

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.**

Wednesday, October 28, 1953.

The PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir Walter Duncan) took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

**WHEAT INDUSTRY STABILIZATION  
ACT AMENDMENT BILL.**

Received from the House of Assembly and read a first time.

The Hon. R. J. RUDALL (Attorney-General)—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The Bill provides for the continuance of wheat marketing by the Australian Wheat Board for the next three wheat harvests and, incidentally to this, for fixing the home consumption price to be charged for wheat during the next three years and the mode of determining the price to be paid by the board to growers. The Wheat Industry Stabilization Act of 1948 has now expired except so far as it continues to apply to wheat of previous seasons. This Act was part of a Commonwealth-wide scheme providing both for orderly marketing and price stabilization. Orderly marketing was secured by the establishment of the Australian Wheat Board and the enactment of laws in all States requiring growers to deliver their wheat to the board and requiring the board to sell it and distribute the proceeds among the growers. Price stabilization was secured by a Commonwealth guarantee of a price not less than the cost of production, the guarantee being supported by the creation of a fund to which the growers themselves contributed through the medium of taxes on wheat. This marketing and stabilization scheme, however, has now completed its statutory life and will not, unless renewed, apply to the coming season or thereafter.

The present Bill contains the proposals which have, so far, been agreed upon between the Commonwealth and all the States in relation to wheat of the three next seasons. This agreement is limited at present to orderly marketing, but the possibility of obtaining a price stabilization scheme is by no means to be ruled out. Price stabilization is still being considered by the Commonwealth and the States; but as a stabilization scheme involves a levy on wheat which is borne by the growers, it is generally accepted that no such scheme should be introduced until it has been submitted to the growers by ballot and approved by the majority. The Government is still hopeful that agreement will be reached

on some price stabilization scheme and will be willing to introduce legislation for a poll on this subject as soon as that becomes practicable.

On the subject of orderly marketing, clause 10 provides that the marketing scheme will continue until September 30, 1956, that is to say, it will cover the wheat of the next three harvests and growers will continue to be under a duty to deliver their wheat for sale to the board. The home consumption price of wheat during that period is provided for in clause 9. The basis of this price will be the International Wheat Agreement price, or 14s. a bushel, whichever is the lower. As wheat is now being sold under the terms of the new International Wheat Agreement at prices between 16s. 4½d. and 17s. 1½d. a bushel (according to destination) the immediate practical effect of the clause will be that the home consumption price will be 14s. a bushel for wheat of fair average quality free on rails at ports. This price, however, is subject to alteration in the light of two factors. One is that if the home consumption price determined in the way I have mentioned is less than the cost of production, such price will be raised to a sum equal to the cost of production. The cost of production from year to year will be determined by the Commonwealth after consultation with the States. In working it out the Commonwealth authorities will assume that the cost of production in the season 1952-1953 was 11s. 11d., and will make such variations in that amount as are justified by altered costs in each season. It does not appear likely at present that the proposed price of 14s. will have to be modified in the near future on the ground that it is below the cost of production.

The other factor which will affect the home consumption price is a surcharge of 1½d. a bushel or some other small sum as a contribution towards the cost of shipping wheat from the mainland to Tasmania. It has been agreed, as part of the marketing plan, that the home consumption price of wheat in Tasmania will be the same as on the mainland and, in order to secure this, it is necessary that the home consumption price of wheat generally shall be increased by a small amount in order to provide funds to pay the freight on wheat shipped from the mainland to Tasmania. The Bill provides for varying the amount of 1½d. a bushel if that figure should prove to be too high or too low. The Tasmanian freight account will be kept separately; and if, when the present Bill ceases to operate, there is any balance in that account it will be applied for the benefit of the wheat industry.

The provisions as to the determination of the price to be paid by the Board to growers are set out in clause 8. The basis of the price is, of course, the pooling of the net proceeds of the sale of all wheat of each season delivered to the board throughout Australia. The Bill provides that before dividing the net proceeds among growers, the board is to deduct a sufficient sum to pay a premium of 3d. a bushel on all Western Australian wheat which is available for export to places outside Australia. The object of this is to give Western Australia the benefit of the higher returns which it can normally get for its wheat because it is nearer to overseas markets than the other States, and its overseas freight rates are consequently less. The balance of the pool, after providing for the Western Australian premium, will be divided among the growers in proportion to the amount of wheat delivered by each of them to the board. Due allowance will be made for differences in the quality of wheat, transport charges, carriage of wheat to the terminal port from the place where it is delivered to the board, and any other necessary adjustments in particular cases. The Bill also provides for advance payments to be made to growers with the approval of the Commonwealth Minister.

The other amendments made by the Bill are of minor importance. Clause 4 contains consequential amendments only. Clause 5 strikes out some references to the acquisition of wheat by the board which are not necessary, and may lead to constitutional difficulties in connection with the interpretation of the Commonwealth Act. Clauses 6 and 7 deal with the monetary penalties for offences in connection with non-delivery of wheat or unauthorized dealings with wheat. The maximum fine for any such offence is thrice the value of the wheat in respect of which the offence is committed. In order to clarify the meaning of the expression "value of wheat," these clauses provide that the value to be taken into account will be that certified by the board as the value of the wheat on the basis of the board's prices in the State at the time when the offence was committed.

It will be seen, therefore, that although the Bill may appear complicated the basic principles of it are quite simple, namely, the continuance of an orderly marketing scheme for three years, and the maintenance during that time of a home consumption price for all purposes based on 14s. a bushel, subject to reduction if the International Wheat Agreement price shall be lower than that figure, and

also to the principle that the home consumption price shall not be below the cost of production.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—The Opposition realizes that this is an important Bill. During the past few weeks I have endeavoured to ascertain from the Government its intention regarding this legislation, which is not a stabilization Bill but is really a prices Bill. I was informed that the milling interests would be considered when the legislation was introduced. Members will not be able to amend the Bill; they have, in effect, been told that they must accept or reject it and it would be futile for any member to try to amend it. Although it goes against my grain I will support it, but in so doing will offer some criticisms. I have no intention of being personal, but I submit that there are other sections of the community which should be considered as well as the small section referred to in the Bill.

Orderly marketing is part of the policy of the Labor Party. Some people refer to it as socialistic, but despite the protests of leading lights of the Liberal Party, the Bill is similar to legislation advocated by my Party. I appreciate the problems of the farming community and recognize that a producer should receive a fair return for his labour and should not be asked to accept less than the cost of production.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Do you think that is a basic axiom?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The man on the land is entitled to consideration and should receive fair payment for his labour. I am not pleading for a section of the community but for everybody and particularly for industry. It is no use making awards if work is not being performed and no use establishing industries if we are not prepared to help them. I have not had the opportunity to travel overseas and study all aspects of world trade, but I have had a long association with the wheat industry, particularly the milling industry, and feel competent to express an unbiased opinion. I am fighting this issue for the employer as well as the employee.

We frequently hear how generous farmers have been to the community, how they have made sacrifices and have been fleeced by the Australian public because they have not been getting the overseas price for home consumed wheat. I ask country representatives and farmers whether they have heard of farmers' relief, debt adjustment, the flour tax or of

consumers having had to make financial contributions in order to keep men on the land? I do not want members to forget that when the farming industry was kicking against the wind Parliament and the taxpayer came to its assistance, which was quite right. There are many people who are prepared to look after just one section of the community, and it is time somebody said something about these matters. Although probably I will not convince anyone except my own colleagues who are already convinced, I will at least put the true position and ask this House to assume its responsibility, which is not only to one section but to the community as a whole.

The first proposal in this Bill was for a price of 15s. for home consumption. Over a period of a few years prices from 18s. to 20s. 8d. were obtained for wheat outside the International Agreement. The Australian Wheat Board has done a wonderful job, and I pay tribute to the work it has accomplished. That, however, does not stop me as a public man from offering a little constructive criticism, and I say that the board has shut the gate after the horse has left the stable. In one week there have been two reductions in the price of wheat, but if these reductions had taken effect at the right time, further sales of wheat and flour could have been made overseas, which would have meant employment to men in the industry. There have been further reductions, obviously due to the action of the British Government in not coming into the International Wheat Agreement because it was not prepared to pay fictitious prices. It was prepared to meet the position as it arose, and its attitude shows that people are beginning to realize that far more benefit can be derived by keeping out of the agreement. When the price of 15s. was proposed, there were objections from Victoria and Queensland. This scheme would be of no value at all if it were not uniform. Therefore when it was suggested that the price should be reduced to 14s. a bushel, the matter was further considered and finally the States concerned decided to agree to legislation fixing the price at 14s. The home price for wheat at present is 11s. 11d. a bushel. This will be increased to 14s., which will mean over £4,500,000 to the farmers of the Commonwealth.

The Hon. W. W. Robinson—The price this year on the cost of production basis would be 12s. 6d.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Yes, but you still want 14s., and unfortunately you have forgotten other industries that will be affected.

In 1951 almost 40,000,000 bush. out of a total of 80,000,000 bush. of wheat were consumed in the Commonwealth as flour and other things associated with that industry and approximately 51 per cent of the wheat milled was exported as flour. The consumer, by paying an additional 1d. or 1½d. a loaf, although nearer 1½d., put £4,500,000 in the hands of the farming community, and although I am not objecting to that, I ask what will happen when the price of wheat falls below 14s. The worker will be called upon to pay the extra amount and, although I am not objecting to that, I do object to the court depriving the flour milling industry employees not of 2s. or 3s., as in other industries, but 4s. a week, by reducing their wages.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Is the honourable member sure that “reducing” is the correct word?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Yes, because 4s. was the quarterly adjustment under the flour milling industry award. I am waiting to see whether there will be a corresponding decrease in the cost of living. I have read in the press that if producers cannot obtain an attractive price for potatoes they will not sell them here, and also that the farmer will not plant wheat if he cannot get a satisfactory price. These things cannot be disputed. We have the Landlord and Tenant (Control of Rents) Bill before us. Will the workers get any benefit out of that? They will be called upon to meet increased costs while at the same time their wages are pegged. I ask what the Government intends to do about this pegging of prices? Why not carry it a little further and strictly control the prices of all commodities, because if it is fair to peg the workers' wages it is equally fair to peg all prices?

The Hon. W. W. Robinson—What if they are falling?

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—They want it both ways.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I do not. What I am complaining of is that it is all one-way traffic today.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—It is honourable members opposite who want it both ways.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—They are so used to having it that they would be disappointed if they could not continue to get it, and that is the whole trouble in this place. Our friends believe in looking after themselves and no one else.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—That is not true, and the honourable member knows it.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I will try to show that it is true. It is all very well for the Government and its supporters to talk about increased population and the setting up of towns of 10,000 people, but they do nothing to prevent the closing down of industry. What did they do to prevent the Balaklava flour mill from closing down? What does this Parliament care about the employees who have been thrown out of work? Has any attempt been made by the representatives for that district to do anything about it? We are told that this legislation will improve the position, but can any one tell me how it will?

The Hon. E. H. Edmonds—The honourable member says that it has been responsible for the unemployment in the milling industry, but he has not told us why.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Because the Australian Wheat Board is controlled by the Federal Government and neither my friend nor any other member has lifted a finger to help the milling industry. The Balaklava mill is only one of many. It had been working for nine years and its weekly wages bill was £620, but today only one man is employed. In its store are 30,000 bags of wheat that will have to be transhipped to Port Adelaide because there is no more work for the mill. The same applies to the Victory mill at Port Adelaide; they are two of the largest mills in the State, but that touches only the fringe of the question. During the time I have been in Parliament, and while we have been helping the wheat industry, over 43 mills have ceased to operate and 37 of these were in the country.

The Hon. L. H. Densley—How many farmers went out?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I do not know of any section of the community from which more people have been able to retire. A few years ago farmers complained because they were compelled to seek debt adjustment. Those same farmers today are complaining because they have to pay as much as £4,000 in taxation. The farming community has rendered a wonderful and valuable service to the Commonwealth, but there are two sides to the question. What surprises me is that the captains of industry in this place have done nothing in support of the milling industry. As a Parliament we have done nothing to meet the situation, but have simply looked after our own interests. I realize that Australia would not be much of a place to live in but for the efforts of the pioneers who went out and worked so hard to develop it, but I do not forget that other people worked just as hard.

Flour milling employees have one of the best records in industry in Australia and have done everything asked of them. They produced flour for overseas countries during times of stress and trouble and the finger of scorn has never been pointed at them in over 44 years, yet these men, some of whom are nearing the retiring age, are faced with unemployment. What is to be their reward for efficiency, loyalty, devotion to duty? Nothing but unemployment. Although I am supporting this Bill I think I am quite justified, as a worker's representative, to put their point of view as I see it. The employers, too, have done everything to reduce cost of production by efficient methods and the introduction of modern machinery. I do not want to hurt anyone's feelings, but an industry that can manufacture 2,335,000 tons of flour, bran and pollard in one year should be sympathetically considered. The dairying and poultry industries have been handicapped by the high prices of bran and pollard and they will get some relief, but the mill employees will get nothing. Have we not some obligations to them? Should not we have some regard for the welfare of all sections of the community? I fear, however, that today we are looking after the interests of only one section. Three years ago, when prices were at their highest, the South Australian Government subsidized the railways to the extent of £220,000 a year in order to give cheap freight on wheat.

The Hon. W. W. Robinson—And cheap freight on coal, too.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—In doing that we, as taxpayers and consumers, helped the farmer and the woolgrower. During the past few years the farmer has been receiving high prices for barley in particular, and oats. Today we propose to fix the price of wheat for three years at 14s. a bushel. Farmers will revert to wheatgrowing and I do not blame them. It has been stated by the Government that last year we had a record crop of 33,000,000 bush. but only 11 years ago we harvested 48,000,000 bush. I trust that the farmers will enjoy further records and decent prices, but I also hope that they will not be narrow-minded and think only of one section. That is why I put forward this plea today for an industry that does not seem to get much sympathy from Parliament despite its excellent record. It has not received credit for the part it has played in supplying overseas countries. Much is said about wheat production but little about the manufacturing industry. I believe in giving credit where it is

due and no man should be expected to toil for long hours without receiving due reward, therefore, if tomorrow the cost of production figure were proved to be too low I would support an increase. Although this Bill cannot achieve my desires I hope that in the not far distant future the Government will consider my suggestions.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS (Northern)—This Bill deals with two specific subjects. It proposes the continuation of the Wheat Board as a marketing authority and, to ensure that, we must be partners to legislation which has been approved in the major wheat producing States of the Commonwealth. The board must have authority to become a member of the International Wheat Agreement and that is the main object of the Bill. At one stage it appeared likely that there would be chaos in disposing of the coming crop. Negotiations proceeded for some time with nothing definite being decided but happily an agreement was reached. Before we support a continuation of an organization for the marketing of wheat we should be satisfied that it has been successful in performing the functions entrusted to it. From my personal experience of the ramifications of the Wheat Board I have no hesitation in saying that it has performed a commendable service and we need have no fears in entrusting to it the handling of crops for the period mentioned.

The second object of the Bill is to fix a home consumption price. This continues the policy of the wheat industry decided many years ago and which arose from an agitation by wheatgrowers and other industries that they should receive a price commensurate with the cost of production. Those engaged in the industry had to have recourse to financial assistance from the Government and private institutions. In his criticism Mr. Condon was apparently confusing cause and effect. The application of palliatives to relieve the industry was necessary because there was no guarantee of it receiving a price based on cost of production. I have lively recollections of farmers' assistance, drought relief and debt adjustment which in good faith were made available in an endeavour to help the industry out of the doldrums into what it had been forced through there being no cost of production price for the goods produced. At present the industry is in a more happy position because of similar legislation to this which has been enacted over the years. People should not imagine that, because prices are considerably in excess of what they were

between 1933 and 1936, it is entirely a question of what price is to be received because it must be recognized that the cost of production has increased and increases have been progressively guaranteed under wheat stabilization, which is contributory to this Bill.

This Bill does not deal with the stabilization of the wheat industry but has for its purposes the continuance of the activities of the Wheat Board as a marketing authority and the enabling of Australia to become a party to the International Wheat Agreement and to fix a home consumption wheat price. The question of this legislation being tied up with the International Wheat Agreement is important but is at times overlooked. Not long ago I heard a person who should have known better suggest that the International Wheat Agreement was not worth the paper it was written on. He also said that he had never seen a copy of the agreement and did not know its contents. The organization established under that agreement is an important factor in the marketing of wheat. It comprises 37 importing countries and five exporting countries and the quotas to be purchased and sold are fixed under the agreement. At present Australia's quota is about 70,000,000 bushels, and it is under an obligation to provide that quota to the importing countries which desire to purchase it.

Some people believe that we would be better off were we to revert to the old marketing system under which individual merchants were entrusted with the responsibility of handling the crop. As a grower I always received fair treatment from those with whom I did business under the old system but I think we have passed through that to another phase of marketing. In the early days of this State farmers had to export their own crops but later merchants acted as intermediaries in the sale of crops overseas. From that stage we have developed to the present set-up which has an international aspect. That was the set-up when war broke out, and it was necessary for the Commonwealth authorities to take action under war security regulations. We then passed to this other phase in which we had the Australian Wheat Board, the continuation of which is proposed by this Bill.

Mr. Condon referred to the wheat industry and those engaged in it. I did not take his remarks as being of a personal nature; I and other members always listen with great interest to him when he speaks on the wheat industry

or the milling trade. However, I was disappointed that he did not elaborate his point that in some way the setting up of the Wheat Board, and those engaged in the agricultural industry, were responsible for the somewhat unfortunate conditions existing in the milling industry today. I endeavoured by way of interjection to obtain from him more specific information on where the trouble lies, because he appealed to us to support him in his plea for both employers and employees in this industry. Is the trouble in the milling industry because it is not able to secure all the wheat it wants? Why is there trouble and why is there unemployment in this industry?

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Because the Australian Wheat Board sells flour and the farmers control the board. The trouble is because they do not reduce the price earlier.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—The selling of the flour is a matter between buyer and seller, because a seller cannot dictate whether the buyer should accept wheat or flour.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—But that has been done for 12 years.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—I have an open mind on the matter, and I assure the honourable member that all representatives of country districts are just as interested as he is, so he should indicate more clearly how we should rectify the position he objects to. Although I could elaborate more fully on various aspects, I do not propose to do so because it seems to me that the two specific matters to be determined are whether we are in favour of the crop being handled again by the Australian Wheat Board for another three harvests, and whether we are satisfied with the provisions made for the home consumption price. I entirely agree with these two matters and I therefore support the Bill.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH (Central No. 1)—I support the Bill and in doing so compliment the speakers who have taken part in this debate. Whilst discussing the question of orderly marketing, it is as well to remind honourable members, as my colleague did, that this proposal has always been in the forefront of Labor's policy. Mr. Edmonds quoted figures and facts this afternoon, but he will readily realize that in 1930-31 our wheat sold overseas at world parity at much less than the cost of production.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—At what price was it sold locally?

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—This Bill deals with the fixed price of 14s. under the International Wheat Agreement, it permits the

international price to obtain, and will provide the stabilization which was brought in by the Curtin Labor Government.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—I thought your Leader said this was not a stabilization measure?

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—It is to the extent that it provides for orderly marketing and a home consumption price of 14s., thus making a stable price in this and other States so that there will be no rivalry between them. Although I agree that primary producers should receive the full reward for their labours, it is well to remember that those employed in the industry are not protected, and that wheat cannot be grown unless labour is applied to the land and to the garnering of the crop after Providence has provided a good year. The Industrial Code of this State does not protect workers engaged in rural industries, and has not fixed any standard wage, the wages paid being fixed by agreement between employer and employee. In 1938-39, 28,981 males were employed in rural occupations, and in 1940-41, 26,487. Presumably those figures include members of the family, but there would be a large proportion of casual labour engaged in wheat production. Although I do not object to the farmer receiving the full reward for his labour, I submit that in such a measure as this the Government should protect employees in the industry, and should make provision for the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition regarding the milling industry. No other section of the industry played a more prominent part in the war effort, because it provided one of the essential foodstuffs for the armed forces.

The Hon. W. W. Robinson—What does the honourable member suggest should be done?

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—Some provision should be made, as suggested by the Leader, for the stabilization of the industry similar to the proposal we are discussing this afternoon. The wheat industry has had a very chequered career. In 1949-50, 1,896,324 acres of wheat were under crop, 1950-51, 1,847,791, and in 1951-52, 1,613,126—a decrease in acreage of 283,198 acres from 1949-50.

The Hon. W. W. Robinson—What was the production per acre?

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—It was much higher. The reason for the decrease in acreage planted was that farmers went in for barley, which it was their right to do, but now they are going back to wheatgrowing. The

value per acre in 1949-50 was £10 15s. 9d., in the following year £12 6s. 9d., and in 1951-52 £14 0s. 9d. The yield per acre in 1940-41 was 6.97bush., and in 1951-52 it rose to the highest reported yield of 16.92bush. The average price per bushel today is about 17s., so that despite the reduced acreage, production values are much higher today than for many years.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Does the honourable member consider that last year's production per acre is anything to go on? It was a freak year.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I accept these figures, and I see no reason why the honourable member should not. I do not consider it was a freak year. These figures are compiled from reports of the Agriculture Department and others who are in a position to know the facts, and they say that this year there will be a record harvest.

The Hon. A. L. McEwin—The honourable member should not make any prophecies now.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I am not making any prophecies, only repeating statements made by people who are in a position to know. The average price in 1951-52 was 16s. 7½d. In 1947-48 the price was 15s. 5½d. so I say that the wheat industry is in a most buoyant position and if the protection is to be extended to it in the shape of orderly marketing—which is Labor's policy—some consideration should be given to extending the Industrial Code to afford protection for workers in the industry. Those referred to by Mr. Condon in the milling industry are worthy of sympathetic consideration.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY (Southern)—After listening to this debate I am not sure whether the wheat industry is in a buoyant position or falling down on its job. The fact remains, however, that we are fortunate enough to produce wheat and we want to market it in an orderly fashion. The growers are quite happy about the activities of the Wheat Board. They believe that the several pools have been cleaned up in reasonable time and that the returns have been entirely to their advantage, contrary to what they might have been under other circumstances. Mr. Condon made a lot of the position of the milling industry, but when he said that the farmers had contributed a wonderful and valuable service to the Commonwealth I think he expressed his true feelings. The fact that Australia has not continued to grind as much wheat as he might desire is a

question of costs; not the cost of growing wheat, but the cost of milling flour, and if an overseas country can buy wheat and mill it and have flour at a cheaper rate than it can buy it here no one can blame it. Consequently, the cure is in the hands of the industry.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Would it be possible that others work a bit harder and longer?

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—They can produce flour more cheaply. The subsidy to the wheatgrowers of £220,000 a year in the shape of concessional railway freights mentioned by Mr. Condon is infinitesimal compared with the advantage gained by the consumers, which was as much as £35,000,000 to £40,000,000 in one year on the home consumption price for wheat. Therefore, it does not seem that Mr. Condon has made out a very strong case against the farmer. The fact that there are 30,000 bags of wheat in the store of the Balaklava mill is proof that there is no shortage of wheat. No matter how much farmers have reduced their wheat acreages he cannot lay any blame in this matter at their door. They have produced wheat and have located it at the site of the mill to the extent that there is a surplus of 30,000 bags, so I think that answers that point. Throughout last season we heard continual reference to farmers falling down on their job, and as an answer to that I quote a recent statement by Dr. Callaghan:—

South Australia has always played a reasonable part in earning credit for Australia. Wheat, oats and barley produced totalled nearly 67,000,000 bushels last year, which exceeded the previous record by 11,000,000 bushels. Substantial quantities of wheat and barley have been available for export.

That is the complete answer to the propaganda of members opposite against the farmer during the last few years, and I hope that they will now admit that the farmers have done what has been in the best interests of the State and the Commonwealth. Having produced wheat they desire to market it and a board has been set up for that purpose. The old institution of selling wheat through merchants has gone and it would be difficult at short notice to reintroduce it. Although the procrastination by two Labor-controlled States delayed ratification of the International Wheat Agreement and the setting up of this board, we are now able to do it and farmers are happy to give full support to this measure. I support the Bill.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 to 4 passed.

## Clause 5 "Powers of board."

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—Mr. Edmonds criticized me for not giving more information today. I thought I had done it previously. The Australian Wheat Board was set up by the Commonwealth Parliament, but after a couple of years the Curtin Government changed its personnel. I strongly objected to that at the time. It removed Mr. Harold Darling and another member and I said then that I thought it only right that members of the board should be men of business ability. I do not know whether Mr. Edmonds is aware of the powers of the board. Its function is to sell wheat and flour, and the millers are merely agents. The miller does not sell flour. The Wheat Board allocates to each State a proportion of the market; South Australia's share is 13 per cent. Recently, the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation waited on the Federal Minister for Commerce and Agriculture and objected to representation of the milling industry on the Wheat Board. It consists of 12 men and the farmers have eight representatives yet they urged the Government to dismiss the mill-owners' and the mill employees' representatives, so I say that the men who are behind this Bill have shown their prejudice against

the milling industry. To the credit of the Federal Minister, Mr. McEwen, and Sir George Jenkins, they refused this request, but it reveals the prejudice of the farmers against the other section. For a number of years the Wheat Board in making sales of wheat and flour abroad has been able to insist on the buyer taking a certain proportion of flour. When the overseas price was 17s. a bushel they could have made sales at 16s. 9d., but unfortunately did not do so and have had to take 16s. 3d. Mr. Densley referred to remarks by Opposition members, but I remind him that what the Opposition has said here Sir George Jenkins said at the meeting of the Australian Primary Producers Union. He gave them a straight talk about production and everyone doing a little more, and probably I got my cue from him.

Clause passed.

Remaining clauses (6 to 10) and title passed.

Bill reported without amendment and Committee's report adopted. Bill read a third time and passed.

## ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.37 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, November 3, at 2 p.m.