

wealth Prime Minister asking whether the wool-growers there had come to any decision, and I received a reply yesterday that the matter was still under consideration. In Australia they are therefore practically in the same position as we are here. I think, gentlemen, you understand the whole position. You will gather from the cables I have read that Mr. Massey and Sir Joseph Ward are of opinion that, taking all the circumstances into consideration, you should accept this offer of a 55-per-cent. increase on the 1913-14 prices. I shall be pleased now to hear anything you have to say about it.

A DELEGATE: When shall we be paid for the wool?

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: As soon as the wool has been valued and declared to be up to average condition you will be paid in cash. You deliver your wool to a store to be named—to whatever mercantile firm you have been in the habit of consigning it in the past—and then it is valued. As soon as the valuation is complete you will be paid.

A DELEGATE: Have we a voice in the valuation?

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: That is a point for consideration. Probably the farmers, for their own protection, may consider the advisability of setting up a committee to go into that matter.

Mr. KINROSS WHITE: I move, That the offer of the Imperial Government be accepted. There is no doubt the Imperial Government have very good reasons for making their offer on a percentage basis, and I do not think they should be handicapped in any way. The price is more than a fair one, and I think it ought to be accepted without demur. There is no use haggling over it. Haggling can only lead to unpleasantness, and already some feeling has been created throughout the Dominion in the minds of people who are not concerned in wool.

A DELEGATE: I beg to second the motion.

Mr. PEARCE: It seems to me the motion is entirely out of order. I thought we were here simply to ask questions and gain all the information we could before coming to a decision. It will be remembered that at the first conference the Minister retired and left us to talk it over amongst ourselves.

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: There is nothing against the moving and seconding of a motion now; but still, if the conference wish to go into committee, elect their own chairman, and consider these proposals, I shall be very pleased to give you all the information I can now and retire. It is for the conference to decide. I may say I have here a table worked out by the Department showing approximately how the prices that will be obtained if the present offer is accepted will compare with the prices offered by the last conference and with the January, 1914, prices. [Copies of table distributed.]

Mr. PEARCE: When I spoke I simply had in mind the procedure you adopted, sir, the other day. I quite understood that this was a continuation of the other conference, and we have already a chairman of the conference. I have no objection to your remaining in the room, but the other day you decided to retire. Now, there is one question I should like to ask. You will remember that at the last conference the committee, amongst its resolutions, passed the following unanimously: "That this committee is against the principle suggested of an addition of 55 per cent. as being very unfair to some classes of wool." That resolution of the committee was afterwards adopted unanimously by the whole conference. Did you, sir, inform Mr. Massey to that effect?

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: I have read to you the cablegram I sent to the Prime Minister. In it I stated distinctly that the farmers were absolutely against the percentage basis.

Mr. ACTON-ADAMS: It seems to me we are drifting into a false position. I think the conference should affirm the principle that it is acting merely in an advisory capacity to the Minister. We have no mandate from anybody to deal with their wool. We are only here to advise. I move accordingly.

Mr. VAVASOUR: I agree with Mr. Acton-Adams that we should be placing ourselves in a very invidious position if we were to assume that we had a mandate from the wool-growers. We only represent certain numbers of wool-growers, and it would, I think, be a mistake for us to assume any responsibility in the matter. At the same time I think it will be plain to the Minister that we are willing and anxious to give him all the assistance and advice we possibly can.

Sir W. C. BUCHANAN: I think the question now being raised is one which is not before the meeting. We all know we have no mandate so far as the Imperial Government or the New Zealand Government are concerned. We are here to express the opinion of the wool-growers in those parts of the Dominion from which we come.

A DELEGATE: The resolution moved means an offer of the wool.

Sir W. C. BUCHANAN: No, I take it that the resolution means that this conference is of opinion that the offer of the Imperial Government as detailed by the Minister should be accepted; and I for one do hope that the conference, in view of the information it has obtained from the previous meeting and now from the Minister, will now without delay unanimously accept the proposals. I am quite as strongly as Mr. Pearce against the percentage principle, as under it it is impossible to make it fair to all concerned; but we are not here to dictate—we are here merely to do the best we can as representing the wool-growers in all parts of the Dominion. But apart from the percentage there is no doubt that the proposal of the Imperial Government gives an unfair advantage to certain classes of wool as against other classes. Well, the Imperial Government is responsible for the proposal, and if it thinks it is fair on the average we are not to blame for that. And while the fine wools grown in some parts have an undoubted advantage, there is this to be said: that the fine wool grown is a very small percentage of the total wool grown in the Dominion. I think, therefore, that we should do well to sink any difference we may have in our minds in regard to that and let it go. I strongly favour the resolution now before the Chair, and I hope the conference will pass it unanimously.

A DELEGATE: With regard to the table of comparative values just handed round, I would like to ask the Minister what they really represent. At the last conference we were furnished with