own way. This Bill contains a clause which will give an opportunity for that to be done. The Board may exempt certain growers, if, in its opinion, their wheat is of a type that is better adapted for seed purposes than for milling or gristing. I have no hesitation in expounding my belief that, with a proper system of organisation, such an individual's plot would be exempted from the general pooling conditions laid down in this Bill. If that were not so, it would be foolish. In passing, I would like to remark that in Canada at the present time they do not exempt any grain; it is all brought to the central silos and deposited there in accordance with quality. It is not very hard for any man who has any knowledge of wheat to take a handful, and, by looking at it, determine the amount of foreign substance there is in it. If you find that you have a practically clean wheat, true to type and grain, the difficulty that the hon. member for Drayton professes to see is to a great extent removed. Although it might be a little circumlocutory, it would lead to a better type of grain being raised in our State.

The argument is often raised that in Victoria there has been a good deal of opposition of late to the formation of pools. More especially has attention been drawn in this connection to the Victorian farmers' attitude so far as dairy products are concerned. That is easily explained by reason of the fact that in Victoria they have an early milk flow, which means an early butter flow. In New South Wales it is a little later, and in Queensland it is later still; so that, when we are just beginning to enter on our period of maximum production, Victoria is at the top of her period of maximum production, and Queensland offers facilities for the exploitation of the butter market by the Victorian growers. It can easily be seen, therefore, that the Victorian grower—protecting and conserving his own interests, as he is entitled to do—is not in favour, and is not likely to be in favour, of a butter pool such as was placed before him some little time ago. The Minister for Agriculture in Victoria, in discussing this question, voiced the feelings and desires of those who were engaged in the dairying business there. In 1911-12, 1912-13, and 1913-14, if the butter that we exported from Queensland had been exported and controlled under a pool, it would have meant a gain of £70,000 to those engaged in the production of butter. My authority for that statement is Mr. Crowe, the export expert of the Victorian Department of Agriculture, who has exhaustively gone into this question.

Another phase of the question presents itself so far as the dairying industry is con-

*Mr. Bulcock.*

cerned in its relation to Queensland. When we reach our maximum production, and we are capable of exporting our butter to the London and those Continental markets which we exploit, it comes into competition with the early spring butters of the Continental markets, with the result that the value of our butter is depressed. That is an experience which has been encountered by dairymen who are interested in the export trade, and it can be overcome only by a judicious system of pooling—that system having as its object the conservation of the producer's interests and giving him a safeguard that his butter will not be emptied on to another market at a time which is not economically advantageous to him. It will thus be seen that there are arguments both for and against the system of pooling. Queensland occupies the unique position of being advantageously affected so far as butter-pooling is concerned.

I would like to say a word or two on the question of standardisation, so far as pooling is concerned. In the past, because of our open markets and our competitive system, the standardisation of our products has not been all that could be desired, consequently our goods, more especially our canned goods, have suffered in comparison on the London

market. The system of pooling [4 p.m.] must naturally tend, under a proper system of supervision, to raise the standard, and, in raising the standard, it must serve our interests, and, therefore, bring under the favourable notice of the residents of the Old World the quality of the material that we are able to produce in Queensland. I recognise that those who are producing a superior article may not be in favour of a pool while those who are producing an inferior article may possibly favour a pool. In this instance, it is necessary that a rigid inspection of export goods should be enforced so that we can keep a high minimum standard of nearly all the goods that we export.

I would like to say a word on the question of private enterprise as opposed to co-operative control of public utilities. I am not going to say that all middlemen are rogues; I am not going to say that every middleman is out to exploit the farmer to his maximum capacity; but I do know that there are grave instances where the community has been penalised by the operations of those who have intercepted the primary products between the farmer and the consumer, to the detriment of the consumer. Only a couple of years ago we had an instance of where certain huge money interests of America set out to capture the Chicago wheat trade. This was done at a time when there was a vast volume of unemployment in America, and when the cost of living was unfavourable to the workers, and, therefore, to the community in that particular country. In spite of that, these individuals were so bowless as to corner these essential supplies of bread, and deprive the people of that country of the opportunity of receiving bread at a fair and reasonable price. They almost succeeded in their desires, and dozens of financial magnates went "bung" in the speculation. There is always the possibility of that sort of thing going on so long as these things are allowed to be controlled unrestrictedly by private enterprise. During the process of this debate we have had a good deal of talk about co-operation. I

[Mr. Bulcock.

would like to quote one instance where public interests are not served by a commodity being handled by middlemen. In New South Wales there is a limited company which distributes in the main the city's milk supply, and they pay so much per gallon for every gallon of milk which the producers forward to their central depôts for distribution. The legal standard in New South Wales is somewhere in the vicinity of 3.3 per cent. of butter-fat. The bulk of the milk yields on tests, perhaps, 3.4 per cent. or 3.5 per cent., and when the composite test is made of all the different samples of the milk supplied to the central depôt by the outside suppliers, it will probably be found to contain that percentage of butter-fat. It is obvious that that is a couple of points above the legal minimum of butter-fat standard laid down by the Health Department of New South Wales. It is also obvious that any added water would increase the volume of milk, and proportionately reduce the amount of butter-fat contained in the milk. If that had been done, the hydrometer would have revealed the practice of that company, and consequently they would have been blown out. What did they do? They took a test, and it required only a simple mathematical calculation to determine how much of the milk they put through the separator, and from which they extracted the cream, should be returned to the bulk of the milk. The amount of cream they would get by this process was "bunce." They did not have to pay the producer for it because he was paid on the gallon basis. They did not sell the milk containing 3.4 per cent. or 3.5 per cent., as they should have done if they had been honest people. They extracted one or two points of butter-fat from the milk, and then sold the resultant cream as "bunce." They sold the milk up to the legal standard of 3.3 per cent., and the law could not touch them, and the consumers' interests were being ignored. The little babies who required the rich milk were being robbed by this bowless body, the consumer was being generally victimised, and the producer was being victimised, too, because he was not being paid fairly and equitably for that which he was supplying. The profits of this practice were going into the pockets of one of the biggest companies handling fresh milk in New South Wales. I quote that example to show what can be done by private enterprise in order to gain an advantage at the expense of both the producer and the consumer.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Private enterprise has provided the finest milk food in Australia.

Mr. BULCOCK: I would like to deal with the community aspect of this Bill. If you raise the standard existing in the primary producing areas, it is obvious that not only the producer but those dependent upon him are going to benefit, so that, by the proper control and regulation of foodstuffs and the distribution of supplies, advantage will fall on every individual, whether he be engaged functioning with his own capital or whether he be an individual employed by a particular farm, or in any capacity where primary products are produced. If you have foodstuffs which are being satisfactorily produced, and you discover markets so that the commodities will be sold at the best possible advantage, you are conferring a benefit on the community. I do not hold with the hon. member for Stanley that the effect of pools is going to increase the cost of living. I believe that the effect of pools, by the elimination of the

middleman, will not have any grave effect in that direction. Assuming that, for the purpose of creating prosperity, it is essential in the farming interests and for the farming community that the cost of living should be advanced, whether on a large or small scale, our Arbitration Court can deal with the basic wage, which is based on the cost of living, and there can be no hardship inflicted on any individual member of the community. The only hardship that will be inflicted, so far as I can see, is on those whose interests lie in the direction of waxing fat at the expense of those who are farming.

I notice that the Bill makes some provision—and wisely so—for the establishment of credits. I hope that position will be given serious consideration by the Board that may be established to deal with any primary product that it is desired to pool. Take the wheat pool. When the farmer gets his wheat off, he has to deliver it at the central depôt before he can get any document that will enable him to raise any money. Possibly the small man is adversely affected by such a practice. I know that before the establishment of the wheat pool the small man could go to the local storekeeper or others and, for a consideration, sometimes ranging up to 15 per cent.—he could get assistance.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: 15 per cent. is illegal now.

Mr. BULCOCK: The hon. member knows very well that, when the farmer is unfortunately in the hands of certain unprincipled storekeepers, they make him pay through the nose.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I do not know it.

Mr. BULCOCK: If the hon. gentleman does not know it, I do. While under our present wheat pool system the wheatgrower cannot get financial assistance until he has delivered his wheat to the central depôt, it is possible for an extension to be made in this direction under subclause (2) of clause 5, which provides that adequate financial accommodation may be arranged for, and in that clause rests the foundation of providing credits for the farming community. I do not think that the farming community is going to be placed on a sound or equitable footing until two things have happened; the first being that there shall be markets awaiting the farmer's produce; and, second, that finance shall be available to the farmer, so that he may function in the best interests of the community at large.

I recognise that pools have a tendency to raise the standard of production, and rightly so, as I think the standard should be raised, because I stand for efficiency in the farming community. But I hope, in the interests of the people of Queensland generally, that the practice of allowing choice products to be exported while the local market has to be content with less choice products will be given consideration, because I am one of those who believe that the interests of our own community should always be considered, and I cannot reconcile the exportation of choice or "A" grade stuff and the retention of the "B" grade stuff for consumption on the local market.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They can always get the best if they pay for it.

Mr. BULCOCK: I know that in the past choice stuff has been exported and second-

grade stuff has been retained for local consumption. I recognise, in common with every other member of this House, that it is necessary that the interests of the community should be safeguarded, and I know that pools may readily become monopolies; and I want to see such protection extended to the community as will prevent undue pressure being used by the pools to exploit the people of Queensland. I believe in the farmer getting a fair deal, but I believe in the community getting a fair deal too.

Mr. BRAND: Are you suggesting that the farmers would be dishonest?

Mr. BULCOCK: I am suggesting that the power is incipient in a pool to allow of exploitation if the pool should be so immoral or so ruthless as to desire it, and it is necessary, therefore, that some adequate safeguard should be provided for the safety of the public in the event of such a thing happening. I would say, therefore, that pools, adequately safeguarded for the discovering of new markets, assisting and advising the farmer, whose activities so far as prices are concerned are subject to the decision of the Commissioner of Prices to do away with the possibility of exploitation, leave but little to be desired so far as the prosperity and welfare of the primary producers of this State are concerned; and I am one of those who feel that this Bill will be endorsed by the farming community, and that generally much good will come to the community as a result of this Government's activities in that direction.

At 4.15 p.m.,

The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS (*Pittsworth*): I take it that this Bill is a natural corollary to the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill which we passed earlier in the session, and, in listening to the hon. member who has just sat down, I take it he is a little inclined to believe that in the pooling system certain work is going to be carried out which is essentially the work of the organisation under the Primary Producers' Organisation Act.

I want to confine myself to the question of a general pooling scheme as advocated by the Secretary for Agriculture. I regret to say that in introducing the Bill the Minister did not give us a great deal of information as to what the ideals of the Bill were to be. We were told that one of the principal ideas of the Bill was to eliminate the middleman, but he did not say whether, after having eliminated the middleman, it was going to be a question of the farmers dealing directly with the consumers, or what was going to happen. I hope that the Secretary for Agriculture will realise that, in introducing a Bill of this kind he is introducing a Bill which has the sympathy of members on this side of the House, but we still believe that it is our duty—I think members on the other side of the House will admit that we have a far greater knowledge of the subject generally than hon. members on the other side of the House—to move reasonable amendments along the lines which we believe are going to improve the Bill, and we hope that those amendments will be accepted. First of all, in clause 3 is definitely laid down what it is proposed to do in the Bill. So far as I can ascertain, the Governor in Council will have certain powers conferred upon him, and he can order from time to

*Mr. J. H. C. Roberts.]*

time the pooling of any article or commodity. In that connection I want to bring before the Secretary for Agriculture the remarks of the hon. member for Bulimba. I feel, and I am quite certain that a good many members on this side of the House feel too, that, whilst we can with safety confine the principle of pooling to those commodities which are used for human foodstuffs, it will be a very dangerous thing indeed if we attempt to pool such commodities as chaff, hay, and other articles which are used more or less as foodstuffs for animals and for working horses in the large centres of population. The hon. member for Bulimba struck a note which should act as a warning to the Minister, and I trust that the Minister is going to realise that, whilst probably it is a safe undertaking to pool the foodstuffs of the State, if he tries to pool lucerne and other such commodities, then he is going to do a certain injustice to the man on the land.

Mr. HARTLEY: How do you make that out?

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I want to know what the Secretary for Agriculture means when he says the Board will have power to declare stuff that is stacked to be within the meaning of the Act. Would it be possible for a pool in a time of drought to go to a man who for years previous to the drought had been making provision for a dry time—which we know takes place in Queensland at different periods—and say that his hay belongs to the pool?

It would be a ridiculous thing if that was to be done. It would be an absolute farce for a board, for the Minister, or for any body of men composing a board and acting under the instructions of the Department of Agriculture, to be able to go out to a farm where a man has 600 or 700 tons of lucerne hay and say that that hay has to be pooled. It would be absurd to tell that man, after holding the stuff for a considerable period and using part of it to keep his stock alive and then wishing to sell what he can spare at a price which will pay him for the time he has kept it, that he has to come under the jurisdiction of this Bill. Under that clause, I take it that the Secretary for Agriculture will have the power, if necessary, more or less to commandeer potatoes and other perishable produce which may be held in paddocks against a rise in price. The hon. member for Rosewood represents a big potato-growing district, and he knows that there is a very large number of farmers who deliberately put on one side a certain quantity of their produce. They take infinite trouble and care in storing those potatoes, in order to be ready for the rise in the market which they believe is going to take place when the flush of the crop is sold. I would ask the Minister whether, in the event of having a potato pool, it is proposed that these men should be compelled to place the whole of their crop at the one time in the pool and be expected to sell at the price and on the terms ordered by the members of the Board. If so, there is a possibility of a very great injustice being done to many of the farmers who are interested in the growing of potatoes, and it will bring about a glut in a very short time. No one knows better than the hon. member for Rosewood the possibility of an over-supplied market in connection with potatoes, pumpkins, and other commodities which are grown in his

district. We have to be very careful in connection with a general pooling Bill of this description, which, as the Minister says, is largely based upon the Wheat Pool Bill which he introduced some two years ago at the instigation of the Queensland Farmers' Union. We are pleased that the Minister brought in that Bill, which has been a very great success, mainly due to the business acumen and management of the manager, Mr. William Binns. If there had been a man of less business acumen than Mr. Binns, I feel that the wheat pool would have been a failure. Many hon. members opposite seem to think that it is only necessary to formulate a pool and that everything will go on swimmingly.

I would ask the Secretary for Agriculture how the canary seed pool is progressing. What has happened in connection with that pool may happen in connection with many other pools which it will be possible to bring into operation under this measure. The Secretary for Agriculture knows that I was one of the keenest advocates for a canary seed pool in Queensland, and I had the pleasure of coming down to Brisbane on three or four occasions and interviewing the hon. gentleman with regard to the formation of that pool. I particularly requested that the Government should undertake some liability in regard to a guarantee to enable the canary seed pool to pay, on an average, £7 10s. per ton for canary seed on the Darling Downs. The first occasion on which we interviewed the Secretary for Agriculture was in January, and it took the hon. gentleman from January to May to make up his mind as to whether he would recommend the Government to give a guarantee of £10,000 to enable us to carry on. Unfortunately, no one can say that the canary seed pool has been a success. I refer to that pool for a specific purpose. Nine-tenths of the canary seed of Australia is produced on the Darling Downs, which means that we have a monopoly of the markets of Australia for canary seed; yet we have had great difficulty in getting rid of it, and what has happened in connection with canary seed may occur to a greater extent in regard to other commodities which are produced in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria at the same time. I want the Minister to realise the necessity of taking a reasonable view in regard to this Bill, and to appreciate the possibility of great failures taking place under the measure as it is framed. The hon. member for Barcoo called attention to subclause (ii.) of clause 5. I want to refer to subclause (iii.) of that clause, because the hon. member for Barcoo evidently thinks that this is one of the first principles of the pooling system, and said in his concluding remarks that a pool may become a danger to the community—that it may become autocratic, and practically be a monopoly—and he therefore wants to see the pool surrounded with all sorts of regulations so that it can be prevented from becoming a monopoly and from working against the interests of the consumers in the State. In subclause (iii.) of clause 5 it is provided that the Board may—

“As far as practicable provide the commodity for consumption in Queensland, and for its supply during any period of shortage to those places within Queensland wherein a shortage is experienced.”

Mr. J. H. C. Roberts.

Are we to understand that under that provision we shall first of all have to supply the people of Queensland with their requirements? Does it mean that, if we could get 10s. or 15s. per cwt. more for our butter or cheese in New South Wales or Victoria, we are not to be allowed to send it there before we have supplied the people of Queensland at a price that may or may not return the farmer a living wage? When the hon. member for Barcoo says that he hopes to see the pooling system established so as to enable those in charge of the pool to be in a position to prevent exploitation or injustice being done to other sections of the community, I want to point out the injustice which will be done to the primary producers in the event of their not being allowed to use the markets of the world for the sale of their commodities. The primary producer never objects to the labouring man using the markets of the world in which to offer his labour. (Government dissent.) We do not say to the workers of Queensland, "Thou shalt not go out of Queensland under a penalty of £500." They have got the whole of Australia in which to offer their commodity—their muscle and bone. Surely it is not the intention under this Bill to prevent commodities going out of Queensland when the market price is 10s., 15s., or £1 a cwt. more in some other State than it is here. I rather think that the hon. member for Barcoo feels that subclause (iii.) of clause 5 is a very desirable provision under the pooling system.

INTERRUPTION OF BUSINESS.

At 4.30 p.m.,

The SPEAKER: Order! Under Standing Order 307 the business of the House will now be interrupted for the purpose of dealing with questions and formal business.

PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

- Report of the manager, State Advances Corporation.
- Brief history relating to the Brisbane tramways.
- Return to an Order of the House relating to Government employees dispensed with.
- Return to an Order of the House relating to deflated or retrenched Government employees.
- Twelfth annual report of the University of Queensland.

QUESTIONS.

STATISTICS IN RE IPSWICH-DUGANDAN BRANCH RAILWAY.

Mr. BELL (*Fassifern*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

"Will he kindly supply the following information relative to the branch line Ipswich to Dugandan with respect to the financial years 1912-13 and 1921-22:—(a) train mileage; (b) number of passengers carried; (c) amount of freight collected; and (d) number of special trains?"

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Keppel*) replied—

	1912-13.	1921-22.
(a) Train miles ..	61,687	67,045
(b) Passengers booked on branch ..	44,759	44,301
(c) * Freight on goods and live stock loaded on branch	£6,350	£21,865
(d) Number of special trains	Not available	13

\* This is the "outwards" traffic from all stations, but includes freight for destination. The actual earnings due to the branch for 1921-22 are not yet available.

PETITION FROM RESIDENTS OF MARIA CREEK AND LIVERPOOL CREEK AREAS FOR CENTRAL SUGAR-MILL.

Mr. GREEN (*Townsville*) asked the Chief Secretary—

"1. Referring to his answer to my question of 21st July last, has the Government yet come to a decision in regard to the petition of the residents of the Maria Creek and Liverpool Creek areas for the erection of a central mill to serve those areas, and, if so, what decision?"

"2. What was the cost of pulling up the Maria Creek tramline?"

"3. What was the value of the material so collected?"

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) replied—

"1. During my visit to Innisfail on the 9th May last, the hon. member for Herbert introduced a deputation representative of the residents of the Maria Creek and Liverpool Creek areas of his electorate touching the question of the erection of a sugar-mill to serve that district. He has since been in close touch with me on the matter, and is aware that, pending the receipt of the report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the suitability of localities for additional sugar-mills, no decision will be made.

"2 and 3. This information will be obtained."

RELIEF RATIONS AT CHARTERS TOWERS.

Mr. WINSTANLEY (*Queenton*), without notice, asked the Acting Home Secretary—

"In this morning's 'Brisbane Courier,' under the heading of 'Relief Rations,' it is stated that Charters Towers received £33,391. Are those figures correct, or is it merely a mistake of £30,000?"

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones, *Paddington*) replied—

"The figures disclosed in the 'Brisbane Courier' of this morning's issue are not correct. The correct figures for Charters Towers are £3,391 14s. 9d. Evidently it is a typographical error, and I hope the 'Courier' will correct it."



PROPOSED EXCURSION OF MEMBERS TO WHEAT AREAS.

Mr. F. A. COOPER (*Bremer*), without notice, asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

“In view of questions asked this afternoon, and the apparent ignorance of certain members of the Country party in regard to wheat qualities, will he arrange an excursion during the wheat harvesting season to the wheat areas for the benefit of members of the Country party?”

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*) replied—

“Yes, I will endeavour to arrange that. I will also endeavour to arrange for excursions to the sugar areas and to many other agricultural districts in Queensland.”

(Government laughter.)

PRIMARY PRODUCTS POOLS BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS (*Pittsworth*): I should like to refer to some of the remarks of the hon. member for Barcoo in regard to the question of efficiency and the standardisation of the article we produce. He seemed to imagine that it was possible to raise an article to a certain standard under the pool system. I want to point out to him that we cannot possibly bring an article up to a standard under the pool system unless we can get right down to the manufacture of that article. I feel that, had the money which has been spent upon the Primary Producers' Association, and in many other ways, by the Department of Agriculture, been devoted to the purpose of bringing into being an effective means of distribution, and the opening up of markets for our products, the farmers of Queensland would be infinitely better off than they are under present conditions. Efficiency and standardisation can only be brought about by the amalgamation of many of our manufacturing companies. For instance, if you have ten or fifteen small factories, each of them manufacturing a small quantity of butter or cheese—I refer especially to the butter factories—you are going to have a very big proportion of second-grade butter. Had we had the opportunity, through Government assistance, of first of all bringing into being an effective amalgamation of the co-operative companies, and the promise that we should have at our disposal means to encourage the co-operative distribution of those commodities. I feel certain that the producer would have been a great deal better off than under a system of simply forming a pool whenever the Minister thinks it is necessary, particularly when he thinks he can dissolve the pool whenever he thinks it is desirable. We are going to get nowhere at all under those conditions. It should be the ambition of the State authorities and the people of Queensland engaged in the primary producing industries to send out an article second to none in the world; but we are certainly not going to get to that position by simply bringing into existence a pool to enable us to sell the product we may have to sell. Is the cheese pool to-day bringing about effective sales of cheese? Do you think that the work of the cheese pool compares favourably with the work done by the wheat pool? Never on your life. I want the Minister to appre-

ciate the fact that we have something bigger to deal with than the mere formation of pools. I hope this Bill is going to become law, but I sincerely hope that the Minister is going to be reasonable in the matter of accepting amendments. He circularised the country districts, and openly acknowledged that the amendments which he accepted from members of the Country party made the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill almost a perfect Bill. In other words, he admitted that had it not been for the amendments moved from this side of the House it would not have been by any means a perfect Bill. I think that of the twenty-three or twenty-four amendments moved by members on this side he accepted nineteen, and he was very glad to get them. I hope he is going to show a similar desire to meet us on this Bill, realising that we are prepared to help him, provided he is prepared to accept the help we are offering.

I would like to drive home to the Minister my point that simply bringing into being a pool to deal with any particular commodity is not going to enable us to give to the primary producer the full value of his product. A pool may be formed at an injudicious time, and we shall find that a big loss takes place rather than a profit, and it will not be a question of one or two men suffering, but all the producers in that particular section of industry.

In clause 8 we find the following provision:—

“The tendering of the commodity by any person (whether by himself or any other person authorised by him) to an authorised agent, for acceptance of delivery by him, shall be *prima facie* evidence of an intention to deliver the tendered commodity to the Board to be disposed of by the Board in accordance with this Act.”

I sincerely trust that the Minister will profit by the lesson which was taught to us on the Downs in regard to the wheat pool. I hope it is going to be so arranged that, directly a man offers to place a certain commodity in the pool, it will be classified, and payment will be forthcoming within a fortnight or three weeks after the classification has taken place. As the Minister knows, in the first year of the wheat pool a large quantity of wheat was sent into the grain shed at Oakey. It was of excellent quality. It was sent in in November and December, 1920, but was not classed till June or July, 1921. The result was that 25 per cent. of it came out f.a.q. wheat and the balance was below average quality; consequently a very grave injustice was done to, and a very serious loss incurred by, the unfortunate growers who had put the wheat in that shed. I appreciate the fact that the wheat pool came into being a month or two too late. It had to inaugurate a system, appoint and discipline an office staff, and do a great many other things for the doing of which the time was too short. That resulted in certain errors being made. I trust that in future errors of that kind will be obviated, and that it will not be necessary for a man to wait four or five months for payment for the commodity which he has put into the pool.

I listened to the hon. member for Barcoo referring to the question of oversea markets. Any man who has taken an interest in oversea markets appreciates the fact that, if we wish to hold our place, we need to have a

[*Mr. J. H. C. Roberts.*]

regular supply of the highest class of commodity on those markets. Under present conditions, unfortunately, Australia is sending to the London market a certain quantity of butter. After one shipment, no further shipments arrive for two, three, or four months, and in the interval the Queensland butter is forgotten. It may have built up a name for itself; it may have been a commodity which a certain number of people were anxious to get hold of; it may have tickled the palate of a good many consumers, who may have sought to obtain further supplies. Unfortunately, owing to a lack of organisation, we have not been able to keep on the English market the necessary quantity of butter at all periods to enable us to build up a trade. I disagree with the hon. member for Barcoo when he says that we have, first of all, to feed the people of Queensland with the commodity we produce, and afterwards export to other States or markets in other parts of the world. It would pay the butter producers to export every pound of butter made in Queensland to a favourable market and keep our name good there all the time, even if we had to bring New Zealand or some other butter to Queensland to take its place. I hope that the Minister will remember that anything in the nature of a prohibition of the exportation of any primary product until we have supplied our local requirements, when we are looking to the markets of the world, is going to have a very bad effect upon the return which the primary producer will receive. Supposing that the Minister were to say that the local demand has to be supplied before any export will be allowed of the cotton from the crop which is being put in, in what position will the cotton-grower be? Shall we ever build up a big export trade? No. The Minister must appreciate that fact, and I trust that such a thing will not be possible under the Act.

I am quite aware that a good deal of the legislation which has been brought in by the present Administration is for the purpose of assisting the primary producer along certain lines. It has been brought in more or less as a result of the feeling that the primary producer has not been getting a fair deal in the past. I feel that in bringing in this legislation there is a danger that the independence of the primary producers may be sapped. It is quite possible that we may bring into being a class of primary producer who will become so dependent upon the department doing the business for him that, when he is left to himself, he will find it very difficult to carry out the business which he is supposed to carry out. I feel that a certain amount of his independence already has been taken away from him; more especially as the hon. member for Toowoomba made the statement some time ago that the Primary Producers' Organisation Act is a communistic method of organising the farmers; and, when I asked him whether he thought it was a nationalisation of the industry, he said it was an absolute nationalisation of the primary producing industry, and that the communistic system was going to be inaugurated. In "The Producers' Review" for July, 1922, there is an article in which it is stated that the Premier said he firmly believed that the "Review" was becoming a Labour paper. The article goes on to say—

"Mr. Theodore does not put the position correctly. The correct position is that the Labour Government has become converted to the 'Review's' policy."

1922—4 z

I do not know whether the Premier was right when he said that the "Review" was becoming a Labour paper, or whether Mr. Harrison was correct when he said that the Labour Government were being converted to the "Review's" policy. The policy of the "Review," even in August, 1922, was to criticise the Government for accepting amendments to the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill which came from the Country party. On top of that, the Secretary for Agriculture allowed literature to be distributed throughout the country districts in which he said that those amendments made the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I said that the amendments made the Bill?

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: Yes; the hon. gentleman said that the Bill was very much improved owing to the amendments which he had accepted.

Mr. DUNSTAN: Don't distort!

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I am not distorting; I am speaking the truth. In the literature which the Minister authorised to be distributed he said that practically the amendments which he allowed to go into the Bill made the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Some of those amendments were my own.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: The hon. gentleman withdrew nearly all of his. It is our duty to let the people realise where those amendments came from. In view of the statement made by Mr. Harrison that the Labour party has become the "Harrison party," I want to know whether the Minister, under the pooling system, is

[5 p.m.] going to make distribution possible through our co-operative enterprises rather than through proprietary channels. I take it that he is going to do that. This morning we listened to his violent attack on the middlemen, whom he accused of making unjust profits out of the primary producers, and the hon. member for Toowoomba stated that the leader of the Nationalist party had robbed the farmers. In view of those statements the Minister can follow no other course in the future, when pools are formed, but to carry out distribution through co-operative channels. "The Producers' Review" of the 10th June, 1922, makes a violent attack upon the question of co-operative distribution, and says that the distribution should be through proprietary channels rather than through co-operative channels. When we come to appreciate the fact that this paper has for years advocated the distribution of our products through co-operative channels, and now suddenly finds it is necessary to publish an article stating that it believes it should be done through proprietary channels, one wonders if that article was written at the instigation of the Secretary for Agriculture. Does the Minister say that he believes that the middlemen, who he claims will be eliminated under the pooling system, are going to be the means of distribution? I hope he will tell us when he replies, whether under the pooling system distribution will be effected through the big co-operative companies that we have in Australia and on the other side of the world, or whether the distribution will be effected through the proprietary companies which are distributing our produce to-day, and whom the Minister calls middlemen, and whom he looks upon more or less as thieves and

Mr. J. H. C. Roberts.]

robbers. The Minister has made a statement that he believes that under the pooling system, he is going to abolish, to a very great extent, the possibility of middlemen further robbing the primary producers. If that is so, there is only one thing for him to do, and that is to effect distribution through our large co-operative companies. The Minister should take a decided stand. We are frequently twitted that we take no stand in regard to certain matters. I am going to twit the Minister with being afraid to take the stand necessary to carry out the ideals he has in his mind. I hope to be present when he puts the proposal to the co-operative men on the Council of Agriculture that they should distribute through proprietary channels. In five minutes the Minister will be non est or the Council will be wiped out. The Minister knows very well that he dare not go to those men and say what he is going to do. I look forward to the day when the Minister will be able to show, outside Parliament, how he wiped out the middleman and how he brought about the organisation of distribution along co-operative lines. He is going to spend a good many thousands of pounds in bringing into being the distribution of our products along those lines, and until he does that he is not going to help the man on the land. A statement was made this morning by the hon. member for Toowoomba which I did not agree with, and which I asked should be withdrawn. This afternoon the hon. member again made a statement in regard to that particular incident. In "The Producers' Review" of 10th August, 1916, there is an article containing a statement made by the Assistant Minister for Justice, the Hon. J. A. Fihelly. Might I be permitted to use such an august term as "The present Agent-General, James A. Fihelly"?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: James A. Fihelly?

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I feel that it is my duty to give him his full title and call him the Hon. John Arthur Fihelly, but I know that probably the Minister would address him as "Dear Jack." That article stated—

"The Assistant Minister for Justice (Mr. J. Fihelly) made the following statement recently:—

Complaint has been made in regard to solicitors outside the metropolitan area, who, in dealing with an estate of about £160, left only £17 to £18 to the widow and family after probate and costs had been satisfied.

This seems to me an instance of bleeding the widow and orphans in a most reprehensible way, and suggests the necessity of beneficiaries consulting the Public Curator on all matters appertaining to estates willed to them, or to intestate estates. I am credibly informed that this practice is not unusual, but I can assure the public that, if there is any possible way for exposing the solicitors concerned, this department will not hesitate in making the matter known."

At that particular time, unfortunately, that gentleman did not make the matter known as fully as should have been done.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What case was the hon. member referring to?

[Mr. J. H. C. Roberts.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: I will tell the hon. gentleman quietly afterwards. I am afraid, if I told him now, he would not accept too many amendments on the Bill.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman has exhausted the time allowed him under the Standing Orders.

Mr. MORGAN (Murrumbidgee): The time has arrived when some altered conditions should be introduced for the purpose of giving the primary producers a fair return for the work they perform. That can only be done by the primary producers obtaining a fair price for what they produce, so that they will have a certain amount of money at the end of the week or the end of the month or the end of the year, in the same way as those working in other industries have a certain amount of money at the end of those respective periods. It is generally recognised that workers in industry are protected by the Arbitration Court, which grants them a living wage, giving them full value for the work they perform; and it is likewise necessary that those engaged in primary industries should be assured that they will receive full value for the work that they perform. But, unfortunately, up to the present time we have not succeeded in making the conditions such as to enable the producer to get a fair return for the work that he performs. Unfortunately, he is left entirely to the mercy of the elements or to conditions over which he has no control. For instance, a drought may come along and destroy his crop, and he gets no return for that year. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the producer may have an exceptionally good crop, but the price of his product is so low that it does not pay him to harvest his crop. Under such circumstances he is just as badly off as if he had suffered from a drought. The time has arrived when we should endeavour to regulate conditions so that the farmer will be assured of a fair return for his produce; and, if we can stabilise the markets, we shall be doing something of benefit to the producers of this State. The producers of Queensland are the most important members of the community. Without the producers those who perform work in other walks of life would not be able to exist, and, while the farmer is desirous of obtaining a fair return for the work he performs, I feel sure that he is not out to exploit the consumer, who must obtain the necessaries of life. All he desires to obtain is sufficient to enable him to live in comfort and to be able to educate his children as they should be educated. That is the least we can offer to the men who are engaged in tilling the soil. The system of pools is practically new to Australia. Although we have had Wheat Pools and other pools in existence for the past few years, we must admit that legislation of this description is more or less of an experimental nature, and we must be very cautious in matters pertaining to experimental legislation. I am pleased to know that the Bill contains a provision that, before a pool will be established for any commodity, the producers of that commodity will have an opportunity of taking a ballot on the question, and that it is necessary to have a three-fourths majority of the producers in favour of it before a pool will be established. That is a very fair clause. The producer is becoming more enlightened day by day, and is taking a greater interest in matters pertaining to his welfare than he did at any

previous time, and he is also taking a greater interest in matters affecting the welfare of the State.

Several amendments are necessary in this Bill, and I hope, when dealing with legislation of this sort, that the Minister will recognise that it is not a proper thing to rush it through the Chamber, particularly as now we have no revising Chamber. The Minister should recognise that conditions this session are different to what they were in previous sessions. If a Bill is rushed through this Chamber, and after the light of day is shed on it and the people outside have an opportunity of perusing it, errors are discovered, they cannot be rectified by amendments in the Legislative Council. This safeguard has been abolished by the present Government, and under those conditions I hope the Minister will not rush the Bill through the Committee stage to-night. The Minister will admit that the discussion so far has not been of an obstructive nature, and I hope, if we get through the second reading, that the Minister will give us until to-morrow to prepare amendments, so that we shall be able to bring forward those amendments in Committee and assist the Minister to make the Bill a better one than it is at the present time.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I have your leader's amendments now.

Mr. MORGAN: I believe the leader and some members of the party have been preparing certain amendments; but, in spite of that fact, I hope the hon. gentleman will not take the Committee stage of the Bill until to-morrow. The Bill is something new, and it is not advisable for the Government to force through the House measures of this description without giving a full opportunity for criticism. I feel sure that hon. members on this side are prepared to assist the Minister. Personally, I am prepared to assist him in every way I can in connection with this Bill. I certainly think the Bill is deficient in some respects; and I think the Minister is inclined to leave too much to the regulations. I do not believe in too many details being left to the regulations. I would far sooner see the different matters embodied in the Bill itself, as we would then have an opportunity of dealing with each question. I supported the Government on the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill, and I take it that this is a corollary to that measure; and, if the Bill will bring about a more satisfactory state of affairs than exists at the present time, we are justified in asking the Government to give us an opportunity of improving it.

It will be admitted that during certain periods there are gluts in the market, when the farmer gets a very inadequate return for his produce. If provision was made under this Bill to allow of only the necessary quantity of produce being placed on the market for the time being, it would prevent the flooding of the market, and that would be a benefit to the primary producer. One of the regrettable things which happen is that, when a farmer has a good crop, he is often compelled, owing to his financial position, to rush his produce on the market, when it is bought by speculators, who hold it in storage until the glut ceases and the price goes up. It is not the producer who gets the higher price, but the speculator. I am not one of those who are in favour of encouraging the

speculator in respect of foodstuffs. We should endeavour to give the producer a price which will enable him to live decently and comfortably, and allow the consumer to get foodstuffs as cheap as possible. Unfortunately, the cost of retailing commodities is exceedingly high. In some instances a commodity may be bought from the farmer for 3d., and the consumer cannot get it for less than 6d. or more. In many cases it costs 100 per cent. to bring the commodity from the farmer to the consumer. I will give an illustration of what ordinarily takes place in connection with the sale of butter. A grocer will purchase £20 worth of butter on Monday morning at 1s. 6d. per lb. and retail it during the week at 1s. 9d. per lb. That sum of £20 will earn for the retailer £3 6s. 8d. in one week. The grocer will purchase £20 worth of butter every week in the year for fifty-two weeks, and retail it over the counter, and at the end of the year he will have earned a gross profit of no less than 866 per cent. I think that the Minister will admit that that is an excessive profit.

The SPEAKER: I hope that the hon. member will connect his remarks with the Bill.

Mr. MORGAN: The Bill provides for the distribution of butter. If it does not provide for the proper distribution of produce generally, it will be of no use at all. The price paid to the farmer for what he produces is sometimes so low and the price charged to the consumer so high that there is someone in between who is getting an enormous profit. The producer is getting too little and the consumer is paying too much; and under this Bill, I take it that produce will be distributed in such a manner that no one will be able to make excessive profits out of necessary commodities. I take it that the Bill has been brought in with a view to endeavouring to get for the producer a better price for his produce than he has had for a considerable time, and likewise to enable the consumer to get the necessaries of life at a lower price than he is giving now. If the Bill brings that condition of things about, it will meet with the approval of the majority of the people, and that is what we are aiming at. The Minister has power under the Bill to appoint a board after the producers have decided that a pool is necessary in connection with a certain commodity. I would like to see an amendment moved to fix the period during which the temporary board will remain in existence. The Minister may say that that can be done by regulation, but I think the provision should be embodied in the Bill. I think that that temporary board should not remain in existence for a longer period than six months. The producers should have the right to elect the members of the Board. The success of this measure will depend upon the class of men who are on the Board, just as the success of co-operative enterprises in connection with the butter, cheese, and bacon industries depends on the capability of the men who act as directors and of the manager of the company. One company, owing to careful management, may be able to pay its suppliers 1d. or 2d. per lb. more for their butter than another company which is carried on under extravagant management. One of the main requirements in connection with a measure of this sort is to place capable men on the Board, who will deal efficiently with the business. I hope the Minister will agree to

*Mr. Morgan.]*

accept an amendment in that direction, and it will remove one of the objections I have to the Bill. I think that the Bill should also provide that, if the producers find at any time that the pool is operating detrimentally to their interests, they should have power to abolish the pool by a majority vote of those connected with it. It is only right that those who create a pool should be able to abolish it if it is not in their interests to continue it. I think that these matters should be regulated more or less by the laws of supply and demand.

Unfortunately, there are many things over which we have no control that affect these things. We must have legislation to try and give that individual a fair go, although, unfortunately, we have not had that state of affairs in existence for many [5.30 p.m.] years. It is recognised by all sections of the community, and also by a large majority of this House, that the producer is not in the fortunate position that other people in other walks of life are. If we desire to encourage people to leave the large centres of population in order to make their living on the land, we must make it worth their while to do so. We must see that the producer is allowed to get all he can out of the article that he produces. We have heard a great deal about middlemen. There are fair and honest middlemen, and I recognise that there are dishonest middlemen. We have honest and fair-minded men and dishonest men in all walks of life. You will even find dishonest men among the clergy. There are clergymen who are a disgrace to the cloth; and, on the other hand, there are men who are a credit to their calling. Probably the proportion among the clergy who are dishonest is small; in fact, I know it is. I am one of those who are absolutely opposed to speculation in foodstuffs. I do not think it is a fair thing to speculate in foodstuffs. I can give an illustration to show the effect of speculating in foodstuffs. Very often there is a plentiful supply of primary products, and they are often held until such time as there is a good market. When the good market comes those products are sold at huge profits, but those profits do not go to the producer. I can show how the profits will be returned to the producer, and that is by co-operation. Last December the dairy farmers were paid 6½d. per lb. for butter-fat. In January they were paid 7d. per lb. The bulk of that butter was sent away to the old country. Those butter factories were controlled by co-operative companies. I was interested in one myself as a supplier, and I know that I was paid 6½d. per lb. in December, 7d. in January, and 7d. in February. By the time the butter arrived in England the market revived, and the result was that every supplier belonging to that co-operative company received deferred pay equal to 4d. per lb. for the December cream, 4d. for the January, and 4d. for the February. If those butter factories had been in the hands of private companies, all the profits would have gone into private hands; but, as we were a co-operative concern, all the profits were divided amongst the suppliers. In my own case it amounted to £70 or £80. It practically meant that we were paid 11d. per lb. for butter-fat in December, January, and February, which was a very fair price at that time. That is an illustration of what can be accomplished by co-operation. In my opinion the salvation

[*Mr. Morgan.*]

of the producer is co-operation. We want to have co-operation right from the time we produce the article until it finds a place on the table of the consumer. The man who does the work should have the control of the article he produces. I am a shareholder in a co-operative company in Brisbane which deals in a big way and sells all sorts of produce; it also deals in cattle, sheep, land, and all kinds of stock. That company recently reduced the selling agents' charges at Enoggera from 5 per cent. to 3½ per cent. We had been trying for years to get the outside agents to reduce their charges, but without success. As soon as our agents brought down their charges, all of the other agents had to do the same. In addition to that, I may say that the other agents refused to deal with us until we got our own yards at Enoggera. That company was able to pay a dividend of 10 per cent., and, in addition, it gave a bonus of 20 per cent. to the suppliers. To the suppliers who were non-shareholders they gave a rebate of 10 per cent. That is an illustration of what can be done by co-operation. There are still huge profits finding their way into the hands of private companies; but, when we see how well the co-operative companies are doing, I am satisfied that that is the way to salvation, so far as the primary producer is concerned. So long as we continue the co-operative movement we are going to be successful. The Minister said that the Bill would not apply to meat, but there is nothing to prevent us bringing meat under its provisions.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I have looked into it since you asked me, and I do not think there is anything to prevent us from bringing meat under it.

Mr. MORGAN: We should take full advantage of the Bill, and bring beef under it.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I think you asked if cattle could be brought under it. It does include beef.

Mr. MORGAN: It will include beef and mutton, because they are primary products. If we desire it, we can take advantage of the Bill to bring beef under it. We should get our own co-operative meatworks. Until we are able to control our cattle right from the station to the table of the consumer we shall not get justice. The cattlemen are the only people to-day who are not getting justice. The butter people, the cheese, the wheat, and wool producers are getting fair prices, but we are not because we are disorganised, and because we allow ourselves to be exploited by the proprietary companies. We ought to have co-operative meatworks in Brisbane, and alongside a co-operative tannery and a co-operative soap and tallow factory, so that we could produce, for instance, all the leather we require, and so that, if a shareholder wished to have a side of leather for his own use, he could get it without having to pay middlemen's profits, and the surplus could be sent away to other parts of the world. We produce the raw material, and we ought to manufacture it so that we can get the full benefit, not only of our cattle on the hoof, but also of the hide and the tallow and everything else.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The middlemen do not like that.

Mr. MORGAN: We have no right to be exploited as we have been, and any system which will enable us to do that is a system for which we must work and fight, because it is time the producer came into his own.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MORGAN: The huge fortunes are not made by the men who take the risks. Look at the risks we run, as producers, with elements over which we have no control. We have to take the risk of the weather and other things which cannot be helped, and they are quite sufficient without taking the risk of finding that the markets have been rigged by outside individuals for their own benefit. What is happening in London in connection with beef at the present time? Simply because the American Meat Trust and Vestey Bros. are endeavouring to cripple one another, we in Australia and other producers in other countries of the world are suffering in the process. Those big firms are crippling the small, hard-working producer, who has no say or interest in the dispute in any way whatever. If the whole of the meat from the Argentine and other parts of the world went through co-operative channels, would we not be able to get together and so regulate things that the consumer would get his meat at a reasonable price, whilst the producer at the same time would get a fair living wage for the work he performs? I am sure that that is what everybody is out for. Why should we, who are not, as it were, in the swim, leave ourselves in the hands of these big financial magnates who at any time can create a condition that would eventually put us on the verge of starvation? There is no doubt whatever that that is the position. We are suffering to-day—every one of us. I myself am poorer by thousands of pounds, and hundreds of persons are worse off than I. Some of us have ceased to have any capital, not because we have been loafers or because it is our own fault. Something has happened over which we have no control, and that is purely and simply the trade war between the millionaire firms who are fighting one another for supremacy in order that the one that wins will be able to get back from the consumer all that it has lost during the fight. I think that it is the duty of every fair-minded man to try to prevent that. I do not mind that sort of thing happening over something which is not a necessity of life. If men like to do it with stocks and shares, well and good—they take a risk. It is a gamble just as going on to a racecourse is; but it should not be tolerated in the case of foodstuffs. All we want as producers is a fair value for what we produce, but we do object, after we have produced our commodity, to find the markets so low that we get practically nothing, although, when we go to buy the same article in the shops, we discover that 200 per cent. had been added. If this Bill is going to do good, I am for it. I want to see the condition of the producers generally improved. I want to see the people prepared to close up the businesses in Brisbane and go out into the country, because more money is to be made there. I hope those conditions will eventually prevail. At present, unfortunately, our sons want to come into the city because there are greater opportunities there than in the bush. Speaking entirely as a producer, that is not as it should be.

A great deal has been said with respect to

wheat. I was home on Sunday, and I found that, owing to conditions for which I do not blame the Government—rain had not fallen—my 60 acres of wheat, which was about 6 inches high, was in such a condition that I told my son to run the cattle upon it. It is gone. Right up as far as Roma the wheat crops are practically in that condition. The farmers tell me they will only get their seed back. The rain came late, and the wheat was put in late, and other showers did not follow, with the result that the crops are a failure. That is something over which we have no control. I do not mind that—we have to take our chance—but what I do mind is that, when we produce a bumper harvest, there is a glut in the market, and we get nothing for it. I am prepared, as a good sportsman, to take my chances, but I am not willing to fight artificial conditions created by men who are better equipped than I in business matters, and who rig the market in such a way that even when we are fortunate enough to grow big crops we get little or nothing for them. If this Bill will help us in that direction, it will have my hearty support. I am going to support it. I recognise that it is experimental legislation. I do not want the Minister to rush it through this Chamber; I do not want him to rush it upon the people. I admit that some pools may be failures because of bad management, or because the wrong men have been put on the boards which control them, but one failure is not going to cause me to oppose the principle. We may have one or two failures, but the question is: Are we going to benefit in the main by pools? If we are, then we should support them; we should give them a fair trial. We could not be worse off under pools than we are at present; we have every chance of being better off, so let us give the principle an honest and fair trial, and, if it is a success, I shall be one of the first to admit it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. COOPER (*Rosewood*): I have listened with great interest to the hon. member for Murilla, and I was pleased to hear what he said upon this most democratic Bill. It is delightful for hon. members on this side to hear hon. members of the Opposition supporting, practically in every detail, a Bill introduced by this Government. It does not often happen.

I also listened with pleasure to the hon. member for Barcoo, who has the privilege of being a Government member. He has, at all events, a very fine grasp, particularly of the agricultural industry of Queensland and of New South Wales. I think it would be advantageous to hon. members of the Opposition if they adopted the suggestions which the hon. member for Barcoo has thrown out.

I followed very closely what the hon. member for Pittsworth said. I am afraid that he almost "pooled" this Chamber. I do not understand whether he intended to "pool" me or the hon. member for Barcoo, or whether he wanted to "pool" the potatoes of my electorate, the wheat of his own electorate, or the canary seed—in respect of which I believe he was responsible for the formation of a pool. He said that I knew something about what the farmers would suffer in my electorate if there happened to be brought about by this Government or by any co-operative organisation the pooling of potatoes. He said the potato-grower in the Rosewood electorate would be injured by this

Mr. W. Cooper.]

legislation if he desired to store potatoes for the purpose of keeping them until the market had risen to what he considered was a reasonable price for his product. I fail to see in what direction a potato-grower would be injured by the fact that a pool or a board took his potatoes away when he desired to sell them in a higher market at any time, any more than a canary-seed grower, a wheatgrower, or the grower of any other primary product would be injured by the same set of circumstances.

MR. CLAYTON: Will the Board have power to take commodities away?

MR. W. COOPER: I do not know. This measure is so democratic that it gives the primary producer the opportunity of saying whether he will or will not have a pool. That is the principle for which I stand. If the farmers who are embarked in any particular industry think that it will not be to their best interests to have a pool under this legislation, there will be no need for them to have it. I have been an ardent advocate of co-operation ever since I have been able to understand the principles of co-operation. I am in accord with what the hon. member for Murilla has said—that the man who produces has a perfect right to control his own industry and get, as far as possible, the full reward of his industry, regardless of whether he be a small working farmer, a labourer, or a mechanic. I was pleased to hear the hon. member make the statement that the people who were and are responsible for the deplorable state in which the small cattle-grower of Queensland finds himself to-day are the large proprietary companies such as Vestey Brothers, Armour and Sons, and Swift and Company, who are fighting one another to secure an advantage in the British and foreign markets. Unfortunately, some hon. members on the other side are not so honest as the hon. member for Murilla was in making that statement. My electorate consists solely of very small holdings; they are farmers who have embarked upon mixed farming, such as dairying and the production of potatoes and maize. The statement that has gone out time after time to the electors of my district is that the Labour Government have been responsible for the lowering of prices of cattle by the fixation of prices and the establishment of State butcheries. If other hon. members of the Opposition would tell the people of Queensland the position as honestly as the hon. member for Murilla has stated it, better conditions would prevail so far as the primary producer of Queensland is concerned.

I do not think that this Bill will be detrimental to the primary producer, regardless of what industry he is embarked in. Judging from what I know of the men who have handled the co-operative factories in the past, and the men who have been elected to responsible positions as delegates to various conferences, if they are elected as members of boards or pools, they will have sufficient intelligence to do the very best thing for the producers of primary products. Some men say that this is a political stunt, because the Government happen to have introduced the Bill. They claim that the Secretary for Agriculture will, no doubt, use his influence in securing on the boards men who will have a tendency to favour the Government. I do not believe anything of the kind. I believe that the men who will be elected as members of the boards will be honest enough to do

[Mr. W. Cooper.

the right thing by the men for whom they are working. Co-operation, in my opinion, is the only redress for the hardships which have been imposed upon the primary producers in the past. I remember distinctly in the early days of co-operation, when I was quite a boy, the proprietary companies and the middlemen used every influence, both by speech and by finance, to defeat the co-operative companies.

The most important thing that this Chamber has to consider is whether this Bill is going to be all that is desired, not only by the primary producers of Queensland, but also by the people of Queensland. I listened to the speech by the hon. member for Pittsworth, particularly the

[7 p.m.] latter portion, and I have been wondering since whether that hon. gentleman, if he had been permitted to continue his speech, would have stated that his intention was to advise this Chamber to pool widows. It appears that he wanted to pool everything and at the same time pool nothing. I listened to the hon. gentleman for forty minutes, and during that time he did not say anything of any consequence or anything that might be of benefit to this Chamber or the people of Queensland. I think some time ago the president of one of the farmers' unions charged the hon. member with first advising the farmers to link up with the National Democratic Council, and then, when that did not suit his purpose, advising them to take "The Producers' Review" and follow in the footsteps of Mr. Harrison, the editor of that paper. Judging from what the hon. member read this afternoon from that paper, I take it that he is now opposed to that journal, and has taken another step and is advising the farmers to link up with the Primary Producers' Union. We want to consider the position that the primary producer occupies in comparison with those engaged in other industries throughout Queensland. After some years of experience of the man working on the land, I find that the primary producer to-day is labouring under very great disadvantages as compared with those employed in other industries. First and foremost, he has to contend with weather conditions, and he has been compelled until quite recently to forward his products to market to be sold by men who make their living by handling the products of the man on the land. I am not going to attack these men, who are to all intents and purposes distributors of the farmers' products throughout this State, and many of whom control the exportation of those products overseas. But I do say that in the past the farmers have always been at the mercy of these men who were practically controlling their industry, and I am supporting this Bill because I believe it will give to the primary producers of Queensland a reasonable opportunity of controlling their own products. I remember a case at Forest Hill where there were four or five buyers of farmers' produce representing Brisbane firms. One buyer from Sydney came up to buy pumpkins, and the other buyers in that yard prevented him, up till 12 o'clock, from getting anything like a reasonable quantity of pumpkins; and, when he found it was no use continuing in the way he had been going, he offered 10s. a ton more. Immediately there was almost a stand-up fight in the yard between the buyers who represented large firms in Brisbane and the buyers who came from Sydney.

showing very plainly that there must have been a concerted plan arranged between the buyers at that station for the purpose of getting the farmers' produce at their own price. If the Bill does nothing else but prevent that sort of thing happening, it will be of great benefit to the primary producers of Queensland. As far back as I can remember—at least thirty years ago—the farmers were in exactly the same position as they are to-day. Of course, at the present time a very great number of them have entered co-operative concerns, and, to a great extent, they are controlling their own products; but in the early days, particularly in New South Wales, the farmers were compelled to send their products to Sydney, and they were at the mercy of the Sussex street produce merchants in regard to the sale of their products; and, when they wanted seed for the purpose of replanting, they were at the mercy of the seedsmen, who could, and did, charge them any price they thought fit. We have men in Queensland with sufficient intelligence to control these pools, and to give to the farmers the full reward of their industry, and I hope that when the Bill is passed the Minister will consider very seriously the question of appointing men to manage the pools who are capable of carrying out their duties in the most efficient manner.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): I recognise that this Bill has been asked for by one class of producers, but I do not think that any business man or any man who has had experience in the distribution of produce will think for one moment that the scheme outlined in the Bill is going to revolutionise any portion of the agricultural industry. The fruitgrowers have asked for a Bill of this description. The idea at first was to have a banana pool. The banana industry has gone from bad to worse, and there was a necessity for something to be done in connection with that industry. I for one, although not a believer in the pooling system, would be quite pleased to give the system a trial. We all know that true co-operation is going to lift the farmers out of the rut they are in. We know that there is need for a certain amount of control. To prove this you only need to go to Melbourne and see the bananas landed there. There is an astonishingly large percentage of bananas landed which are unfit for human consumption, which proves conclusively that there should be some method of control adopted. We were in hopes of building up a society which would draw to its directorate a body of men with sufficient business capacity and ideas to warrant the growers giving them control. But, unfortunately, a large section of the primary producers—particularly the fruitgrowers—had a kind of panic over the matter, and did not want to proceed with it. I would point out that no pool will be effective which has not got the best men in charge. No co-operative concern will be successful if there are inferior business men upon its directorate. The whole trouble with the primary industries has not been the private agencies. We are apt, like hon. members opposite, when we are canvassing for support for our organisations, to go out and blackguard the agents. There may be a small percentage of truth in it, but the average middleman is an average man. Just as there are good, bad, and indifferent members of Parliament, there are good, bad, and indifferent private agents.

We want gradually to bring in a system under which we can cut out all private agents; we want to get distribution direct from the grower to the consumer. That is the objective of all our co-operative societies—they want to be their own distributors. We know that it will be a long process to bring that about. We do not say that it will be accomplished in a year; it may perhaps not be done in fifty years; but we want to lay a good foundation with that end in view, the same as a statesman lays the foundations for the future by his actions of to-day. It is absolute nonsense for hon. members opposite to get up and depreciate the private agents. To my mind those agents have been necessary; without them there would have been no agricultural industry. Without the squatters there would have been no progress in Queensland; yet there is no one who wishes to see Queensland progress who does not want to see the squatter go and the small grazier take his place. It is the same with regard to the private agents; we look upon them as having performed the work they were required to do; but the agent is not our master, but our servant. That is all we ask. For three years I have taken part in matters connected with the fruit industry, and I think I have done more for it than any man in Queensland.

Mr. COLLINS: Are you in favour of the Bill or against it?

Mr. WARREN: Is the hon. gentleman in favour of the Queensland Club or not? I want to take my time and explain my position. This is one of the most important matters from a primary producers' point of view that have been put before us. If there is any good in the measure, then I want it for the producers; I want it for myself. It is a most peculiar thing that the Council of Agriculture recommended a pool for bananas. That is the only fruit they recommended a pool for, although they represent all other agricultural industries. It looks peculiar to me that the Council of Agriculture recommended the formation of a pool for only that branch of industry. We know that £2,000 spent in co-operation is worth £50,000 spent in pooling. Where are we going to?

Mr. COLLINS: You are now contradicting the hon. member for Murilla.

Mr. WARREN: I am speaking for myself, and no one else. Where are we going to get to?

Mr. COLLINS: You are all at sixes and sevens.

Mr. WARREN: It is a matter for the people of Queensland. Surely I have a right in this House to ask where we are going to! Wages have been artificially raised, and that is why we as producers are asking for some concession so far as our products are concerned. If you are going to raise wages and raise the price of produce, then where are we going to get? I would prefer to see a board elected by the growers, then they would give the people confidence, because they could control every case of fruit grown in Queensland. That control must go from the growers to their own directors. We do not want to get it by Government assistance. The Government can assist by building factories and manufacturing the raw product.

Mr. BRENNAN: This Bill excludes the Government.

*Mr. Warren.]*



Mr. WARREN: This Bill does not exclude the Government. It is all Government; and that is the reason why the Primary Producers' Organisation Act is a dead letter to-day in Queensland.

Mr. BRENNAN: Who said that?

Mr. WARREN: It is because it is full of the Government. That is the reason why the banana pool has been turned down, because the banana-growers do not want the Government meddling in their business. We have sufficient brains amongst the producers to become distributors as well as producers. If we depend upon the Government, we shall never get anything.

Mr. BRENNAN: Well, why don't you get your own money without worrying the Government?

Mr. COLLINS: There are other parts of Queensland besides the little district of the hon. member for Murrumba.

Mr. WARREN: I represent the biggest fruitgrowing district in Queensland. Are we going to make the lot of the producer any better by this Bill? I have not heard one man get up on the other side and show how they can do it. The hon. member for Barcoo made a most intelligent speech—in fact, it was by a long way the most intelligent speech from that side; but the whole of the arguments he used could have been used against the Bill.

Mr. BRENNAN: Why did you walk out while he was speaking?

Mr. WARREN: I ask you to protect me against that man, Mr. Speaker, otherwise I shall have to deal with him.

Mr. BRENNAN: I will have to deal with you.

Mr. WARREN: I am going to support the Bill. I am going to vote to give it a chance of an experimental run. I am going to do all I can to make it a true pooling Bill, absolutely separate from the Government, and I shall do all I can to make it a success; but are we, through the organisation and the determination of the Government to mislead the farmer, getting any nearer to the solution of our problem? Most of us think that the workers' problem is a very big and important problem, but a bigger and more important problem is that of the primary producers. For some time past they have been having a very bad run, and nobody will say that pooling is anything but a temporary measure. We hear men on the other side talking about farmers making a good thing at the present time. The dairy farmer to-day is in a very bad position, indeed. We see that big prices are paid, but in nine-tenths of Queensland to-day the dairy farmer is losing cattle through the drought, and the people who have not been affected by these last rains are going to suffer enormously and be put back years. Year after year we meet these troubles. A drought or something else comes along, and the farmer is thrown back and never gets a fair set off. As a farmer and a representative of farmers, I want some of the winnings: I want some money out of it. We do not want to be left to the end of our lives as the pauperised subjects of banking institutions. I want to see the farmers put on a firm footing. I want to see them in a position to earn a living without having to put their wives and little ones into the cow-yard. If the

Government can put on the statute-book an Act that will do something towards achieving that ideal, I shall be the first to lift my hat to them. So far they have given us nothing but vanity and humbug. The Government who have to stoop to such stupidity and humbug as to send out lady school teachers as organisers under the Primary Producers' Organisation Act are never going to achieve the grand scheme they talk about. If the organisers had any backbone, and were in any way able, they would organise this scheme themselves. They have gone out with the blessings of all parties, yet the different centres are asking members of Parliament for advice. I received two letters only in this morning's mail asking me for advice about joining up, and the reason why these questions are being asked is that the names Theodore and Gillies are stuck on the slips of paper which are sent out. If they would only cut these things out, if they had the intelligence to come in out of the wet in regard to organisation, if they had the sense to know that the farmers do not want to stoop to these stupid subterfuges, the producers would be running after their organisation. We all know that the organisation is the right thing. Once the farmers become a solid body, handled by an executive, they will not ask the Government for anything. If we put up a horse for sale, we ask so much for it. So we will do with our commodities. We will not ask the Government to fix the price. We are not going to humbug the workers; we are going to tell them that we are out for a fair thing, and we are going to demand that fair thing. The Government have the workers in one hand and the primary producers in the other, and they say, "Come along, brother." The primary producer has been the underdog for years, and it is time that he got something out of his work. This Bill is to include within its operations all commodities. I admit that, if it is good for one thing, it should be good for another. But have the Government counted the cost? In our fruit industry we have at present three organisations, and this will add another. It will add at least three highly-paid officials. Who is going to pay the money that will be necessary to run this scheme?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Don't you understand the principles of a pool?

Mr. WARREN: I understand the principles of a pool as well as the hon. gentleman does. He did not know what f.a.q. wheat was to-day; he had to wait until he asked his secretary. All this is going to come out of the producer, or out of the consumer, who is the worker.

Mr. BRENNAN: The producer is a worker, too.

Mr. WARREN: Very few others are workers in that sense. As the man who is producing these commodities has been living from hand to mouth for the last two years, where is the money to come from? It means that we shall have to get a higher price for our products. How are we going to do that? Only one-third of the bananas we grow in Queensland are consumed in Queensland; the others are sent as far as South Australia. A pool could have no effect on those bananas; with all the extravagance involved it will operate with respect to no more than one-third of the fruit. If we sent our fruit overseas we would be competing against the

[Mr. Warren.]

world. Under a co-operative scheme we might have sufficient capital and character to get the backing of financial institutions to enable us to hold our fruit. No pool would have that backing unless the Government subscribed the money. Despite all the machinery, all the labour, all the extra expense, we shall get no more out of it.

If there is to be control of the [7.30 p.m.] industry, it will have to be controlled by a Commonwealth pool. It is only the northern portion of New South Wales and Queensland which are producing bananas. How then could a pool be formed? How is the fruit for the Southern markets to be controlled by a pool? The Brunswick and Tweed Heads districts of New South Wales produces sufficient bananas for that Southern demand. I feel quite convinced that the Fruit Growers' Associations did not take into consideration the fact of the bananas being grown in such large quantities in the Tweed Heads and Brunswick districts. No one knows more than the Minister what a big problem it is to deal with the control of the fruit market. It is one of the biggest problems that has to be faced. I am sure he will admit that to control that market is worse than controlling the State stations. Some of our people think that by a stroke of the pen the whole of this trouble can be remedied. I would just like to know how it is going to be altered. This Bill is introduced to assist, amongst others, the fruitgrowers; but the only hope the fruitgrowers have of being successful is in putting forward their very best men to manage the affairs of their industry. We know that until a few years ago the butter industry languished and was in a very bad condition; but, when those engaged in the industry became sufficiently educated to manage the business in a businesslike way, matters changed for the benefit of that industry. We find that the men comprising the board of directors are men of very fine type, and they have been experienced in that industry, and they now control it in a most businesslike manner. Three years ago there was no organisation in the fruit industry. I say, with all due deference to those engaged in the industry, that the reason why we have not progressed as we should have done in that industry is because we have not produced men sufficiently educated to manage the affairs of the industry in a businesslike way. We are getting over that difficulty every year. As years go on we get better business men, and, no doubt, in a few years' time those men will be able to efficiently manage that industry. I am afraid that, if the control of the fruit industry was handed over to the Southern fruitgrowers, it would do them more harm than good. If this big task is placed upon the Southern fruitgrowers and we have not business men to handle the matter, then more harm is going to be done in the way of destroying the good work of the industry than in building it up. I am sure, when the Bill is in Committee, if there are clauses that need amending, the Minister will accept the amendments and make the Bill absolutely the best that has been placed on the statute-book.

Mr. FORDE (*Rockhampton*): I confess that I cannot quite understand the "Yes-No" attitude of hon. members opposite, who pose as the friends of the farmers and producers of Queensland.

Mr. BRENNAN: They are the alleged friends of the farmers.

Mr. FORDE: Yes; we have had sufficient proof of that in the course of this debate to-day. The hon. member for Murrumba said, "We will give the measure a trial." Probably he has in mind that, if the Nationalist party or the Country party can get sufficient members to form a Government, they will repeal the measure.

Mr. WARREN: That is the evil in the hon. member's mind.

Mr. FORDE: Why can they not take a stand one way or the other. It is no wonder that the Rockhampton "Morning Bulletin," in a recent leading article dealing with certain hon. members opposite and the anti-Labour forces in Queensland, said—

"The electors are entitled to know how much Labour legislation the Opposition intends to throw out, just as they can rightfully claim to be given a hint of what it is likely to bring in."

We hear whisperings from hon. members opposite that they will give it a trial, and we can learn from their innuendoes that the measure will be repealed if the anti-Labour party gets into power. Certain members of the Nationalist party did not hide their views at all. The hon. member for Bulimba and other hon. members of the Nationalist party opposed the measure. It was said that we would not be patriotic if we passed it. Those hon. members stand for the middleman's interests in Queensland. It is nothing new to see the produce merchants opposing the formation of a pool, because such a measure aims a death blow at the produce merchants of Queensland—the men who have been waxing fat on the profits made out of the men who toil on the land and who do the real work of producing. It is no wonder that the leader of the Nationalist party, one of the biggest produce merchants in Brisbane, signed a petition to the Commissioner for Railways a few years ago, in which it was stated—

"We do not object to farmers having a general idea that produce brought from such a price to such and such a price, according to quality, but we do strongly object to such information being published as would enable the farmer to identify his particular lines. We would esteem it a great favour if you would kindly instruct all officers of yours who have to deal with advice notes, also those who are in possession of the books, with the information regarding where the truck is from, to kindly keep this information strictly private and not to give it to any representative of the newspapers."

The SPEAKER: Order! That matter has already been quoted to-day.

Mr. FORDE: It was signed by the leader of the Nationalist party as head of the firm of Taylor and Company, produce merchants, Turbot street. It was signed on behalf of the middlemen of Brisbane, who are waxing fat on the profits which should go back to the man who produces. The hon. member for Drayton is always apologising for those people. He is continually putting up a fight for those produce merchants. We find that in other States of Australia the Nationalist forces are opposed to pools. The Nationalist Premier of South Australia, Sir Henry Barwell, said in the South Australian Legislative Assembly on 30th August, 1921—

"The Government is formally opposed to a continuance of the pooling system."

*Mr. Forde.]*

Of course, they are, because profits are made by the produce merchants and middlemen of Adelaide out of the farmers produce. Pools tend to eliminate the middlemen, some of whose profits go to the fighting fund of the Nationalist party. That is why Premier Barwell is opposed to the pooling system. He is mentioned as the coming Nationalist Prime Minister of Australia, and it is well that the farmers should know that. We know, too, that, when the Premier of Queensland went to the Premiers' Conference, he made a suggestion regarding a continuance of the Wheat Pool, and he said—

“With the object of protecting and encouraging the wheatgrowing industry during the coming year, I would like to know if the conference will consider the desirability of fixing a home consumption price for wheat of about 6s. per bushel.”

Sir Henry Barwell, the National Premier of South Australia, said—

“Certainly not, so far as South Australia is concerned. I say that definitely.”

And the Premier of Victoria said—

“Do not mention that to me.”

And so in turn all the anti-Labour Premiers and Ministers from the other States opposed the proposal put forward by the Labour Premier of Queensland that a fixed price be paid for wheat. That shows clearly where their interests are. What do we find the so-called Country party members doing? We know that, when they are put to the test, they swing in behind the forces that supply the money to fight their elections—the forces that were exposed in this Chamber very eloquently by hon. members on this side last night.

Mr. J. JONES: We are going to swing you out, anyhow. (Laughter.)

Mr. FORDE: What do we find the so-called Country party representatives doing? I find when the Butter Agreement Bill was before the Federal Parliament in 1921, Mr. Parker Moloney (Labour) moved an amendment that the butter producers of Australia be guaranteed for their exportable surplus butter a price which shall not be less than the world's parity. All the Country party members of the Federal Parliament opposed that amendment moved by a Labour representative. Then, what do we find again in regard to the wheat guarantee? That cash payment was opposed. We find that on 22nd October, 1920, Mr. Tudor, as the leader of the Federal Labour party, moved a motion of censure on the Government for their failure to pay 5s. per bushel cash at railway sidings, and the whole of the Country party members voted with the Nationalists against the motion, and the deputy leader of the Country party actually moved an amendment that payment be made partly in certificates, and in the division that took place all the Country party members voted with the Nationalists and so saved the Hughes Government whom Dr. Earle Page and other Country members are now vilifying and traducing, and with whom, they are saying, they would not be found dead in the same paddock. We should judge these so-called Country party members by the votes cast by them and by the way hon. members opposite vote. In every division here they are found voting side

by side with the hon. member for Bulimba and the hon. member for Windsor. In a discussion that took place in connection with the Federal wheat pool on 27th July, 1921, the deputy leader of the Federal Labour party moved—

“That the Government take steps to ensure the continuance of the wheat pool this season and enter into negotiations with State Governments to give effect to this principle.”

Mr. Charlton moved a similar motion on 23rd October, 1921.

Mr. J. JONES: Who is he?

Mr. FORDE: He is the leader of the Federal Labour party, and he will be Prime Minister after next election. (Government cheers and Opposition laughter.) On both occasions when the Federal Parliament were dealing with the wheat pool, when the deputy leader of the Labour party moved for a continuance of the pool, the Country party members voted with the Nationalist Government against the best interests of the wheatgrowers in Australia, thus proving clearly that, when it came to the crucial test, they were found voting side by side with William Morris Hughes, Watt, Pratten, and other great middlemen of Australia; and those who put up a fight for the wheatgrowers were the Labour members, who were not controlled by moneyed interests which supplied funds through the pastoralists, and others to enable hon. members opposite to get a seat in this Parliament.

I recognise that this Bill will do a great deal of good for the primary producers of Queensland. It would have been a good thing if the Commonwealth Government had taken action to create a Commonwealth pool.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Hear, hear!

Mr. FORDE: We know they refused to create a Commonwealth butter pool when they were asked, because it would interfere with the middlemen of Australia. It would have been a good thing if the Commonwealth Government had created a pool controlled by the butter producers of Australia during the war instead of the disgraceful way in which they handled the butter of Australia.

Mr. BRENNAN: They robbed the farmers.

Mr. FORDE: Yes, they robbed the farmers. In dealing with the way in which the Commonwealth Government handled the butter of Australia during the war period, the “Farmers' Journal” points out—

“That the following prices were obtained for butter in London:—

	£
Ireland got ... ..	260 per ton
Holland got ... ..	345 „
Denmark got ... ..	345 „ „
Canada got ... ..	345 „ „

while Australia only got £175 per ton, due to the Commonwealth Nationalist Government's bungling of the butter question on that occasion. Would it not have been better for the butter producers of Australia if they had been able to control the butter supply themselves, by a pool or by co-operative enterprise, which would have enabled them to place their product on the markets of the world to the best advantage? These primary industries are of growing importance to Queensland, and it is necessary that we should protect them. On going to the Department

[Mr. Forde.]

of Agriculture I got some very interesting figures which show the way in which the butter industry has grown.

BUTTER.		
—	lbs.	Value.
		£
1915 .. ..	25,456,714	1,566,359
1916 .. ..	28,967,279	2,051,848
1917 .. ..	38,930,690	2,818,419
1918 .. ..	32,371,575	2,765,071
1919 .. ..	26,213,514	2,129,848
1920 .. ..	40,751,373	5,093,922
1921 (estimated)	58,165,352	4,225,935

That is in five years of Labour Government. Now let us consider the cheese industry. That is another important industry. This Government came into power in 1915—the first year for which these figures are given—

CHEESE.		
—	lbs.	Value.
		£
1915 .. ..	4,383,410	178,076
1916 .. ..	8,495,825	345,143
1917 .. ..	11,142,114	452,648
1918 .. ..	8,636,700	386,855
1919 .. ..	8,296,318	358,889
1920 .. ..	11,512,262	622,589
1921 (estimated)	13,079,124	667,579

We find, too, that in 1914 the farmers of Queensland were only getting 10d. per lb. for the commercial butter content, and

	s.	d.
In 1915 the price was ..	1	2
In 1916 the price was ..	1	3½
In 1917 the price was ..	1	5½
In 1918 the price was ..	1	5½
In 1919 the price was ..	1	5½
In 1920 the price was ..	2	13½
In 1921 the price was ..	1	6½
In 1922 the price was ..	2	13½

as against 10d. the year before this Government came into power, showing clearly that the farmers are getting a better deal under this Government than they got under any other Government. We, as far as possible, by our organisations, are getting the farmers to realise their strength by inducing them into organisations which must improve their condition immeasurably. We are endeavouring to educate them along co-operative lines, and in the meantime it is well that we should assist them by pools, because for too long have they been fleeced by hon. members opposite, who say they are their representatives in this Parliament. They are sent here by certain individuals outside. They are camouflaged Nationalists. They are only voicing what Mr. C. W. Campbell, Denham Brothers, Barnes and Company, Taylor and Company, and Messrs. Garbutt and Edkins say outside. The people of Queensland take no notice of the vapourings of hon. members opposite, like the hon. member for Drayton. The small producers of Queensland must depend on the party on this side for a fair deal. Indeed, when certain farmers in Central Queensland were not getting a fair deal from proprietary butter factories there, they appealed, through Mr. Larcombe and myself, to the Secretary for Agriculture for a loan with which to start a truly co-operative butter factory in Rockhampton, and the hon. gentleman gave them a loan of £5,000, and told them, if they wanted more, to come along to him for it.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: That is what he is there for.

Mr. FORDE: A Tory would have refused them. I was interested in the speech made by the hon. member for Murilla, who spoke as a cattle man and a producer. Unlike the hon. member for Drayton, he had the courage to condemn the middleman, to represent whom alone the hon. member for Drayton is sent here. The hon. member for Murilla was candid, and said that he believed the farmers should have co-operation. The co-operative movement is now established, but it must be further developed, and every encouragement must be given to it by the Government. The co-operative movement must have an international as well as a national aspect. Not only must the co-operative societies sell, but they must do the buying from the Australian producers. They should not end in Australia—the movement should be international, and extend beyond the boundaries of the Commonwealth. It would be futile, in my opinion, to build up co-operative companies in each State and hand over the products to the speculators—to the market-riggers on the other side of the world. The products of the farmers in Queensland should be bought co-operatively and distributed co-operatively. The farming implements should be purchased co-operatively, and sold to the farmers at the lowest possible price through co-operative distributing agencies. During the war we found that combinations were formed in the commercial, financial, and manufacturing interests. Those combines were formed because it was found that things could be run more economically and agents' profits eliminated. These combinations have often been international in their scope, and they have been deemed necessary and useful to meet changing conditions, and particularly those created by the war. The war upset the trading conditions, and—more than anything else—the markets of the whole world. In some respects these combinations of the middlemen's interests went in for co-operation, but they are co-operative only in the interests of a few wealthy people who happen to have shares in them. I am very pleased to notice that co-operative control is on the increase in Australia. I find that the total turnover of co-operative companies in Australia is £18,000,000 per annum—in Victoria £8,650,000; New South Wales, £6,000,000; South Australia, £3,000,000; and Queensland, £800,000. In New Zealand it is £13,000,000. Co-operation is on the increase all over the world. As the hon. member for Murilla said, we must encourage it in Australia, and particularly in Queensland. I find that in 1913 Belgium had 271 co-operative societies doing a trade of £2,000,000 annually. Last year it amounted to £10,000,000.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in proceeding on those lines.

Mr. FORDE: I am doing so because hon. members on both sides this afternoon discussed co-operative control in other countries as an argument why the interests of the producers in Queensland should be conserved.

Mr. RYAN: We can do that by forming pools.

Mr. FORDE: Yes, it is necessary to form these pools as a progressive step to see that the men who are eking out an existence on the land with the sweat of their brows are

*Mr. Forde.]*

able to get a reasonable price for their commodities and are not subject to the control of the middlemen in Brisbane and other parts of Queensland. In all the farming centres of Queensland we find that farmers, who, as a rule, are not very financial in their initial stages, are subject to the machinations of these agents—these middlemen who exploit them—who probably give them a little credit and cajole them and deceive them. We stand for the elimination of that sort of thing—for the elimination of middlemen, such as the hon. member for Port Curtis, the hon. member for Oxley, the leader of the Nationalist party, the hon. member for Bulimba, and other hon. members opposite, who pose as true farmers' representatives. We believe that the establishment of these pools will strike a death blow at many of these middlemen who for years and years, under other Governments, have been able to make large profits out of the farmers. Take, for instance, the hon. member for Bulimba, the head of the large produce agency business of Barnes and Company. Imagine the great profits his firm would be able to make in handling 100,000 bags of wheat. Imagine the profits the firm of the hon. member for Windsor, Taylor and Company, would make if they were able to handle all the wheat from the Darling Downs next season.

Mr. BRENNAN: And pull the tags off the railway trucks.

Mr. FORDE: Yes, and pull the tags off.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. FORDE: The Bill eliminates all that. These pools are in the interests of the producers. Some hon. members opposite have not the courage to get up and say that they are definitely opposed to these pools; they say they will give them a trial. Other hon. members say they doubt whether pools will be any good. The Bill has been drawn up after mature consideration. The Secretary for Agriculture is a farmer himself, and knows what the farmers want. He has been through Queensland, and he has been on a good many farms in Central Queensland. He knows the difficulties of the farmers. He has heard their tales of woe, and how they have worked year in and year out to produce their crops, and have had to hand them over to middlemen who wax fat on the profits. The men who are toiling on the land in Queensland know what happened in 1918 when the Commonwealth Government had at the end of the harvesting season 37,000 bales on hand. There was a big surplus of bags; but, instead of handing the bags over to the co-operative distributing agencies, or the farmers' associations, they were handed over to the middlemen of Australia. Those middlemen made enormous profits. They got the bags for 9s. 6d. dozen, and sold them for 16s. 3d. per dozen. They should have been sold to the farmers' associations, or to the co-operative distributing agencies. I hope that this Bill will go through. It will stand as a monument to the enterprise of the Secretary for Agriculture, who has the true interests of the small men at heart, and who is opposed to many of the tactics adopted by the wealthy middlemen and pastoralist interests that are represented in this House by the so-called Country party members.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*): Truly, the opinions of hon. members vary on this question to a very great degree. I have just been wondering while sitting here how you,

Mr. Speaker, sum up the whole thing. I would like to know, not only what you think of the opinions of hon. members on this side, but how you diagnose the opinions of hon. members on the other side. I admit

[8 p.m.] that the opinions are so diverse that it is pretty difficult to know where hon. members stand. I shall not be very indefinite myself with regard to this matter. I shall be fairly explicit. I am not antagonistic at all to co-operation, and I am not opposed to men voluntarily helping themselves and bettering their conditions; but I do distinctly object to, and am opposed to, men being compelled to do other than what they want to do themselves.

Mr. COLLINS: You must be an anarchist.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The freedom I want for myself and the freedom I would like the hon. member for Bowen to enjoy is the freedom that I would like to be enjoyed by every man in this British community. This Bill strikes me as being another addition to the communal structure which the party opposite are striving to erect. Indeed, they are doing it with great success, and, I am sorry to say, with a degree of sympathy, seemingly, as expressed by hon. members on this side of the House. There is no need for me to be other than explicit in this matter, because the people I have the honour to represent are with me in the matter. It seems to me that this Bill is like other Bills of a similar nature that we have already dealt with. It is a kind of twin measure to the Primary Producers' Organisation Bill which we passed quite recently. The two things go hand in hand. The hon. member for Bowen told us the other evening that we would be astounded at the number of measures out of the Labour platform that were gradually being put on the statute-book. He indicated how things were being done step by step. I am sure, when this Bill was introduced, the hon. member threw up his hat and said, "Another step in the onward march to real communism." If he did not say that straight out, I am sure that he said it inwardly. This Bill will add to the endless stream of State employees or semi-State employees. We do not want the State filled up with Government servants alone. I know that is just exactly what hon. members opposite desire. Their idea is that in the great by-and-bye—and they hope that the by-and-bye will not be far away—every man, woman, and child shall be a State chattel—a servant of the State—a comrade of the State—all enjoying the same kind of community feeling, and the old wage system shall be done away with.

Mr. FOLEY: What has this got to do with the Bill?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: It has got a lot to do with the Bill. It is part and parcel of the objective of the socialistic party. It is all according to order. The Government are gradually working along to their objective. I hope this side of the House will lend no hand in that direction. We may certainly take what they serve to us, and we may take the cream out of it; but let us not be at all backward in rejecting what we believe to be of an experimental nature. The aim seems to be to ring out the middleman and ring in the organisation and the men belonging to boards. I am not quite sure that one is going to be better than the other. Has

[*Mr. Forde.*]

anyone tried to find out whether there is going to be any great difference, or, if there is a difference, is it not more likely to be for the worse instead of the better? Does anyone in this House imagine that the Government are going to secure men to fill the positions occupied by the commercial men of the land to-day, who are alert and keen, and give their whole sole attention to the business of life? Can you imagine any man or set of men who may get into positions on a board being likely to serve the man on the land in the distribution of his produce, in effecting his sales, to anything like the successful extent that the men who have given their lives from boyhood have accomplished for these people? I doubt if anything like the success that is imagined will attend, or is likely to attend, the efforts which are being made in the direction of this wholesale pooling of matters such as is proposed in the Bill we have before us. I cannot understand any man on this side of the House or the other side of the House viewing with favour the starting of any enterprise that is likely to be controlled or partly controlled by this Government. What have the Government done that justifies anyone placing any confidence in them in regard to controlling their enterprises or to taking any hand in their businesses? Can any member of this House stand up and say that any business the Government have had to do with, if it is not a monopoly, has entirely been a success?

Mr. RIORDAN: Yes. State insurance, the Public Curator, and others.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: State insurance is a monopoly. State insurance is a splendid evidence of success, but that is due to the fact that it is a monopoly on the accident side of the business. The Government have no competition in that branch of insurance, and they can levy their own charges. The Government cannot help being successful on lines of that kind. Goodness knows what the losses are in connection with State stations. The Government cannot claim that their meat shops are a success or that the fish market is a success. If the people were supplied with cheap fish, we could understand it, but they are not supplied with cheap fish, because it is cent. per cent. dearer now than it was before the Government entered into the fishery business. The Government cannot claim that their State Produce Agency is a success. Wherein, then, lies the justification for any man to repose one bit of confidence in the Government who will have charge of this and other measures? It is not to be found in their management of the affairs of the State, which have gone pretty well to the dogs and runs us upon the rocks, and no State enterprise except the one mentioned by the hon. member for Burke has any right to be called successful. There is nothing in their administration anywhere to lead this House to say, "You have done well in the management of the affairs of the country. Your enterprises have succeeded. Here is another. We will bound into it because the example you have set in this direction, that direction, and the other direction has been so good."

The hon. member for Rockhampton indulged in some references to the success of the co-operative movement. We are very glad to see that success; but these co-operative undertakings are on individual lines as a

rule. Did he not there put forward an argument against his own plea for these compulsory pools and organisations? Leave these men alone with their initiative and enterprise. They are getting a mighty lot of happiness and good out of what they are doing for themselves, and why imagine that they are a lot of ignoramuses, or wish to compel them to manage their own affairs except as they wish themselves? The bulk of the men in my electorate, at any rate, are more capable of controlling their own affairs than are the men sitting on the other side in this Chamber, yet the latter are attempting to dictate to them as to what they shall do and what organisation they shall belong to. No doubt, there is co-operation in many directions, and every man in this Chamber knows that I have been foremost on the Downs in helping the co-operative movement. I was the man who initiated the Co-operative Butter Factory at Warwick, and I was a director for a great many years. Two years ago I had a great deal to do with the introduction of the wheat pool, as hon. members know. No man could have done more than I did; possibly no man did as much in connection with the introduction of that measure, because I saw that we were helpless without it. I realised that without the wheat pool of 1920-1921 we could not succeed. Conditions then made it an absolute necessity. Some of my people came to me and inquired about the interest I was taking in it, and I told them that it was impossible to handle or finance the wheat of that year or get along in any way without a pool.

Mr. BRENNAN: Did you refuse to come under the pool the year before?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: That is quite right. I opposed the pool because my people opposed the pool.

Mr. BRENNAN: You opposed it because you were buying wheat.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Conditions were very different then.

Mr. BRENNAN: Yes; you were trading then.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Of course. They had something to do with it, if not all to do with it. With an open market we could do nothing. The Government say that they are going to get better prices and more economical distribution of the various products of the farmers under this Bill. There is actual proof that they know better. The State Produce Agency was started with the idea that it would accomplish its object much better than anybody else. It was given out that the economical management of the wheat pool would bring about a similar result, but that has not eventuated. Perhaps the Minister, when he replies by-and-by, will be able to give us some information regarding the expenditure of the wheat pool. Although the Board was established in 1920-1921, the nearest approach we can get to a balance-sheet is the report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 30th June, 1921. By that I see that it was estimated that the quantity of wheat would reach 4,080,228 bushels, but up to the date of the report only 3,151,458 bushels had been sent in, and one-fifth of that was classed as from "No. 2 milling" down to "unclassified wheat." One thing I think should be noted is that f.a.q. wheat was deemed to weigh 59 lb. to the bushel, and to be free from

*Mr. G. P. Barnes.]*

scout, smut, etc. I want to deal with this matter, because I understand some slight discussion has taken place as to whether the guarantee given by the Government was in respect of prime milling wheat or f.a.q. wheat. I understand that the Chief Secretary or the Secretary for Agriculture said that the guarantee was only for prime milling wheat. I can see no reference whatever in the Auditor-General's report to prime milling wheat, and I hope that the farmers will stick out and demand the full guaranteed price for f.a.q. wheat. We know that the standard of wheat varies from year to year according to the article produced. One year the standard may be 59 lb. to the bushel, another year it may be 58 lb., while in others it may go 60, 61, and 62 lb. to the bushel. The standard is an ever varying one. A standard variety is arrived at by taking milling samples of wheat for the season, mixing them together, and taking that as a fair average sample. If the Government make any attempt to get out of their guarantee because of the fact that the wheat is only of fair average quality and is not prime milling wheat, they will not be acting up to their professions.

Regarding the cost, one would imagine, from the eagerness of men to have pools and hand over to these boards the management of their affairs, that they were going to escape expenditure, and that they were going to have the work done for them for nothing. It is going to be very much more costly than it was when it was done by the middlemen. The pool pays a manager £1,250 a year and a chairman £1,000 a year. No man managing a big concern in this country, unless he has capital in the business, draws a salary equal to what is being paid to these men. Wherein then is the economy of management? Look at the vast staff of men employed. We have no balance-sheet in connection with these pools other than the Auditor-General's report. Fifteen months have passed since the Auditor-General's report was written, and we have yet no balance-sheet from the Wheat Board. We do know, however, that up to that time the expenses of the Board had been £135,017 10s. 7d. It would not be fair to say that all that is overhead charges, because it included railage, shipping, and other charges. The actual expenses of management up to the end of June, 1921—at which time they had been running only six months—were £44,505. Who pays that? It is not done for nothing. The farmer has to pay that; it is a first charge. So the man who runs away with the idea that, if these things are managed by the Government or by a board, they are going to escape the heavy charges which are entailed when the wheat is sent to the middleman for disposal, is making a big mistake. No man is going to work for nothing. The chances are that those who work for organisations of this kind very frequently do a great deal less work, and have less soul in their work, than those who work for what are termed middlemen. We have in the Speaker's chair a business man who knows as well as I do that it is an impossibility to escape certain charges in connection with the distribution of foodstuffs or any other commodity. Every man who works wants a fair return for his labour. No man can say that, because a thing is going to be State-managed or managed by a board, expense is going to be escaped. This evening, when

someone on this side was speaking, the Minister indicated that, if there was damaged wheat, if there was grain in a mouldy state, it was due to the farmer.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I did not say that. I said that the farmer selected the board, and, if there were any bungling, the farmers were really responsible.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The hon. gentleman did not put it in that way, but I accept his explanation. This is what the Auditor-General's report says—

“An officer of the Department of Agriculture and Stock inspected and reported upon nine grain sheds and seven dumps. His report shows that the condition of the grain sheds was satisfactory, while that of the dumps was unsatisfactory.”

That brings me to a charge I made against the late Board. Although I said in this House that I had perfect confidence in them, and I believed they would do their work well, that does not do away with my summing up of their work in reviewing the case to-day and looking at the actual results of their administration. Their administration has been a sorry matter for numbers of men. Thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of bags of wheat were rendered profitless to the farmer as the result of the indifferent management which was exercised by the Board in connection with the handling of wheat.

Mr. BRENNAN: Still, they got a better price than they would have got had there been no pool.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: They got a worse price.

Mr. BRENNAN: On the average, they got a better price.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The guarantee to the farmer was 8s. per bushel; and the price to the miller was 9s. per bushel on a port basis.

Mr. BRENNAN: In 1914 you gave 3s. 9d. per bushel.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: That is quite right. The Board did not arrange that price. I will give the Premier the credit that he helped very materially in the fixing of the price at 9s. per bushel. It was the Premier's Conference that fixed the price of wheat at 9s. per bushel, and helped to maintain the price up to the end of the year 1921. The Board had the fixed price to work upon.

It is provided in the Bill that a board will have to take the produce that may be tendered to it at the time when it is tendered. There would be a number of very happy farmers in this State to-day if that practice had been adopted under the old Wheat Board. That is where a desperate wrong was done. It is shocking to contemplate to-day the fact that a man who tendered his wheat was turned down and told to wait. Many of them waited six months, and others nine months, before their wheat was taken delivery of. It was prime wheat at the outset, but it became weevily. It was then taken and sold on their account. Some of it came into the market quite recently. I was told only last week that some of the wheat from the 1920-21 crop was still selling in Toowoomba. I have seen some of it, and I do not believe that pigs would eat it. That was brought about because the Board had a lot to learn when they took up the matter

[Mr. G. P. Barnes.]

of building stocks and dealing generally with these matters. Hon. members opposite say that a better price was got. I said just now that a very much better price should have been obtained, and would have been obtained if the matter had been properly handled.

Let us leave the 1920-21 crop and come to this year's crop. We find that the Board, instead of having gained experience as the result of their management of affairs for one year, have had this year to resort to the exportation of wheat; and they have received for that wheat a price lower than could have been obtained locally. That has been brought about simply because they endeavoured to exact a price that the miller could not pay if he were to compete with the other States. It might be very well for them to say, "We are doing this in the interests of the farmer. We are trying to get all we can." What is the use of attempting that unless you can [8.30 p.m.] succeed? What is the use of asking a price that the men cannot pay, and, as a result, wheat is brought in from abroad? Is it not a scandal that more wheat has been imported into Queensland, either in grain or by way of flour, than has been exported? A large quantity of wheat has gone out of Queensland, which, if it had remained, would have returned to the farmer a better price than he will now receive.

Mr. BRENNAN: Does the hon. member say that we can consume all the wheat produced in Queensland to-day?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Yes. The consumption of wheat in Queensland, at 5½ bushels per head, would amount to about 4,000,000 bushels. This year we shall only have about 2,500,000 bushels.

Mr. BRENNAN: Why not prohibit the importation of wheat and make the people use it.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: Why not prohibit the importation of flour and make the people use it? The hon. gentleman will sympathise with me when I tell him why the millers of Queensland could not utilise the wheat. I addressed the Wheat Board in connection with this matter on 20th March last, and I pointed out that the price they were asking for wheat—which I think at about that time was 6s. 8d. per bushel as against 5s. 8d. per bushel in New South Wales—was against trade, and, as a result, they would have to export. I am now dealing with the management of these matters, and what is likely to take place in connection with the management of the affairs to be dealt with by this Bill. We shall see the serious position the millers of Queensland were in as compared with their competitors in other States on the date named. On 20th March the Melbourne millers had left to go towards the cost of gristing the sum of £2 12s. per ton of flour, the Sydney millers had £2 4s. 9d., the Brisbane millers £1 3s. 5d., and the Warwick millers had 14s. 3d. per ton. That is based on the price received for the commodity from the Wheat Board. You will see at a glance that the business was killed. Another comparison, which I presented to the Premier and also to the Wheat Board, for another period showed another set of circumstances. On 9th March the amount left to defray the cost of gristing for the Warwick trade by the millers in Queensland was £1 10s. 6d. per ton. If they attempted to supply the

Brisbane market with flour, they had left only 9s. 7d. per ton, and, if they attempted to supply Rockhampton, which is a cheap outlet for the Downs flour, they had 2s. 10d. per ton. The result was that the mills had partially to shut down and confine their activities largely to local trade in order that they might make a living. It might be said in connection with this matter by a prejudiced man, that the Board was not aware of what it was doing. The Board was aware of what it was doing, and it privately acknowledged that a tremendous mistake had been made. On 17th January, Mr. Kirkegaard, of Freestone Creek, in the Warwick district, addressed the members of the Wheat Board in connection with this matter, and said—

"On 17th January, the Board got to understand that the Brisbane Milling Company was going to stop buying Queensland wheat. The fact was that they were going South for their wheat, because they could get it cheaper. The price of New South Wales wheat, on rails, was only 4s. 1½d. and 4s. 2d. At that time, it was 4s. 2½d., or 4s. 2d., at country sidings, while the Queensland pool was charging 5s. 4d. at country sidings, so that there was a vast difference between the two prices. But there was nothing more said at the meeting of the Board on the 17th January. A week later, a special meeting of the Board was held, at which the chairman told them that they would have to do something about the wheat, as Mr. Archibald was going out of buying from the Board. He (Mr. Kirkegaard), urged that some consideration should be given to the mills, since the chairman had told them if they exported the wheat it would mean 8d. per bushel loss to the farmers. He asked why, instead of starving the mills, as they were at the present time, the Board should not offer the mills wheat at 5s. He might add that, from what he could hear, owing to the price of wheat, Barnes and Company were going to knock off one shift, and as far as the Farmers' Mill was concerned, they were not able to make ends meet by about 6s. per ton. If they got 5s. from the mills, the farmers would get 4d. per bushel more than they would if the wheat were exported, and the mills would be kept going. The next day, representatives of Barnes and Company, the Defiance Mills, and himself, representing the Farmers' Mill, went to see the manager again. Barnes and Company and the Defiance Mills did a big trade in flour with Rockhampton, and they suggested that if they could get wheat at 6d. per bushel less than the Board's charge, they would be able to maintain that trade. Even at a reduction of 6d. the farmers would still be 2d. per bushel better off than they would be by exporting the wheat. He (Mr. Kirkegaard) urged that the mills could be given some relief if the Board would not give them a reduction of 6d., and so allow the Farmers' Mill to make both ends meet. He thought it was a shame to see the Farmers' Co-operative Mill practically standing idle. It was a crying shame to see wheat going past the mill door when it meant a loss to the farmers of 4d. per bushel to send it past."

Mr. G. P. Barnes.]



I know what he said was correct, because I was at the meeting. The other members of that deputation told the management that the millers would be able to give a better price for their wheat than they were able to get by exporting. There you have an example of management. I have quoted those remarks to-night in order to show to those who have had little experience in this matter that there is considerable danger in management of this kind. Instead of building up our own industry and giving employment to our own people, we have received flour from the South from people with whom we cannot compete, and we have been forced to export our own product.

Mr. BRENNAN: Was not the price for wheat in the North fixed at a different rate?

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The price all over the State was fixed at 9s. a bushel for the 1920-21 crop; and, when the millers consigned the wheat to Brisbane, they were allowed 2½d. a bushel to cover the cost of freight. The hon. member for Toowoomba suggests an extraordinary anomaly in connection with price-fixing, and that is that the price of wheat in Queensland to-day has been maintained largely as a result of the abnormal price that has been fixed for flour inland. For instance, flour in Warwick, where the wheat is grown, is £14 per ton, and here in Brisbane it is £13 per ton. The whole object of that is to justify the Board holding out for a price for wheat in excess of the price paid in the other States.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has exhausted the time allowed him by the Standing Orders.

Mr. EDWARDS (*Nanango*): Hon. members opposite have argued that members of the Country party are somewhat dubious as to the pooling system being a success, but those hon. members must remember that there are members in the Country party who have had many years of experience in connection with the co-operative movement in Queensland. They must also realise that there are many members in the Country party who, like the rest of the producers of Queensland, have everything to lose in the event of legislation of this description being a failure. Therefore, it is not to be wondered at if, as hon. members on the other side have stated, we want these matters fully debated, and we want the Minister in charge of the Bill to accept reasonable amendments which will create a true co-operative spirit in connection with the Bill. The debate on this Bill was very instructive until the hon. member for Rockhampton spoke. In my opinion, that hon. member does not even know the first principle of co-operation.

Mr. FORDE: I know more about it than you.

Mr. EDWARDS: In the first place, he preached class-hatred from one end of his speech to the other, and then he talked about co-operation. As I understand the true spirit of co-operation, we must first have it within ourselves. Furthermore, the hon. gentleman accused hon. members on this side of not knowing anything about co-operation and of deceiving the producers of Queensland.

Mr. FORDE: No; I said you were in the hands of the middleman.

Mr. EDWARDS: He went from one member on this side of the House to another,

[*Mr. G. P. Barnes.*]

and he accused the hon. member for Drayton of not knowing anything whatever about co-operation. I would ask the hon. member for Rockhampton how much money he has in shares in co-operative companies in Queensland to-day.

Mr. FORDE: One's knowledge of a subject is not measured by his wealth.

Mr. EDWARDS: The hon. member for Drayton and other members on this side of the House have been pioneers of the co-operative movement; they have put money into the movement from the start in order to build it up, and to-day they are holding shares in co-operative concerns. Let us trace the attitude of this Government in connection with the co-operative movement since they first came into power.

Mr. FORDE: "Bob" Hodge knows more about co-operation than you.

Mr. EDWARDS: I do not think Mr. Hodge would claim, for one moment that he knew anything about co-operation at all. Let me trace the attitude of the Government in connection with the co-operative movement in Queensland. In the first place, they attempted to put into force their policy in connection with the nationalisation of the produce of the farmers. To do that they created the State Produce Agency. That was the first step in connection with their ideas of co-operation—a step which meant ultimately the entire State control of the primary products of this State. That State Produce Agency has been in existence for some years in Brisbane, and we hear hon. members on the other side of the House saying that the middlemen of Queensland, during their term of office, have made huge profits out of the producers.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear!

Mr. EDWARDS: They still stand for that and say, "Hear, hear!" If that is so, why is it that the State Produce Agency has not made a success of the business? It has had fair competition from the other agents of the State, and it has received a fair amount of produce from the producers; yet it has made a failure of the business right through the piece. Does that not show us the danger of State control in connection with the co-operative movement? I say without hesitation that it does. We had the hon. member for Rosewood telling us that this was a splendid movement in the interests of co-operation and also a very democratic movement. I want to point out an instance showing the democratic nature of this Bill. In the first place, clause 4 reads—

"The Minister shall, as soon as practicable after the application of this Act to a commodity, appoint a Board of such number of representatives of the growers of the commodity as prescribed, and shall appoint one of them to be chairman of such Board."

What more autocratic method could we have than that? If the hon. gentleman is sincere in connection with this matter, and, if he wishes to bring the producers of this State together in a true co-operative spirit, it is his duty to offer the primary producers of this State a Bill whereby they will elect their own representatives on the Board and their own representative as chairman of the Board. That is co-operation as I understand it. There are certain provisions in this Bill that require altering, and I hope the Minister

will see his way to accept reasonable amendments in that connection. The Bill also provides that a certain number of producers in any district can bring an industry for the whole of the State under a pool. That is a great danger to the producers of this State. There is another danger—and, to my mind, it is the greatest danger of all. If the pools created under the Bill are not going to operate in building up step by step the co-operative movement and promote the distribution of products under that movement, they will end in failure. If under the Bill a new set of officers are set up to work against the existing system of co-operation in Australia and New Zealand, in connection with which an office is established in London to control the sale of our butter in the old country, great danger will result. We have had the Wheat Pool Act held up as something which is of great service to the wheat-growers in the State. While that measure may have done some good in the interests of the wheat-growers, many wheat-growers have suffered under it. In my own district there are growers of wheat who notified the Wheat Pool Board in the regular way with regard to their crop of wheat, but it was several months before the board could take delivery of the wheat. The wheat was of good quality and in prime condition when the growers notified the board, but a good many growers had afterwards to sell their wheat in the open market for what it would fetch. Those are the dangers which we have to guard against when creating new methods of handling the products of the State. We do not stand for middlemen who are making large profits out of foodstuffs; but we want to be very careful that we do not create a new position of affairs under which we shall damage the co-operative machinery which is already in existence and even let it go to the wall, because in that case very serious harm would result to the primary industry. The Minister says that the Government are out to protect the interests of the primary producers; but I say that the primary producers are not going to have anything to do with the pooling system if the Government have any control over it, as a suspicion has been created in their minds with regard to Government control. The Premier is irritating the primary producers by the official heading which appears at the top of the billheads. The producers are suspicious that the Government are going to socialise the primary industries, and it is hard for the Minister to explain away the suspicion that he stands, in the first place, for the socialisation of industry and State control of the means of distribution and exchange, and, in the second place, that he stands for production for use and not for profit. While the Government stand for the nationalisation of production, the Secretary for Agriculture is introducing a measure for the farmers in connection with which the Government are going to have full control. I hope that the Minister will tell the producers exactly where he stands. If the Government are prepared to throw overboard the new objective which the Premier spoke so strongly against at the 1921 Labour Conference and put a policy on the statute-book which will be of real assistance to the producers, they will deserve the support of hon. members. There are other great difficulties in the way of making a success of the pooling system. In the first

place, we require men who are capable of handling the products of the growers efficiently so that the very best conditions may obtain.

Mr. COLLINS: Are you voting for or against the Bill?

Mr. EDWARDS: I am going to speak and vote as I think fit, and not as the hon. member for Bowen wants. In my opinion, the system of pooling is not going to be the success that it should be in Queensland, unless the Government stand clear of it and give the producers full control.

Mr. BRENNAN: Are they not doing that under this Bill?

Mr. EDWARDS: No; as I have pointed out, the Minister has full control under it. He first of all appoints the Board and then the chairman. If the Government are favourable to co-operation, why does the Minister not say, "Here is a Bill to assist you, and under it you can appoint your own Board and chairman." That is the only way in which it is possible to make a success of the co-operative movement in this State. It is all very fine for the Minister to tell us that this is advanced co-operation; if the producers are not very careful, it will be advanced socialisation.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Do you believe in the Bill?

Mr. EDWARDS: If the Minister will accept amendments which will be brought forward from this side, I will support the Bill, if I am assured that the Government are standing clear of any control under it. If the Government are going to have the same control as they have at the present time in regard to the constitution of the Council of Agriculture under the Primary Producers' Organisation Act, it will not be in the best interests of the producers of the State. The Country party moved no less than nineteen amendments when that measure was before this Chamber. One of the amendments which was then turned down provided that the Minister should allow the Council of Agriculture to appoint its own chairman, and we find that one of the difficulties in connection with the organisation of the primary producers arises in connection with that matter. That is one of the things that has engendered suspicions in the minds of the producers, and it is that which is creating opposition.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: On account of your whispering.

Mr. EDWARDS: No; it has been proved by the Minister's own utterances. A request was made from my district in the interests of the maize-growers. Everyone will admit that the maize industry is an important one. It is so important that it is one of the foremost industries in our State to-

[9 p.m.] day. There is plenty of room for advancement in it. A request

was made from my district for a maize-grower to be placed on that board, so that they could get full information with regard to the marketing of maize and other matters. The Minister said that he could be taken as representing the maize-growers.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I said something else. I said that I represented the largest maize-growing district in the State.

Mr. EDWARDS: These are the things that are creating suspicions in the country districts of Queensland. If the Minister is

*Mr. Edwards.*]

earnest about assisting co-operation and about building up the co-operative movement step by step by voluntary means, he has the opportunity of doing so. We have the co-operative movement in existence now, and it is all connected between Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, and now we have a floor established in London. If the Government were prepared to put the same amount of money into the co-operative movement by building and assisting the co-operative stores, and in other ways, they would be doing a great deal more for Queensland than they are doing by creating a lot of new positions. It naturally follows, when you create a board, that you create a new set of officers. That means another great expense on the producers of this State. I want to say that the trouble with the producers of the State to-day is their big overhead expenses in connection with the working of their crop. Instead of having new departments and new expenses, we want to economise, and the Government can help by lifting some of the burden of taxation from the producer. That is the only way that we can give any real assistance to the producer to-day. It is no use attempting to create new positions.

Mr. KIRWAN: Which window are you dressing now—the front one or the back one?

Mr. EDWARDS: The hon. gentleman is the greatest window-dresser in this House.

Mr. KIRWAN: I never get a chance.

Mr. EDWARDS: When you leave the chair and go and sit on that seat over there, you are anything but impartial.

Mr. KIRWAN: I am not in the chair now. I can interject now.

The SPEAKER: Order! Interjections are disorderly. (Laughter.)

Mr. EDWARDS: I hope the Minister will give every assistance he can to primary production, whether it be by assisting the co-operative movement or by giving financial assistance to enable the primary producers to conserve fodder. One of the big things necessary in the State is to stabilise prices. If the farmers could get financial assistance through a rural bank or by some other means, it would be a big thing in the interests of those people. It is not merely a matter of forming a pool to handle the products. The primary producers require to be financed to enable them to store their fodder; and they want to be helped in other ways. They do not want to run into debt, which will cripple them in after days. I hope the Minister is sincere in connection with this Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Why do you question my sincerity?

Mr. EDWARDS: In the first place, the Premier knows why we question his sincerity, because the Premier himself said at the 1921 Labour Conference that, if the conference pushed on with the policy of socialisation of production, he would oppose it at every turn.

The PREMIER: You are misquoting me.

Mr. EDWARDS: The Secretary for Agriculture stands for that policy—that is, the policy of nationalisation. It is impossible for him to stand for that policy and to give to the primary producers of this State a fair deal on the true co-operative scale.

[Mr. Edwards.]

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

The consideration of the Bill in Committee was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

## BRISBANE TRAMWAY TRUST BILL.

### SECOND READING.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*), who was received with Government cheers, said: The controversial question has been raised a number of times as to what should be done with the Brisbane tramways. It is my intention to-night briefly to outline the reasons which have prompted the Government to propound the scheme that is set forth in the Bill. The intention is to create a trust representative of the local authorities to take over the Brisbane tramways. The matter we have to consider is whether the Brisbane tramways should be continued under the ownership and in the operation of a private company, or whether they should be taken over in the interests of some public authority. We have to consider whether we should give an extension of the franchise to the existing company or end that franchise and purchase the tramways on behalf of some public authority. The Government have considered the question from all its aspects, and they have decided that it would be an evil thing to grant any extension of franchise to the existing company or to any company. The granting of an extension involves conferring upon the company a very valuable concession, and one which is enhanced in value each year as time goes on. It is not as though the granting of an extension to the existing company would mean the mere retention by them of their present rights or privileges or the retention of the property at its existing value. Brisbane is a city which is growing, and no doubt will grow rapidly in the future till possibly twenty years hence it may have a population double that of to-day. Under those circumstances the value of a concession represented by a tramway franchise is constantly increasing until at no distant date it might be worth twice what it is worth to-day. If an extension of twenty years were granted to the company, without condition as to the price to be paid at the end of that term, it is quite within reasonable prospect that twice as much would then have to be given as would have to be given to-day for the purchase of the undertaking.

Mr. MORGAN: It might be worth less.

Mr. BRAND: That is a good argument for Government ownership.

The PREMIER: That is an argument for public ownership. The hon. member for Murilla seems to be taking a very pessimistic view of the growth of this city. I know that it has been urged that the tramway business will not retain its value or its popularity, that it may be run off by some other means of transit or mode of conveyance of passengers, but persons who have made inquiries on this subject in many cities of the world do not hold with that view.

Mr. MORGAN: It has been proved.

The PREMIER: It has not been proved in any case. Tramway business in every city in the world which is increasing in population also increases in value. It is true that tramways which were running through certain

streets or sections of London are not running there now. London is a very large city, and trams do not run in the heart of the city; but that is not because the trams, if run there, would not be eminently successful from a financial point of view, but merely because the streets could not carry the traffic, and other arrangements have therefore had to be made. In other places, such as New York and Chicago, where the street cars have to contend with competition of railway, subways, and elevated tramways and other kinds of transit, the street cars still run as a highly remunerative business.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Is it not conceivable that the traffic in our streets may become congested?

The PREMIER: Undoubtedly it is conceivable, but however congested they may become in the heart of the city, and whatever portion of those congested parts may be excluded, the tramway business throughout the city as a whole is bound to be a business growing in profit and value to those who conduct it. I think that anyone reasonably considering this question can come to no other conclusion than that this is a business which is bound to grow in value, and, therefore, ought to be owned by a public authority. At any rate, I am putting arguments which appeal to the Government against granting to the present or any other company an extension of the existing franchise, and which have guided them to a decision to acquire these tramways under the provisions of the existing statutes in the interests of the people themselves.

There is another consideration—one which appealed to the immediate predecessors of this Government, Mr. Denham's Administration. It is that under any system of private franchise in the tramway business there is towards the end of the term granted a stoppage on the part of the company of all development. They are uncertain as to what is going to happen, and naturally they do not expend large sums of money in keeping their system up-to-date or establishing modern methods. That is a perfectly natural result under a limited franchise system. I think Mr. Denham pointed that out very lucidly on one or two occasions. There is always in such cases, on account of the lack of improvement, an agitation amongst the people and the local authorities for the granting of a further franchise to the company in order to get them to go on with improvements and extensions. I can quote a reference by Mr. Denham to that very phase of the question. It was made in 1915, seven years prior to the expiration of the franchise, to a deputation from certain local authorities which wanted the Government to grant an extension to the company. He said—

“He had a high opinion of Mr. Badger as a business man. He (Mr. Badger) knew that they (that is—the Coorparoo and Stephens Shire Councils) were fighting his battle now, and that later on some other local authorities who wanted extensions would continue that battle, so that compulsory purchase could be put off interminably. The local authorities, however, had stated emphatically time and again that they did not want an extension of the franchise.”

There would be a natural demand on the part of new suburbs to get tramway extensions, and the people would be pushing the

Government to give a further extension of the franchise in order to get the improvements made. That is why I say it is an argument why the Government should exercise their right to acquire the undertaking under the existing statutes on behalf of some authority.

It may be urged against that argument that there is no necessity to give an unconditional extension of the franchise, that a better bargain can be made with the company, or that, at any rate, some agreement can be entered into which will ensure to the people who will eventually become the owners of the system better terms than they would get if there were an unconditional extension of the franchise. That may be true. It is true that the evils or difficulties or disabilities about which I have spoken would not exist if an agreement were entered into on behalf of the people with the company, provided it safeguarded every point in dispute. But the difficulty of arriving at a satisfactory agreement has been very apparent to the Government, and I have no doubt that it was evident to Mr. Denham and previous Ministers who had to handle this question. The argument implies that the company will accept an agreement satisfactory to the Government, and so far there have been no evidences that the existing company would subscribe its signature to an agreement which would be satisfactory to the Government and the local authorities—to the people concerned. Perhaps I ought to remind hon. members that the negotiations in regard to the question whether the franchise should be extended or an agreement entered into have been going on ever since 1920, and for years before that with the Denham Administration. In consequence, I and other Ministers have met representatives of the company and of the local authorities. Mr. Badger placed before me proposals for an agreement under which his company would be willing to continue the tramway business, but a careful consideration of the proposed agreement showed the Government that there was no advantage in it, or not sufficient advantage to justify the Government in continuing the present franchise.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Are you prepared to give us the terms?

The PREMIER: Yes; I am going to quote them. The offer was submitted by Mr. Badger himself on the 15th September, 1921, in the form of a letter. I had had several interviews with Mr. Badger, and we had previously discussed every phase of the question. Mr. Badger had submitted an amount which the company considered they ought to get by way of compensation if the tram service was purchased, and he asked what the Government were prepared to give? The negotiations led nowhere, because there was a very wide gap between the two amounts, and Mr. Badger subsequently submitted this letter—

“My board would be prepared to enter upon negotiations for an agreement along the general lines of the proposals submitted to the local authorities in 1911, commonly known as the ‘Chicago plan,’ copy of which, I believe, is in the possession of the Honourable the Premier, provided an agreement is reached in advance upon the following points:—”

The agreement was to be on what is known

*Hon. E. G. Theodore.]*

as the "Chicago plan," but there was to be an agreement on these points—

"1. Repeal of the Tramways Purchase Act.

"2. Repeal of the Profiteering Prevention Act in so far as it purports to affect the tramways.

"3. An agreement as to the present value of the tramways with their appurtenances.

"4. The company's right to charge fares as provided in the Tramways Acts, 1882-1890-1913, together with all other rights, powers, and privileges conferred by these Acts to be irrevocably confirmed.

"5. The company shall not be called upon to make to the existing tramways any extensions or additions when the rate of interest at which the required capital is obtainable and/or the cost of material and construction would be so high as to make such additions or extensions unprofitable or to impose an undue burden on the undertaking.

"6. An extension of the lease of the present premises in Countess street for a term of five years, unless the company can conveniently vacate them sooner.

"The company would be prepared to favourably consider as one of the terms of a general agreement, approval of the repeal of all Orders in Council made under section 50 of the Tramways Act of 1882, relieving the company of maintenance of portions of the streets, excepting those relating to the wood-paved streets—namely, Queen, Wickham, and George streets—in the city of Brisbane.

"If these stipulations which we regard as vital are accepted, we will be pleased to discuss further details."

The "Chicago plan" referred to in Mr. Badger's letter was submitted to the local authorities in 1911 and to the Government last year, and is as follows:—

"In consideration that the Government would give the company an extension of franchise for twenty-one years, the company would agree—

(1) To construct certain extensions.

(2) Pay to the Government or local authorities 25 per cent. of the net profits for ten years, and thereafter 50 per cent. until purchased.

(3) Value of tramway for purpose of agreement to be fixed as at date of agreement. To such sum was to be added the actual capital expenditure on extensions, equipment and plant, together with a fair allowance of 10 per cent. for conducting and supervising the work, and an allowance of 5 per cent. for expense of procuring capital.

(4) Net profits to be ascertained by deducting from gross receipts—

(a) Working expenses, including all charges, taxes, and payments to renewals and depreciation fund amounting to 14 per cent.

(b) Interest on value of undertaking as ascertained in (3)."

In dealing with these proposals, the letter and the "Chicago plan" must be read

[*Hon. E. G. Theodore.*

together, because it will be noted that Mr. Badger says in his letter that the stipulations set out therein must be accepted before the other proposal can be discussed.

Both the Chicago plan and Mr. Badger's letter to myself have been considered, it being borne in mind that this question of the agreement for the distribution of profits would not come into operation unless those points set out in Mr. Badger's letter were first agreed upon. In the very beginning it was found utterly impossible to arrive at an agreement on the question of what amount should be fixed as a valuation of the tramways.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: That has to be determined now, hasn't it?

The PREMIER: It has to be determined by a tribunal. But that is not what Mr. Badger asked for. He did not say that a tribunal might determine the value, and that would be the value upon which the new agreement would be based. The Government and the Tramways Company had to agree. That meant that there would be no agreement which did not meet with the approval of the company. Mr. Badger submitted to me a figure which we considered was far and away beyond what the Government or the local authorities should pay for the trams. I think that the local authorities recognised that it was utterly impossible to arrive at any agreement by consent with Mr. Badger as to what should be set down as the value of the trams, upon which value the Tramways Company would get interest during the whole of this agreement.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: What is the figure which Mr. Badger asked?

The PREMIER: I do not know that I am at liberty to give that figure; it was given to me in confidence. I have no objection to giving it, if Mr. Badger gives me his permission; but the negotiations between us were private.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Is it not possible to give the local authorities some idea of the obligation they are undertaking?

The PREMIER: Yes. It is possible to give that, but not the figure Mr. Badger is asking. The hon. member asked me the figure Mr. Badger tendered to me, which he declined to tender in the presence even of his own solicitor or of the Crown Solicitor, who was with me. Both of those gentlemen retired from the room, and Mr. Badger passed the figure across to me. I found it to be so far above the figure which the Government were prepared to consider that it was utterly impossible to go any further unless he could reduce it.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Tell us the figure which the Government were prepared to consider.

The PREMIER: The figure which I handed across to Mr. Badger was £1,200,000.

Mr. TAYLOR: Was that in agreement with the valuation of your own experts?

The PREMIER: It was based upon the experience of our own Valuation Board, who went into the question. I was proceeding entirely along those lines.

Mr. BRAND: You say it is worth no more?

The PREMIER: I do not say that; I say that that is what we are prepared to set down as the valuation.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Did your Valuation Board complete the valuation?

The PREMIER: Yes; it completed its inquiries to the stage which enabled it to advise the Government in regard to the valuation.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: The Tramways Company, in their report, stated that the Board knocked off half-way through.

The PREMIER: The Tramways Company are responsible for whatever report they make, and we are responsible for whatever business we conduct. We did not go on with any unnecessary inquiry. I may tell the hon. member that I took advantage of my presence in England in 1920 to get the highest expert opinion from the highest compensation experts, probably, in the British Empire, upon the question of the basis of valuation, having with me a carefully prepared legal case for counsel's opinion in England. Sir John Simon was one of the counsel engaged. He went into it very carefully with the aid of his legal assistants, and afterwards discussed with me the point of view as it appealed to him, subsequently submitting to me a very full statement of the position. It was upon the opinion he gave that the Valuation Board conducted its inquiries and brought them to the conclusion we wanted. Beyond that there was no necessity for us to proceed. The Tramways Company may not understand why we did not pursue inquiries in this direction or in that, but the Government departments understand it. There was no necessity to spend thousands of pounds more when we had got the information we wanted, as set out by the highest legal opinion we could proceed upon. That is what actuated the Government in the conduct of the Valuation Board's proceedings. The information collected by the Valuation Board, together with the legal advice which has been obtained from the most eminent counsel in Australia and in England, who have been engaged upon it, will be available when the question of fighting the compensation case is entered upon. The valuation has to be fixed. Hon. members will see that the Bill provides for a tribunal to fix a valuation in accordance with the original statute. The data collected by the Valuation Board, and all the data and information in the hands of the departments, will be available to fight that case. It is understood between the Government and the local authorities concerned that the Government will conduct the case. It is so provided in the Bill. The costs will be charged against the undertaking. That was one of the first matters put to the Government by the local authority representatives when we met in conference. However, I am getting rather ahead of the argument that I intended to pursue. It will be seen by the proposed agreement which I have just outlined, by the letter from Mr. Badger, that the company would, in the event of their proposals being agreed to, be placed upon a more favourable basis than they are now, notwithstanding the provision for the division of profits in certain circumstances. When all the demands of the company were satisfied, there would be no profits to distribute. As a matter of fact, the company would be relieved of some of the liabilities which fall upon them now. The company have the

liability of maintaining a certain proportion of the road width up to a certain standard, as specified under their Acts or agreements, in the metalling of the roads, and so on. They propose to relieve themselves with regard to that liability, except in the case of streets which are wood-paved. That is relieving the company of a very considerable liability, and it would be entirely to their advantage under the new agreement if it were entered upon.

I cannot give Mr. Badger's valuation, but I can give the valuation of Mr. Blundell, a Brisbane director of the Brisbane Tramways Company. He placed the value at £2,000,000, which is under Mr. Badger's valuation. Assuming that £2,000,000 is the valuation, and basing these calculations upon that and taking the year 1919—the last year in respect of which detailed figures can be obtained—the gross receipts were £468,492; working expenses, including taxation, £295,462; 6½ per cent. interest, which would have to go to the company under the agreement, on a capital of £2,000,000—Mr. Blundell's figure—£130,000; reserves for renewals and maintenance—14 per cent. of the gross receipts—£66,000; making a total charge of over £451,000. There would thus

have been a shortage of about [9.30 p.m.] £23,000, and there would have been nothing left to distribute amongst the local authorities under Mr. Badger's scheme. Therefore under the 25 per cent. distribution they would have got nothing, while the company would have had their taxes paid and would have got 6½ per cent. clear upon this inflated value of £2,000,000. They would have been in a much better position than they are now. That is the agreement that was tendered. It must be remembered that that agreement was subject to a prior arrangement in regard to this fixed capital, and it was apparent that would be the rock upon which such negotiations would split—I do not care what negotiations were being conducted. The local authorities recognised that pretty well. The local authorities had some experience with regard to that in 1911 and in 1913, when they met Mr. Denham in conference to consider the question of an extension and a further agreement. Mr. Hawthorn, who was then a member of Parliament, made a speech in Parliament which is reported in "Hansard" for 1913. Mr. Hawthorn was chairman of one of the local authorities concerned, and he has taken a very prominent part in these negotiations. He said—

"A conference was held by fourteen local authorities to endeavour to have a Commission appointed in connection with the tramways. . . . We know the Brisbane Tramways Company are out for business. We found as a body that we could get nothing out of them."

That has been the experience of every representative of public authorities in dealing with the company. Perhaps I ought to say that Mr. Badger, who was the general manager of the Brisbane Tramways Company for many years and who during recent years has been acting more in the capacity of adviser to the company than as actual manager, has been a gentleman who has been very keen upon the business, and has, no doubt, been a very good servant for the Brisbane Tramways Company. He has been a good, efficient, and keen manager. I have had the opportunity of meeting him many

*Hon. E. G. Theodore.]*

times in regard to these negotiations, and I say unhesitatingly that there was no possibility of coming to an arrangement with him on any terms other than what would be strongly advantageous to the existing company. I believe that the same thing would be experienced by anyone else conducting negotiations with the company. I know that is the case with regard to Mr. Badger. The representatives of the local authorities admitted that quite frankly. The only alternative to the extension of the franchise implied the purchase of the tramways and the control of the tramways by some public authority.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: What is to prevent them going on as they are doing now?

The PREMIER: This is to prevent them going on as they are now: The company have not gone on with any improvements of the tramways, I think, within the last five years; they have built only two new cars, and they have made no extensions. Naturally, they will make no extensions or provide new cars unless they can get some definite arrangement in regard to the future of the tramways. That is what must prevent the present system continuing.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: You do not blame the company?

The PREMIER: I am making it perfectly clear that I do not blame them. It is necessary that the present unsatisfactory conditions should not continue. It is very unsatisfactory to the users of the trams, the company, and everyone else concerned. At the present time it is only a matter of drift.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: It is preventing development.

The PREMIER: Yes. The Tramways Company say that they are not going to spend £500,000 or £1,000,000 in improvements and extensions unless they can get some definite tenure.

Mr. VOWLES: It would help to give employment.

The PREMIER: Yes. The fact that the construction of extensions is going to help employment is surely nothing to warrant the Government giving the company an extension. Whatever is the outcome of the present consideration of the position, it is bound to lead to development. The settlement of the tramway question will lead to immediate development of the tramway business in providing extensions of the tram lines, improvement of service, construction of street cars, and so on. That will be the inevitable outcome of the present scheme. The alternative to an extension is to take over the tramways and vest them in some public authority. It is true that in 1920 the Government passed an Act which would have had the effect of taking over the trams and vesting them for the time being in the Commissioner for Railways, to be run as a State service and as a Government concern. I am free to confess that, considering the matter very carefully since that time, the Government have come to the conclusion that that was a mistake. To take over the trams and run them as a Government department would be a mistake. It is not the function of the Government to run street cars in any city.

Mr. KERR: Is that the only consideration?

The PREMIER: I will explain why. The hon. member gives a sardonic laugh at

that—I do not know whether he is able to appreciate the point or not. This is a local authorities' concern. It is a question of a local utility.

Mr. KING: It is certainly not the function of the Government to run tramcars.

The PREMIER: I am glad to hear the hon. member admit that. It is not the function of a Government to run a town water supply system, or to run a sewerage system, or to run any other local utility.

Mr. BRAND: Or run the State stations.

The PREMIER: The hon. member may take that argument too far, though I agree with him so far as local utilities are concerned. In some cities in the Commonwealth the Government do run street-car services. In Sydney the Railway Commissioner runs the trams, but I think it is undesirable, especially in Queensland. People in other parts of the State have just as much claim to the Government spending money in running local utilities as the people have in Brisbane. If we are going to run the Brisbane trams as a Government department and finance the scheme out of funds subscribed from every part of Queensland, why should we not take over the Rockhampton trams and run them? And why should we not establish trams in Toowoomba, Townsville, and elsewhere? There are no arguments in favour of the Government running a Brisbane street-car service.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: That was provided in the 1920 Bill.

Mr. BRAND: What does the Labour platform say on the point?

The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman has sufficient intelligence to look that up for himself. He asks a silly question like that when I am addressing the House on a very serious matter. The scheme contained in the 1920 Act was propounded by my predecessor, the late Hon. T. J. Ryan, and the matter has been very carefully considered since then. The question of ownership and financing the tramways as a local authority matter has been fully recognised as being the just and proper thing to do. I would remind hon. members that under the 1920 Bill it was only intended to take over the trams with a view to handing them over to the local authorities. It was provided that the trams would be handed over after the indebtedness of the Government was fully discharged, and that might be a great many years. There is no necessity now to go through that interim period, for the trams can be taken over and can be financed under a system of public trust, as provided in this Bill. Of course, arguments have been used against the Government taking this action to vest them in the local authorities. The newspapers especially have been active in urging that this is a false step, and that the local authorities ought not to be brought in and ought not to manage a business of this kind.

Mr. MORGAN: They do not seem very anxious, either.

The PREMIER: I disagree with the hon. member on that.

Mr. VOWLES: Why do you not consult the electors?

The PREMIER: I will lead up to that point. As a matter of fact, previous Governments who have dealt with this question

apparently always intended that the local authorities would ultimately own the trams. That was provided under the Act of 1832. It is provided that they would be controlled by the local authorities, and not by the Government or any other authority. It was provided that the local authorities in the City of Brisbane would take over the trams. That was also provided in the Act of 1890, and again under the Act of 1913, which was passed by the Denham Government. That Act provided that the trams would be compulsorily purchased and managed by the local authorities. Mr Denham made provision in the 1913 Act that the trams should be compulsorily purchased on the fixed date of 30th September, 1920, on behalf of the local authorities of Brisbane. That policy has always been in mind, and has never been controverted. We are only carrying out the original intentions in regard to the policy adopted so early as 1832, when the original Act was passed. Of course, in those days it was a much less complex system. In those days the trams were ordinary horse trams, but the policy was again confirmed in 1890 and 1913. In reconsidering matters after 1920 it is true that we conducted negotiations with the company to see whether it was possible to get them to agree to a reasonable sum before submitting the matter to the local authorities. The negotiations with Mr. Badger proved abortive, and subsequently we took the matter up with the local authorities, and I may say that the question of taking it up with the local authorities was first initiated by the City Council of Brisbane. The City Council tabled a resolution last year in favour of either an extension of the franchise being granted to the company or some immediate action being taken to hand over the tramways to the local authorities. I am not quite sure of the terms of the resolution, but, after notice had been given of that resolution, some approach was made to myself as Premier by the City Council, and I agreed to receive a deputation from the Council on the question. When they met me, I told them that the Government were quite prepared to exercise their right of purchase if the various Brisbane local authorities would set up an authority to control the trams, for we considered that that was the proper way to manage them in the future. The City Council almost unanimously, at that meeting, at which most of the aldermen were present, agreed to that suggestion. Following that, a conference was called which the Home Secretary and myself attended, and practically every man attending that conference, which was representative of most of the local authorities in Brisbane, agreed to the scheme. Certainly they wanted to have the details of the scheme supplied. They wanted a Bill drafted, and wanted to see it. As a result, the Bill was drafted and circulated amongst the local authorities, and I believe a majority of them agreed to it.

Mr. MORGAN: Before hon. members got the Bill.

The PREMIER: Certainly, before hon. members got the Bill. What is wrong with that?

Mr. MORGAN: It is a wrong thing.

The PREMIER: I think the hon. member is labouring under a delusion. It is a

common thing. In the preparation of legislation the Government will consult whom they like. That is a right that no Government will ever give up. The Government never consult the Opposition in the preparation of Bills. They have to submit Bills to Parliament, but when it becomes necessary to consult the local authorities before a Local Authority Bill is drafted, it will be done by this Government and by every other Government. The draft Bill will be prepared and circulated amongst the local authorities. The settlement of its final form afterwards rests with the Government. They may accept the suggestions made by the local authorities or they may reject them.

Mr. KING: I wish you would practise that a little more.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is taking up a different attitude from that adopted by the hon. member for Murilla.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: We object to this being done in another direction.

The PREMIER: I do not know what the hon. member is alluding to.

Mr. VOWLES: We object to newspapers getting Bills first.

The PREMIER: The only glaring example of that kind that I can remember is when the Brisbane "Truth" published a Bill of the Denham Government before Parliament got it. That is the only instance I can remember of that.

The local authorities were fully apprised of what was intended, and a free expression of opinion was asked, and, if the local authorities had been left to give a free and unfettered decision on it, certainly 90 per cent. of them would have agreed heartily to the scheme; but, as a consequence of the bankrupt opposition on the part of the Brisbane newspapers, chiefly the "Courier," some of the local authorities started to throw cold water on the scheme. Before the "Courier" became so active in denouncing this proposal some of the local authorities had expressed themselves in favour of it. Mr. Diddams, the present mayor of Brisbane, waited on Mr. Huxham with a deputation in 1918, and he asked—

"Why the Government had not proceeded with a Bill designed to enable the local authorities to acquire the metropolitan tramways? He said the local authorities were so desirous of acquiring the tramways that if they could not get the money from the Government they would endeavour to raise it themselves."

That was reported in the "Courier" of 23rd July, 1918. More recently, after the Home Secretary met the local authorities at the conference at the beginning of this year, the mayor of South Brisbane said—

"Personally, I have no objection to a trust. I never had one. I am glad to know that you propose to allow the trust to consist of eight members, and that the election of the trust should be as it is."

Alderman Faulkner and certain other members, in view of the "Courier's" opposition, started to oppose the Bill, although they had agreed to it in February last.

Mr. VOWLES: Why should the electors not be consulted?

*Hon. E. G. Theodore.]*



The PREMIER: The hon. member has got an extraordinary desire at last to consult the electors upon everything. He does not want Parliament to decide anything because there is a Labour majority in Parliament. He does not want Parliament to decide anything because he knows such things will be decided upon democratic lines, and he wants to avoid such a decision. He wants to delay it. When he was sitting on this side behind the Denham Administration he never demanded that legislation should be submitted to the electors. He always resisted any suggestion of that kind. This idea of a referendum only arises, in my opinion, from a desire to study the interests of the Tramways Company—to avoid a decision on the question.

Mr. MAXWELL: When loans are being asked for, the question has to be referred to the people.

The PREMIER: The hon. member, I think, is not now an alderman of the City Council. The City Council recently came to the Government with a proposal for a loan of £1,000,000 that they proposed to raise, and they wanted the Government to pass legislation to avoid submitting it to the people. (Government laughter.)

Mr. MAXWELL: That does not alter the fact that under the Local Authorities Act such questions must be submitted to the people.

The PREMIER: This is a point you cannot get away from: this question must be decided, and it ought to be decided as early as possible. The Government have consulted the direct representatives of the people in the Brisbane City Council; they have considered the question fully, and they are prepared to determine the question now; and, further, if the question were submitted to the people, the electors of Brisbane would not get a decision from those who are to carry the obligation, because so many of the people who are living outside the area would not have the right to vote on it. Who are the people who are most concerned in the trams? The people who use the trams first, and then those who will be carrying the financial obligation. We have consulted their direct representatives in the councils whose areas may possibly be levied on.

Mr. MAXWELL: It was never submitted to them.

The PREMIER: This Bill was submitted to them.

Mr. MAXWELL: Not to the people.

The PREMIER: To the direct representatives of the people. The hon. member, who is one of the most ultra-Tories in this Chamber, talks about consulting the people. Who are those he consults? He consults the employers' representatives. He has secret meetings to send delegates to England to frustrate consulting the people.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAXWELL: That is cheap talk.

The PREMIER: The scheme of the Bill provides for the acquisition of the trams and the vesting of the trams in a trust consisting of eight members, two of those members being Government representatives, one of whom will be the chairman. The Government representation will continue while the liability of the Government exists.

[*Hon. E. G. Theodore.*]

Once it is discharged the Government representation will automatically disappear.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: With regard to the chairman?

The PREMIER: Yes, as regards the chairman and the other Government representative.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Will the Government retain representation on the Appeal Board?

The PREMIER: The Government will have representation on the Appeal Board to deal with appeal matters, but not as regards the trust, in connection with which they will have no direct representation. The members of the trust are to be appointed for three years at a remuneration of £300 for the chairman, and £200 each for the other members. It has been suggested that this is not an efficient way of managing the trams. It is suggested that, instead of control by a trust consisting of local authority representatives, there ought to be a Commission set up. I would like to deal briefly with that question. Personally, I have nothing to say about management by a commission of experts in principle, except that it is not a democratic method. If you are going to set up a Commission to manage a business like the tramways, you cannot have a Commission elected by the people. It would cease to be a Commission if elected by the people, as the members elected would not necessarily be engineers or commercial men. Therefore, if you have a Commission, you must depart from the democratic method. You will have a Commission which is independent of the local authorities and the rate-payers. There ought to be some kind of control, unless you are going to set it up over Parliament—a Commission must be subject to some control. I say that there are arguments in favour of a Commission, and solid arguments against it. If a Commission of three experts were set up under this Bill, and they were rendered subject to the control of Parliament, there would be the objection raised by those who are criticising the Bill on the same grounds that they are criticising the Bill now—that they would be interfered with if they were subject to Parliament; and, if they were not subject to Parliament, they would be an autocratic authority, to which there is no analogy in any body existing in the State.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: If they were subject to the local authorities interested, would not that meet the case?

The PREMIER: In that case you would not get a Commission such as is advocated. What is advocated is a trust, which must not interfere with those who are managing the tramways. If you set up a Commission, the members must be free from the local authorities, and you would get the autocratic system again. They must be independent of local authorities and Parliament; but that position is intolerable, and would not be considered by the people.

Mr. J. H. C. ROBERTS: Do you consider the salaries put down sufficient for the chairman and the members?

The PREMIER: The members constituting the trust under this proposal will not actually be managing the tramways; they will have to do what any other similar

authority would do—what the Brisbane tramways board of directors does now. They will have to employ their experts to manage the tramways, and they must give them free and untrammelled control of the tramways to ensure success. The Brisbane tramways are managed now by a general manager, who is resident in Brisbane. He has, I understand, an absolutely free hand in the engagement of staff, engineers, and payment of salaries, and matters of promotions, transfers, dismissals, and so on are entirely in his hands. He, in turn, is controlled by a board of directors. The principal board sits in London, and they draw for their services, I understand, no more than we are providing in this Bill—£200 or £300 a year—yet they are able efficiently to control the general manager, who is the man in charge.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: It is different when you provide for a general manager.

The PREMIER: The Bill provides that the trust must appoint a general manager, who must control his staff. He cannot have anyone pitchforked upon him by the trust or by anyone else.

Mr. VOWLES: Not like the State stations.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member has a solid argument against this Bill, let him explain it. I am quite prepared to listen to it, but I do not think he is going to strengthen that argument by talking about State stations, or State fish shops, or things like that. What we are providing in this Bill is what I consider a complete scheme, and I am trying to anticipate some of the arguments which may be urged, and which have been urged in the public Press—that is, that the Trust will not be efficient, because it will lead to a system of bungledom and interference by local authorities. I do not think that is possible. I want to point out that the members of the trust, as constituted, will have real functions. They must not interfere with the business management of the tramways, but they will have to lay down the policy of the tramways. In policy matters the trust will have control.

Mr. MAXWELL: They have the right to appoint the manager of the tramways?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. MAXWELL: To appoint and discharge.

The PREMIER: They will appoint him for a term, but they will not have power to dismiss him without formulating some charge against him: otherwise, as the hon. member can see, if they had the right to dismiss him at any time, they would have the control of the tramways absolutely in their hands, assuming the manager did not act according to their dictation.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: What is the necessity for the advisory board?

The PREMIER: That is what I am coming to. The trust is charged with the duty of formulating the policy relating to future extensions of the tramway, and so on. They must formulate those proposals and submit them to the Government, after which the Government will submit them to an expert Advisory Board, consisting of engineers, and the Advisory Board's report will be available to the tramway trust. It is only an attempt to co-ordinate the responsibility of

the trust with the responsibility of the Government. The Government are largely wrapped up in the expenditure which will be incurred in the first place, because they will guarantee the debentures which are to be issued, and the liability may amount to £1,000,000.

Mr. KING: The Advisory Board has overriding powers?

The PREMIER: Not overriding powers.

Mr. KERR: On questions of policy, yes.

The PREMIER: Clause 30 provides—

“(i.) As soon as practicable after the constitution of the trust, a general scheme for the future development of the tramways, for the service of the district, shall be prepared by the trust.

“(ii.) The trust shall submit proposals for such general scheme to the Minister, who shall refer same to an Advisory Board appointed and paid by the Governor in Council at the expense of the trust.

“(iii.) The general scheme shall not be adopted by the trust until it has received the approval of the Governor in Council.”

It is only an attempt to safeguard the Government's responsibilities in the matter, and not to have the Government subject to an added responsibility, possibly running into hundreds of thousands of pounds.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Cannot you construct tramways without the authority or permission of the trust?

The PREMIER: Certainly not. At all events, there is no power on our part to do it. If the hon. member can point out any defect in the Bill in this respect, we will attend to it in Committee. The Bill also provides for the acquisition of the trams upon a basis which is laid down in the Bill. It proceeds in accordance with the basic principles established in the original statutes relating to the Brisbane trams of 1832, 1839, and 1890. The rights of the company are wholly preserved.

Mr. KING: They are wholly preserved.

The PREMIER: Yes. That is the principle on which the Court shall determine the compensation to be paid. It is provided in this Bill that the Full Court shall decide the basis or principle upon which and the court or person by whom the compensation shall be determined. That is not a departure from the original statute. It is an endeavour to set up a competent authority as early as possible to lay down the basic principle for determining what compensation shall be paid. I may say that the company have seen this provision and have had an opportunity of tendering their advice in regard to it. The tribunal which fixes the compensation will decide if the purchase price is to be paid in cash or on terms. If terms are agreed upon, then the payment will be made by debentures with a currency of twenty-one years, with an option for redemption after ten years, and the debentures will carry 5½ per cent. interest. I may say that I do not anticipate that the trams will be purchased in any other way than by paying cash. I think it will be better business for the Trust and everyone concerned to pay the compensation in cash. There will

*Hon. E. G. Theodore.]*

be no difficulty, so far as I can ascertain, about financing the Trust. Certain preliminary negotiations have already taken place with the Commonwealth Bank, and there will be no difficulty whatever.

Mr. KING: Will the Advisory Board be retained after the payment in full.

The PREMIER: I do not see the necessity for retaining the Advisory Board after the payment is made in full. Once the Government liability is discharged we have no right to impose our conditions on the Tramway Trust. I might make some reference to the financial prospects of the Trust. Those who have been actuated by the desire to advance the interests of the Brisbane Tramways Company to get an extension have been holding out very gloomy prospects regarding the successful management of the trams under a Municipal Trust. I do not hold those views at all. I am satisfied that the Trust has good prospects. It will have to appoint a competent manager, who will be given a very free hand, just as any ordinary company would do in the same kind of business, and it is bound to prove successful. It has always been assumed that the compensation to be paid will be a gigantic amount. The basis of the compensation is to be determined by the tribunal. The tribunal will be impartial, and one can reasonably expect—we can have no grounds for expecting anything else—I am speaking now with a full knowledge of the legal opinions we have from the highest and most eminent counsel—that the compensation will be nothing more than a reasonable figure, and can easily be taken up with every confidence by the new authority.

Mr. MORGAN: There is the right of appeal against the decision of the tribunal?

The PREMIER: There is the right of appeal on all legal points. The tribunal will settle questions of fact.

Mr. SZER: What about the question of goodwill?

The PREMIER: The question of determining the goodwill will be a question of fact, and that will be settled by the Queensland tribunal. The question of goodwill will be decided in Queensland. This question, fortunately, will be cleared up, because we have laid it down in this Bill that it shall be determined by the Full Court.

Mr. KING: The goodwill is a question of law.

The PREMIER: The amount, if any, which shall be paid is a question of fact.

Mr. KING: No, the question of goodwill is a question of law.

The PREMIER: It is provided in this measure that the Full Court shall determine the basis upon which compensation is to be paid. It shall also determine the person or authorities who shall award the compensation. That will tend to clear up a whole sea of difficulties that would arise without this provision in the Bill. I have already mentioned that the Bill is based practically on a scheme which has been operating in Adelaide for many years. A municipal trust manages the trams there quite successfully, so far as I have been able to ascertain. The measure of their financial success is set out in their balance-sheets.

Mr. TAYLOR: Did they construct them?

[Hon. E. G. Theodore.]

The PREMIER: No, I think they were purchased, but I am not quite certain about that. Up to 1907 they were horse trams, and I believe they were purchased by the Government, and a municipal trust was created which constructed the electric trams. They have had sole control since February, 1907, and up to July, 1919, their revenue amounted to £4,466,878; operating expenses to £2,341,874; payments to reserves for renewals to £160,202; payments to sinking funds to £368,364; and interest on capital expenditure to £597,975; leaving a small deficit of £1,539. So that they operated the trams during the whole of that period, paid full interest on capital, put £368,364 to sinking fund, and £160,202 to reserves. It was a financial success, although in Adelaide they have 65 street miles of tramway as against 42 in Brisbane. What can be done in Adelaide on a big capitalisation can be done in Brisbane.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The fares are very much higher in Adelaide.

The PREMIER: I am not able to say. The sections are long ones.

Mr. KING: They have no Commissioner of Prices there.

The PREMIER: The Commissioner of Prices has not fixed fares here. At any rate, there will be no necessity for the Commissioner of Prices to fix fares here, because the trust will control the fares, and the members of the trust will be directly responsible to the people who elect them.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: The Government will control fares under this Bill.

The PREMIER: Only under certain circumstances.

Mr. KING: Will you make it clear that they will be actually beyond the control of the Commissioner of Prices?

The PREMIER: I do not mind doing that. I think that can easily be conceded, because any elected board who have control of charges of that kind are answerable to the people who pay the bill, and, if they screw too much out of them, they can be turned out at the next election.

Mr. KERR: What is the object of making the ratepayers responsible for any loss?

The PREMIER: I do not know how you could make the users responsible for any loss. The Bill follows entirely the scheme of the Adelaide Act in that respect. It is quite obvious that the general taxpayers of Queensland should not be out of pocket. Provision is therefore made that in the event of any deficit the trust can levy on the rates to discharge their obligations to the general taxpayers of the State, but I do not suppose there will ever be any necessity to do that, although it is provided for in the Bill and in the Adelaide Act.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Does the Act give the trust power to control motor buses?

The PREMIER: No, I do not think it is proposed to do that; but, as a matter of fact, the city council or the other local authorities in the metropolitan area have that power, and this trust is only another local authority in the same area. If the motor buses are unfairly competing with a public utility, the councils concerned can regulate them, and I think we can safely leave it to them.

Mr. TAYLOR: Did your Valuation Commission Board make an estimate for possible renewals that are required almost at once?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. TAYLOR: Would you have any objection to stating it?

The PREMIER: I do not know that I can. The only objection I have to revealing the information is that these documents are bound to be used in the proceedings which will fix the compensation before the tribunal to be decided upon, and the Crown Law Office advises that it is inadvisable to give the information. It is like giving your case away to your opponent. That is the only objection I have. What personal objection could I have? We are only concerned with protecting the pockets of the people who are to pay.

Mr. SIZER: When you refer to compensation, it still leaves goodwill to be assessed?

The PREMIER: No; it covers goodwill—the whole purchase cost. If goodwill is not allowed by the court, it will not be included by the tribunal which will fix the compensation. Compensation means the final purchase price covering everything to which the company are entitled. I am sure that the leader of the Nationalist party will not mind my quoting his own remarks with regard to the Tramway Purchase Bill in 1918. I do not desire to take any advantage of him or score a point against him. I heartily endorse the remarks which he made then, and remind hon. members of what he said on that occasion. Speaking on the second reading of the Brisbane Tramways Purchase Bill (“Harvard,” page 1467), he said—

“I think that if the Government will put a clause in the Bill to take over the present manager of the Brisbane Tramways Company, and give him full and free power to run the tramways, there is a probability that they would make a success of it. It is a successful affair at the present time, but it is doubtful what may happen if the Government get it, although I am certainly in favour of the Government owning the tramways.”

At page 1468, he said—

“I do not intend to offer any opposition to the Bill, because I realise that the people are asking for this public utility to be dealt with as part of other public utilities. I support the Bill.”

If all hon. members considered this matter, not in a party spirit, but with a desire to arrive at the best possible solution of a position that exists now and which has to be remedied, they would agree that this scheme which is being put forward by the Government is the most favourable one that could be propounded. I do not say that the Bill is word-perfect. If there are defects in the measure, I am quite prepared, on behalf of the Government, to consider any suggestions for the amendment of those defects. I beg now formally to move—

“That the Bill be read a second time.”

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

#### BRITISH IMPERIAL OIL COMPANY'S TRAMWAY AND WORKS BILL.

##### INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Kirwan, Brisbane, in the chair.*)

Mr. PETRIE (*Toombul*): I beg to move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be

introduced to authorise the British Imperial Oil Company, Limited, to construct, manage, maintain, and work certain lines of tramway and certain pipes, conduits, and other works in, along, over, under, and across certain public roads within the Shire of Toombul, in the State of Queensland; and for other consequential purposes.”

I take this opportunity of thanking the Premier and the Government for the courtesy they have shown to me in asking me to bring in this Bill, and I thank the Premier for his offer to facilitate its passage. For the information of the Committee, I may state that the British Imperial Oil Company, which is incorporated as a joint stock company and is registered under the British Companies Act of 1886, is carrying on business within this State for the purpose of importing, storing, treating, and packing oils and other commodities. The company have secured freehold property at Pinkenba, which is shown on the plan attached to the Bill. It comprises 23 acres of land. They have also leased from the Government, under the system of perpetual leasehold, six blocks, for which they are paying an annual rental of £66. The company are so situated that there are several roads that are not really very much used, and, in order to carry out their operations, they have had to construct two tramways across those roads, I think in five different places. The Bill is really a technical one, and is so drafted that it will be followed without any trouble. The company say they will erect wharves, I suppose of reinforced concrete, and, instead of bringing out their oil packed in tins and barrels, the crude oil will be brought out in bulk and tanks will be constructed, and the oil will be pumped from the tanks to the premises which will be erected on the freehold portion of the property. They will spend thousands of pounds, and will provide a great deal of traffic for the railways. The trams will run in one direction towards the wharves, and in the other direction towards the Pinkenba Railway Station.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: What is going to happen if they strike oil at Roma?

Mr. PETRIE: It is time to deal with that matter when it arises.

The PREMIER: My experience is that it is bad to give too much information at this stage.

Mr. PETRIE: At the outset of my remarks I did not intend to give so much information. On the second reading of the Bill I shall be glad to furnish any further information that may be desired.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was agreed to by the House.

##### FIRST READING.

Mr. PETRIE: I beg to present the Bill and move—

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

Question put and passed.

The second reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.