

whether we would accept it or not. If, therefore, any delegate reckons that we do not represent the growers he should retire from the meeting. I regard myself as a representative of the growers—I am one myself—and we should at once decide the question. I support the original motion. I am against Mr. Adams's amendment entirely.

Mr. Adams's amendment negatived.

Mr. FIELD, M.P.: I do not think that we can do better than follow the excellent practice of setting up a committee—probably the same committee as before would do—to report at a later day. They would digest the figures, and ascertain whether the 55 per cent. is good value for all classes of wool. I represent many backblock settlers, many of whom will lose from 1d. to 2d. per pound for their lower-class crossbreds if they accept the present offer.

Hon. Mr. MACDONALD: We set up a committee at the last conference, and they worked out some figures, but afterwards came back and asked the Government for their figures. Every man has got a set of figures of his own manufacture, but he cannot vouch for them. Therefore, what is the good of humbugging the conference in this connection? No man can submit absolutely accurate figures for the whole wool-clip of New Zealand. I have obtained returns from all possible sources, and they all differ from one another. I can give the conference our own official figures; but I am confident that the whole of the sheep-growers know the position, and that the majority of those here represent the feelings and aspirations of the people concerned. But there are one or two men in this meeting who do not voice the opinion of the sheep-farmers. I would like you to settle down to business, stop wrangling, and see if we cannot arrive at a reasonable decision, because the longer we talk the more intricate the position will become.

Mr. LYSNAR, M.P.: I think the present offer is a satisfactory one, but the basis of working is what we require to consider, and the mover and seconder of the first resolution should seriously consider that aspect before committing themselves too far. I have some figures here—not my own—that indicate that there is very little difference between what the last conference offered and what the Imperial authorities desire us to accept now. They are based on the January values. I suggest that the Minister of Agriculture should give us a set of figures that we can accept as a basis, because it is impossible to expect every farmer to tell from his records what he obtained for his clip in 1913-14. The difference amounts to, on a working basis, 2d. per pound on the prices we are giving in New Zealand. The last conference's offer, and the mean of the present offer, are as follows:—

Superior half-bred	..	..	..	..	19½d. in each case.
Medium to good half-bred	..	..	..	..	17d. and 16½d.
Inferior half-bred	..	..	..	..	14d. in each case.
Superior crossbred	..	..	..	..	18½d. and 16½d.
Medium to good crossbred	..	..	..	..	16½d. and 15d.
Inferior crossbred	..	..	..	..	13½d. and 12¾d.
Lincoln and Leicester	..	..	..	..	15¾d. and 14¾d.
Lambs, good	..	..	..	..	16¾d. and 17¾d.
Lambs, medium	..	..	..	..	13¾d. and 14½d.

There is therefore a distinct gain taking the whole range of prices, but it is a question of what basis we should work on. I think we should take the Government's values and proceed accordingly. The cry naturally is being made, and will be made by socialists and labour organizations, that we are getting 55 per cent. on pre-war prices, and therefore they can readily claim the same percentage of increase in the case of wages. It has even been hinted that the wharf lumpers will not handle our wool if we do not agree to the Imperial Government's proposal, and I give the rumour for what it is worth. But it matters very little to the Imperial authorities so long as we accept the proposal on their figures. The Hon. Mr. MacDonald read the telegram from Mr. Massey, in which reference was made to the 55 per cent. basis. But what does the Prime Minister actually say—I took the words down from his cablegram—"he does not think there is much difference financially one way or the other." Let us settle down to work, favourably consider the Imperial offer, and then set up a committee to ascertain how it will work out having regard to to-day's values. A man who sold fine wool in 1913-14 at a certain price might realize more for it to-day, and *vice versa*. The committee could fix the prices and take the responsibility of saying to the people here, "The value of your wool to-day is so-and-so; and this committee has recommended the conference to accept so-much below its value." Then it goes forth to the labour and other organizations accordingly. Will the Minister give us a basis of working of what he considers fair average values for 1913-14? We could then appoint a committee to find out the present values, work from that point up to the 55 per cent., and then take that margin and work downwards, and it might mean that we shall be making a concession of from 12 to 20 per cent. on to-day's values. The offer being made to-day is better than the previous one. Sir James Wilson is anxious that the 55 per cent. offer should be accepted, and I think it is generally recognized that it is a good offer. It is only a question of how the matter should be handled.

Sir W. C. BUCHANAN: This is the second proposal of the Imperial Government. We must all realize that the Hon. Mr. MacDonald is merely an agent—he is not able to decide; it is the Imperial Government that is going to decide. But it must come home to every one at this conference that if we depart materially from the second proposal that has come from the Imperial Government there will be no further appeal to us. It is quite useless for Mr. MacDonald to send another proposal back: I feel absolutely sure of that. I have already expressed my opinion with regard to the percentage; but we have the fact that the percentage is being applied to the Australian clip—