

2. In connection therewith, in view of the importance of the proposal, I desire to consult freely representatives of wool-growers and all interested in the wool industry.

3. I have therefore invited representatives to meet me to-day to consider the proposals which the Government have received.

4. The proposals are: That the Imperial Government accept as a basis the average price realized for each quality of wool for the season 1913-14, and is prepared to pay an advance of 45 per cent. thereon. Delivery to be made at either port, railway-station, or store as approved by the Government of New Zealand.

5. All handling-expenses from the point of delivery decided upon to be borne by the Imperial Government.

6. I am further advised that, in the event of the whole of the wool not being required for military purposes, the surplus is to be placed on the open market, and if it should be that a profit is realized, half of such profit is to revert to the New Zealand wool-growers, but if any loss results the whole of such loss will be borne by the Imperial Government.

7. The terms of payment will be prompt cash on delivery.

8. It is also intimated that as a condition of the requisition all existing contracts shall be cancelled.

9. For the information of the conference I am able to make it known that the necessary transport will be arranged by the Imperial Board of Trade.

W. D. S. MACDONALD, Minister in Charge.

Mr. VAN ASCH: Is the wool to be valued by the experts at different ports, or is every producer to be paid 45 per cent. more than he received for his wool in 1913-14? Supposing I sold my wool at the first sale that season for 10d., and my neighbour at the next sale got 1d. more, will the latter obtain the 45 per cent. on his extra 1d. rise, or will the whole of the wool sold that season be revalued for the purposes of the present proposal?

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: I take it that the price will be based on the average prices of the different classes of wool for the 1913-14 season, which will be the maximum price throughout. If one man gets "panicky" and wants his wool sold here, while another wishes his clip shipped Home, it would be impossible to deal with all such individual cases. I take it the price is going to be the average price for all grades of wool. That will be the average price for the North Island. Probably the finer first half-breds and Corriedales of the South Island will be assessed on a different basis altogether. I have not gone into that question, but the Government do not wish to force the sheep-farmers to agree to anything they do not clearly understand, and I suggest that after the proposal has been considered and debated the wool-growers should select a committee from this conference, and that the wool-buyers and also the brokers should do the same—and probably the fellmongers and other kindred industries might each like to appoint a similar committee—the mercantile firms, the freezing companies, and the banks are also interested. It is the wish of the Government to allow everything to proceed through the same channels as previously. Mr. Massey's cablegram gives all the information I have, and is as follows: "9th November, 1916.—Myself, Ward, and Mackenzie met in conference with the representatives of the Imperial Government with reference to the proposed requisitioning of all New Zealand wool. Imperial Government willing to pay 45 per cent. increase on average price of each quality of wool season 1913-14. Delivery to be made either at port, railway-station, or store through the Government of New Zealand. British Government pay cost of dumping and incidental handling. From June the British Government requisitioned all the British wool at 35 per cent. increase on the 1914 price, and the French requisitioned the whole of their country's wool at 25 per cent. over pre-war rates. In the event of the whole quantity of New Zealand wool not being required for military purposes, surplus to be placed in open market. If profit realized one-half such profit to go to New Zealand; if loss, whole of the same to be borne by the Imperial Government. Terms, prompt cash on delivery; all existing contracts to be cancelled." I think that the average price will be readily ascertained. The value of crossbred wool was from 11d. to 11½d. in 1913-14. The wool bought by the majority of buyers is graded, say, A, B, C, D classes, and the buyers pay an average price for different grades; they work out their own average table and know the result. Those are all the points I need refer to. If there are any matters connected with the price about which you wish to have more exact information it will be a simple matter to cable for it, and your decision can be deferred until you are finally satisfied by a reply from Mr. Massey as to what is the exact position.

Sir W. C. BUCHANAN: The first step to be taken by this conference would appropriately be to back up the dominating note of the Minister's forcible speech—viz., that this meeting is unanimous in its support of the steps proposed to be taken by the British Government as outlined in the proposal now before the meeting, and which the Imperial Government deem it necessary to take in connection with the needs of the Empire. I think this conference should pass a unanimous vote—I am sure it will—in this matter, and thus back up the action of the Imperial Government and their Allies in this great crisis. I will therefore move, That this meeting desires to express its wish to support the Imperial Government in every way possible in order to assist in the successful conclusion of the war.

Mr. BOYLE: I have much pleasure in seconding that resolution.

Sir J. G. WILSON: As one of the older pastoralists and members of the farming community I should like to support Sir Walter Buchanan's motion. If the British Government does really require our wool for Imperial and war purposes—and it is evident that it does require this help to enable it to win the war—then we should all agree to the proposal as far as we possibly can, provided the matter is properly arranged and that the arrangements are satisfactory.