

had no authority from the growers to accept the prices offered, yet finally the matter was fixed up satisfactorily. I urge the meeting to accept what is a fair and reasonable proposal.

Mr. KELLY: Sir James Wilson has unwittingly misrepresented me. The figures he perused last night referred to some 12,000 bales of different wools, and the difference, taking the whole series, was 2d. per pound. The Government's offer of 45 per cent. on the 1913-14 values was 2d. short of what last year's values would yield. For 44/46's the difference is 2½d.; 44's, 2¼d.; 40's, 1¾d. 36/40's, 1½d. There is a reduction of 1d. per pound in the case of the 36/40's; and therefore the proposal does not work out equitably on the basis of the last year's values.

Mr. ADAMS: I do not propose to remain in the conference to vote one way or another on the main proposal. I think many delegates have the same intention. We want to ascertain, however, what position we are in, and therefore we should affirm what principle we are sent here on.

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: There was not a great deal of time to convene the conference, but I sent out telegrams in the direction of merely affirming the principle of the proposal, and then I communicated with the sheep-breeders asking them to select delegates to attend this meeting to finally decide the question.

A DELEGATE: Have they done so?

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: Yes, in many places. The position has changed since we met last, in regard to the Imperial Government's offer, and the industry is well represented here to-day. If, therefore, you are not prepared to come to any definite resolution for or against the proposal I do not see any use in sitting here any longer. Mr. Adams has taken up a wrong position, seeing that the new prices are known and are an improvement on the previous offer. This is a representative gathering, and we should be able to vote on the subject. It is not a matter of one man being compelled to sell his wool at an unfair price. There are a great many things bearing on the subject I could tell you that I do not want to mention at present. When I did explain one or two matters the other day I was told I was threatening the conference; but there are questions connected with shipping and freight that have a material bearing on the main subject. However, if this conference merely desires to act as an advisory board, then all I can say is that I do not want any advice. I ask for a resolution from the conference accepting or rejecting this amended proposal.

Mr. ADAMS: You should not put us in a wrong position.

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: I am prepared to accept my responsibility as to the principle of the proposal.

Mr. POLSON: I have had some experience of a question of this nature at a prior conference of freezing companies, when they fixed the prices of meat for the New Zealand farmer without consulting him, and also fixed the price of meat-storage in a manner quite satisfactory to themselves. I am a farmer as well as having something to do with the freezing companies, and speak without prejudice. But I do not wish to see the state of affairs which occurred then take place again. What happened then was that New Zealand for twelve months accepted prices for its meat very much lower than the prices ruling in Australia.

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: I would ask you to stick to the wool question.

Mr. POLSON: As Sir James Wilson referred to the point I wished to combat his contention. The matter touches the question of representation, because we are not in any way representative of the farmers—certainly not of my part of the Dominion. Only to a bare extent do some of us here represent the farmers, the bulk of whom are not even aware of this meeting taking place. Certainly, the backblocks farmer does not know about it. In connection with the meat question statements have been made regarding our patriotism in comparison with other parts of the Empire—during the last twelve months—and I do not wish to see a similar position arising in regard to the wool. Mr. Adams is right in the attitude he has taken up. We are here to give you our advice as a body of men; but, having heard that advice, it is for you, naturally, of course, to take the responsibility. If we proceed on those lines we can carry out the business there is to do quite well and reasonably. We can advise you as a body, and Mr. Adams can stay here without consulting any of his fellow sheep-breeders. You can then act on our advice, or not, as you choose.

Mr. PERRETT: Some delegates did consult others interested in wool-growing, by telegraph.

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: In my opinion we are quite representative of the farmers; but if some districts are not represented and you wish to wait until they do send delegates here you will do nothing. We are perfectly entitled and able to decide what action we ought to take, and we must keep away from side issues.

Mr. FIELD, M.P.: The question of side issues has been raised, and as to whether we are representative of the farmers; but it is impossible to get such representation as can be considered thorough and complete for the purpose of conveying to a conference the expressed wishes of that body of our settlers. We ought to be all the more careful, therefore, in assuming that responsibility lest we make mistakes and not do the right thing.

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: I am afraid you are not speaking to the resolution before the meeting. The amendment is that this conference is not coming to any decision with regard to the wool, but that the delegates have just come here to advise me. I do not know what they are going to advise me on; but I am here to submit proposals from the Imperial Government to purchase the New Zealand wool-clip, and if Mr. Adams thinks this is not a representative conference, or that any resolution passed should not be binding on the sheep-farmers, he can vote for the amendment.

Mr. FIELD, M.P.: I am against the amendment.

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: And the conference is against it. Why therefore beat the air by talking further about it?

Mr. McQUEEN: I was under the impression when I left Invercargill that this conference was for the purpose of hearing possibly another offer from the Imperial authorities, and of deciding