

reserves, as well as when dealing with proposed alienations, the department has in mind constantly the need for protecting and regenerating timber for local requirements, and considers that this can best be done by issuing permits over reserves or vacant Crown lands reasonably adjacent to the applicant's holding, rather than requiring applicants to travel considerable distances to reserves specially set aside for settlers' requirements, with corresponding increases in transport costs to the settler.

Under those conditions I should think it would be far preferable for settlers to be able to obtain their timber requirements close to their own holdings rather than to be compelled to travel many miles to secure timber from one or other of the reserves classified in the old days for settler's requirements. To proceed —

Members of the field staff are unanimously of the opinion that it would prove more equitable and satisfactory to abolish free settlers' permits in the South-West and charge a flat royalty rate to applicants who require timber from State Forest, Reserves or vacant Crown lands. Persons holding land with the timber reserved to the Crown are entitled under their lease to take timber required for improvements on such holdings and will not be affected by these proposals insofar as the timber on their own holdings is concerned.

As the majority of landholders in the South-West have timber on their own holdings, the number of permits issued annually is not very great, and, if a reasonable rate of royalty were charged throughout, the revenue raised would probably not amount, at the present time, to more than £250 to £300 per annum. On the other hand, considerable saving in officers' time would be effected and control generally facilitated.

In view of those circumstances, it was recommended that free settlers' permits in the South-West be abolished and a schedule of rates of royalty to be charged on each class of split and round timber generally required by the farming community, ranging from fence and strainer posts, vine stakes, to poles for sheds, etc., be drawn up.

In view of the explanation furnished by the Forests Department it seems to me that there is little of which to complain. The average settler in the South-West does not suffer from a shortage of posts and usually does not require to replace them frequently once his holding is developed. I am convinced that the new regulation will not prove the hardship suggested by Mr. Thomson. After all, it is merely a matter of a penny each for fencing posts. I recognise, of course, that every few shillings the settler has to find represent an additional strain upon his resources. This is a small matter

and in view of the supervision that is necessary if we are to maintain our existing timber resources in the South-West, and if the Forests Department is to continue the policy it has pursued for years past in an endeavour to regenerate the forest growth in areas indiscriminately cut out in the past, the House should not disallow the regulation.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.11 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 11th October, 1911.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURE.

Shortage of Farm Labour.

Hon. N. KEENAN asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is he aware that the shortage of labour on farms in some districts of the State is so acute as to render most precarious the harvesting of the crop? 2, In view of the impossibility of obtaining labour in the usual manner will he make representations to the Commonwealth authorities to allow approved enemy aliens now in detention to be liberated on parole to carry out this work; such enemy aliens to be paid the usual wages and to enjoy the usual conditions now in force? 3, If approved, can this scheme be carried out expeditiously?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, Yes. 2 and 3, The whole matter has been taken up with the appropriate Common-

wealth Minister and the Commonwealth Departments. The Government expects an early report from Mr. Stiffold who also presented our case in the Eastern States.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS.

Water Haulage, Great Southern Towns.

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What has been the cost per annum, over the last ten years, to the Western Australian Government Railways of freighting water from any outside sources to the railway centres of Narrogin, Katanning, and Wagin? 2, What items are included in these costs?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1 and 2, The information, which is not readily available, is being obtained and will be supplied to the hon. member.

QUESTION—PETROL.

As to Quality.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Industrial Development: 1, Is he aware that complaints are being made about the quality of the petrol now being supplied to consumers? 2, Are there any means at the disposal of the State Government for ensuring that the quality of petrol supplied is kept up to standard? If so, will he take any action necessary? 4, If not, will he make representations to the Commonwealth Government regarding this matter?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT replied: 1, Yes. 2, No. 3, Answered by No. 2. 4, Yes.

QUESTION—GAS PRODUCERS.

Fire Risk and Fuel Quality.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Works: 1, In view of the danger to roads and surrounding country when clinker and hot ashes are removed, without efficient protection, from producer gas plants, will he take steps to provide uniform by-laws to ensure protection from fire? 2, Further, will he do what is necessary to ensure that charcoal sold for producer gas requirements is of a defined quality and suitable for the purposes required?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The position is met by the Bush Fires Act Amendment Act, 1940, and by Regulations made under the Traffic Act. Subsection (50) of Section 204 of the Road Districts Act gives road boards power to make by-laws regulating the dumping of hot ashes in any place, and for the prevention of damage by burning, and several boards are now moving in the matter. 2, The matter is receiving active consideration.

QUESTION—SUPERPHOSPHATE, ETC., SUPPLIES.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is he in a position to state that the widespread fear that the coming wheat and general production season will be marked by a shortage of superphosphate and other fertilisers, including potash and sulphate of ammonia, is without justification? 2, If not, what steps does he propose to take in rationing, or otherwise, to ensure consideration to all growers, including those who at present may not be in a position to meet the anticipated cost?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, I am not aware of a widespread fear that shortage of superphosphate and other fertilisers will seriously affect the coming wheat and general production season. Taking into account the various factors affecting the demand for superphosphate, it is believed sufficient supplies of this fertiliser will be available in Western Australia for next season's operations. 2, The question as to anticipated supplies of various fertilisers has been investigated by the Department of Agriculture. We have the benefit of some confidential information and the position regarding the general supply of fertilisers is being watched carefully. A system of rationing suitable to Western Australian conditions already has been examined.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Weights and Measures Act Amendment.
- 2, Abattoirs Act Amendment.

BILL—POTATO GROWERS LICENSING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th October.

MR. HILL (Albany) [4.37]: I support the second reading of the Bill, which has been desired by the potato industry for many years. At present 30,000 tons are produced in Western Australia, of which about a quarter is grown in the Albany electorate. I am not a potato grower but I have often thought of a little conversation that took place many years ago in my orchard. Mr. G. W. Wickens was passing through, and he remarked, "Before you put in a crop of potatoes you need to toss up to decide whether to take a ticket in Tattersall's or to sow the crop." It is appalling that such an important industry should be compared to taking a ticket in Tattersall's, but I am afraid that there is justification for the comparison.

The object of the Bill is not to introduce marketing control or to impose a burden on the consumer. It is simply designed to enable growers to organise to assist their own industry. As you know, Sir, practically every industrial interest has its trade union. Fruit growers have a fruit growers' organisation, but the fruit growing industry is very different from the potato growing industry. When undertaking fruit growing a man has to realise that he is entering the industry for life. We have our organisation which, before the war, was financed by a levy on all fruit exported. The potato growing industry is far more difficult to organise. A potato grower can be in and out of the industry within six months and much of the trouble has been caused by what might be called these occasional growers.

The Bill does not set out to introduce marketing control but, as I have already stated, its aim is to assist the industry. For the sake of argument, let us say that over a certain period the consumption is 6,000 tons. The production may be 7,000 tons. That extra 1,000 tons is just sufficient to cause the price to collapse. When the industry is properly organised, it will be possible to regulate the supply to suit the demand. In most cases, with proper organisation that would very easily be achieved. For instance, when the supply was greater than the demand it would be a comparatively simple matter, if there

were proper organisation, to regulate the grade of potatoes placed on the market. At present there is no organisation at all.

Periodical statistics are available but there is no one to whom the Government can look from the standpoint of co-operation with the growers, nor is there any association of growers that can be authorised to approach the department. If the Bill is agreed to, a board will be appointed comprising one Government official and two representative potato growers. The duty of that board will be to take the necessary steps thoroughly to organise the industry. Then there is the question of co-operation with growers in the Eastern States, which has also to be considered. I have attended meetings of growers at which it has been necessary to pass round the hat in order to secure funds with which to defray the expenses of a delegate. Under the provisions of the Bill a fund will be established from which money will be available for any purpose that will be of general benefit to the industry as a whole.

When the Bill is dealt with in Committee one or two minor amendments that are desirable may be discussed by members. On Friday last when the Minister for Agriculture was at Albany he took the opportunity to meet potato growers, with whom he discussed the Bill. Its provisions were favourably received by the growers, who are anxious that the legislation shall be passed. Members representing growers in other parts of the State will be able to express their views on behalf of their constituents, but I am confident that the real "dinkum" potato grower in this State desires the passing of this legislation. I ask the House to support it so that the growers will be in a position to assist themselves and, by so doing, to conserve the interests of the State as a whole.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [4.42]: I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill. In my electorate there is a considerable number of growers who for a long time past have urged the necessity for the introduction of this type of legislation. As the Minister pointed out when moving the second reading of the Bill, similar legislation has been enacted in other States and is working satisfactorily. I have no doubt that if the Bill under discussion becomes an

Act its provisions will be of considerable benefit to the potato-growing industry here, and will certainly help the producers. The Minister explained that the Bill had been introduced mainly at the request of the Australian Agricultural Council and of some growers' organisations. I know several organisations that have been active in this matter and have been most anxious for the introduction of the legislation. The Minister explained that if the Bill is agreed to, it will enable records to be kept of the quantities of potatoes produced, which will furnish an idea of the quantities available for marketing; it will assist departmental officers to contact growers, and will provide funds for the development, protection, and improvement of the market, not only within the State but for export purposes as well.

A Bill along similar lines was introduced in the Legislative Council during the session before last by the Hon. H. V. Piesse, and I take this opportunity to pay a tribute to the work of that hon. member in connection with the potato-growing industry of Western Australia. Not only has he travelled throughout the State and attended scores of meetings of growers, but he has journeyed throughout the Eastern States as well and has returned with a wealth of information regarding the industry. I feel it has been very largely because of the efforts of Mr. Piesse and his close association with potato growers and their organisations in Western Australia that we have this legislation before us today. I received a letter from one of my constituents in which he points out that the Bill sets out to indicate who will be permitted to obtain licenses, and he says—

In my opinion the licensing of growers is the most important part of this Bill because it has very far-reaching effects inasmuch as under regulations which can be prescribed under the Bill elections are bound to take place to elect growers' representatives in their organisation and therefore it wants to be laid down very definitely who is a grower and a full description of him.

Those associated with the industry in my district are very perturbed at present regarding the large number of foreigners who are engaging in potato growing. Members know that in my electorate there are the irrigation areas and in the Hamel area in particular the foreign element has practically taken control.

I have received letters from people operating in that district who are most concerned regarding the position of Nestles, which firm manufactures condensed milk, drawing supplies from the producers of milk. So much of the land in the district has been taken up by foreigners for potato growing that the quantity of milk supplied to the factory has been considerably curtailed.

Mr. Withers: Did the foreigners take up the land from the Government or from private farmers?

Mr. McLARTY: From private farmers.

Mr. Withers: That makes a difference.

Mr. McLARTY: I do not think that matters so much as the fact that the foreigners are there in such numbers that the Britishers are very much in the minority. The land has been taken up with the one object in view—the growing of potatoes. Unless we pass legislation such as that under discussion, which will help in connection with the licensing and registration of growers, I can see very plainly that the Britisher who is making his living out of potatoes today will, in the near future, be in a very serious position.

Mr. J. Hegney: That position applied in the timber industry years ago.

Mr. Fox: It applied in the mining industry and your party supported the move.

Mr. McLARTY: The mining industry operates under an award of the Arbitration Court which fixes the rate of wages. Unfortunately that does not apply to the potato growers.

Mr. Fox: You cannot go down a mine unless you are grown up.

Mr. McLARTY: It is mostly grown-up people who grow potatoes. I would like from the Minister an indication as to whether the Bill contains any provision under which the foreign element could be dealt with. I ask him if a foreigner is to be licensed just the same as a Britisher?

Mr. Marshall: Yes.

Mr. McLARTY: In Tasmania a board similar to that which is proposed in the Bill before the House is operating successfully.

The Minister for Agriculture: Are you referring to foreigners or to naturalised British subjects?

Mr. McLARTY: Some of those people may be naturalised, but many are not. I know, of course, that a foreigner who becomes naturalised is no longer a foreigner.

Mr. Withers: Do those people own the land or only lease it?

Mr. McLARTY: Some of them own their land, while others are merely leasing it. I was referring to the creation of a board in Tasmania, which is one of the greatest potato-producing States in Australia. Similar legislation to that now before the House has been in operation there for some time, and, as I have stated, a board has been set up in that State. There is no question about the tremendous amount of good that has been achieved by the potato board in Tasmania. I am told that potatoes from that part of Australia are fetching £4 to £5 per ton on the Sydney markets more than are potatoes from Victoria. The Tasmanian board insists upon the correct grading of potatoes, upon their being dug at the proper time, upon their being free from disease before being exported, and upon their being of first-class quality.

Potatoes from Tasmania are not allowed to go on the market unless they fulfil those conditions. The board is certainly entitled to any credit that may be associated with the potato industry in that part of Australia. From the operations there we can assume that a similar body, if created in this State, will be of equal value. As pointed out by the Minister for Lands, there is every indication that under proper control Western Australia will become one of the most important potato exporting States. The quality of the commodity we grow is exceedingly good, and is equal to anything of the kind grown elsewhere in Australia. This State produces more potatoes per acre than does any other State, and indeed our yield is greater per acre than it is in any other State.

The Minister suggests that two persons who are licensed by the Agricultural Department shall be appointed to the advisory committee by the Governor-in-Council, and that they, together with an officer of the department, shall constitute the authority. I understand that everything is working satisfactorily in New South Wales under the Act that is in operation there. In that State, however, the Minister for Agriculture has power to authorise the payment of these fees for purposes similar to those set out

in the Bill before us. In other words the Agricultural Department bears the cost of issuing the licenses, whereas the Bill we are dealing with places that cost as a first charge upon the license fees. In my opinion the cost should be borne by the Agricultural Department. I should like the Minister to tell us what revenue he expects to derive from the payment of license fees. That is something we ought to know. The Minister should be able to give us some idea of what the collections will amount to. He should also be able to tell us what the cost of administration will be. Potato growing in the South-West is an important industry.

Wherever that commodity is grown the land is improved. Potatoes are grown best on the best of land, and wherever there has been a potato crop the pastures, because of the heavy manuring and fertilising, have remained good for years afterwards. Those who have discussed this question with Mr. Piesse know his opinion is that sufficient potatoes could be grown in the South-West to feed the whole of the population of Sydney. That will indicate to members how important the industry is and the extent to which Western Australia will benefit from its development. There should be some method of control, not from the point of view of price-fixing, but from the point of view of supplying the market in an orderly manner, particularly during the glut period when there is an over-production. I should like to refer to the internees' camp at Harvey. I noticed that questions were asked in both Houses with regard to the quantity of potatoes grown by the internees and what is being done with the crop.

I was glad to see a statement by the Minister that it is not intended that those crops should enter into competition with legitimate growers. There appears to be no objection to internees growing sufficient potatoes for their own requirements, but I do not approve of their being allowed to grow potatoes in competition in the markets with legitimate growers.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Are they not supplying the adjoining military camp?

Mr. McLARTY: I believe that is being done, and to that extent the internees are competing with our growers. I think they should confine themselves to the growing of potatoes for their own requirements.

The Minister for Mines: They would not require to grow many potatoes to do that.

Mr. McLARTY: A good many internees are in camp there.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Bill contains no reference to internees.

Mr. McLARTY: I know that meetings of the Federal Potato Advisory Council have been held from time to time and that good work has been done by that body. Western Australia was represented by two people. One of them was Mr. Piesse and the other was Mr. Burvill of Albany. The latter is a practical potato grower. I have no doubt both our representatives did good work. My view, however, is that the principal potato growing districts of this State should also be represented on that body. I understand the Minister invited a South-Western potato grower to represent that portion of the State on the council.

With regard to the Western Australian committee, I take it that the first two representatives will be appointed by the Minister. I do not see how that can be altered. I hope in future, however, that provision will be made for the election of the representatives of the producers. I can foresee some difficulty in that regard. In this State potatoes are grown over a wide area. As the member for Albany (Mr. Hill) said, there are many growers in his electorate. We also have many others in the South-West, and there are some in the metropolitan area. At a later date it may be necessary for the Minister to agree to more than two producers being represented on the committee in order that representation may be given to the various potato-growing districts. The Minister could perhaps adopt the suggestion made by Mr. Piesse when he introduced a Bill similar to this in another place. That suggestion was that the definition of potato grower should include the man who is growing a quarter of an acre of potatoes, not half an acre, provided that those potatoes are grown for sale. The man who is growing a quarter of an acre of potatoes must intend to sell some of them. The cost of registration will be very small.

Mr. Fox: If a grower had a big family they could eat all the potatoes.

Mr. McLARTY: The area should be a quarter of an acre, not half an acre.

Mr. Withers: Why not eliminate them altogether if you are going that far?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McLARTY: A man is entitled to grow a small area of potatoes. No one wishes to stop him, nor does this Bill propose to do so. But if he sells potatoes he ought to be licensed and pay a fee.

Mr. W. Hegney: Suppose he barter the potatoes with a storekeeper?

Mr. McLARTY: If he does, he is getting something in return and is consequently selling. Therefore he ought to be licensed. If growers are not to be permitted to license themselves, the whole scheme will break down and the Bill will be of little use.

I again express my thanks to the Minister for having introduced the Bill. I know his object is to help those engaged in the industry; there is no question about that. The future is uncertain for the growers, and they ask for this legislation so that they may organise themselves and be able to ascertain where and in what quantities potatoes are being grown. It is not proposed to fix prices for the product that will be prohibitive to the consumer; there is no hint of that in the Bill and consequently members need not worry themselves on that score. I repeat that the Bill is introduced with the object of helping the potato grower to get a payable price for his product and of enabling him to organise for the future.

MR. STUBBS (Wagin) [5.2]: I have listened with great interest to the addresses delivered in this Chamber during the last half hour. I am in complete concord with the aims and objects of the Bill, which are to stabilise an industry that for many years has laboured under serious disadvantages. Although there are no potato growers in my electorate I have had considerable experience in past years of the industry, having been born in a district in Victoria where potatoes were produced in enormous quantities. In fact, 70 years ago nearly all the potatoes grown in Victoria came from the Warrnambool district, the volcanic soil of which produces the best potatoes that can be grown. We have not many areas in Western Australia with volcanic soil for the production of tubers of that quality.

The Minister for Mines: What about Bungaree?

Mr. STUBBS: To my own knowledge we have at least three or four kinds of potatoes; some are good, some medium and some damn bad.

The Minister for Mines: That is unparliamentary!

Mr. STUBBS: Potatoes grown in swamp land—as I know from dearly-bought experience—are not of good quality, yet they are foisted on the markets of Australia. Growers ought not to be permitted to sell them. If one buys a truck load and keeps them in one's store for a week or two, it becomes necessary to hire an undertaker to cart them away, because one cannot stay within a mile of the smell.

I do not desire to criticise people for growing potatoes in swamp land; but the public has the right to be consulted and protected in this matter. I am 100 per cent. behind this measure, provided there are proper safeguards. If anyone doubts my assertion as to the quality of potatoes now sold to the public, I invite him to attend the open markets in the metropolitan area, where he will see potatoes exposed for sale on stalls at 3 lbs. for 6d. These potatoes have been washed. I bought some of them, boiled them for three-quarters of an hour and then found that I might as well try to cut a piece of wax. The potatoes had no flavour whatever. Potatoes grown in districts where the soil is suitable become as white as the driven snow after they are boiled, and fall to pieces like flour.

The Bill is an excellent one and should receive every consideration and fair play. At the same time, provision should be made to ensure that potatoes marketed are wholesome and represent fair value for the money which the public will be asked to pay for them. This measure is certainly not designed to rob the public. It is designed, however, to give the man who works 16 hours and more a day a reasonable chance of obtaining a fair return for his toil. A lifelong experience warrants my saying that I agree with the remarks of the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty), who said that potatoes grown in volcanic soil in Tasmania bring as much as £4 and £5 a ton more than do potatoes grown in other parts of Australia. My advice to the potato growers of Western Australia is that they should carefully consider what variety of potato they will plant, the suitability of the soil and the climatic conditions, because all these are big factors in the maturing of a marketable tuber. By so doing they will produce a potato that will be 100 per cent.

nutritious, instead of the potatoes now sold, which are only from 15 to 20 per cent. of what they should be; their quality is such that the public is not getting fair value in purchasing them. With proper safeguards in the interests of the consumer, I support the second reading.

MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson) [5.9]: I support the second reading because I have been asked to do so by some of the potato growers in my electorate. I desire to pay a tribute to Mr. Piesse for the great amount of work he has done, and the expense in travelling that he has incurred, in endeavouring to place the potato growers on what he considers is a proper basis for the future. In fact, he worked so hard in this matter last year that he became ill. I am afraid of some of the aspects of this Bill. I do not believe, and never have done so, in class legislation, nor do I stand for restrictive legislation. Before I give the measure my whole-hearted support, I want the Minister to inform me whether every farmer—every man on the land—is entitled to plant an area with potatoes provided he makes application to the proposed board, or whether this Bill is designed to restrict the growing of potatoes to those growers who have already established themselves in the industry. We are told the board is not to control the marketing of the product, but to control the area in Western Australia that may be planted with potatoes.

Without going into the merits of the dehydration of potatoes for sale overseas, I point out that there are unnaturalised Yugoslavs and Greeks in my electorate who are potato growers. Is it proposed that permission shall be given only to naturalised growers or to natural-born subjects of the King? What are we to do with the foreigners on our land? In many cases they have been established for ten or twelve years, are good farmers and have many children.

Mr. W. Hegney: It is time they were naturalised.

Mr. McLarty: They should be.

Mr. Willmott: Yes.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: My wealthy friends from Murray-Wellington and Sussex say these foreigners should be naturalised. They come to this State, live hard and work hard. They rear children. Many have five or six children, and have not £5 or £6 to

spare for naturalisation papers. They think they are in a free country and do not need to be naturalised. How many thousands are there in this country that are not naturalised? How many unnaturalised foreigners are there on our goldfields? I say distinctly that this Bill is class legislation and we must consider it most carefully. Again, a man on the land may have tried unsuccessfully to raise various crops and then decide to put in five acres of potatoes. Before he can do so, he must make application to the board for a license. Will the Minister inform me whether such a man's application would be refused? Is it proposed to stifle his effort and take away his liberty? He may be an Australian, not a foreigner.

We must be careful not to interfere with the liberty of the subject. I want to know the limits of this proposed registration. Suppose some members of Parliament owned land suitable for potato-growing, would they be licensed? Is it proposed to license only those growers who are now producing potatoes? The member for Albany (Mr. Hill) says that one-quarter of the State's production of potatoes is grown in the Albany district, but apparently the only good potatoes grown in Western Australia are produced in the Murray-Wellington district! As I say, I want the Minister's assurance that this Bill will not be class legislation. If I desire to be registered as a potato grower I should be licensed after I have made the necessary application, and so should every member of Parliament who so desires. As I say, we must not interfere with the liberty of the subject; and the man on the land is at his wits' end to make enough on which to exist. The Bill proposes to restrict the area of land that may be planted with potatoes this year.

The Minister for Agriculture: Sit down and read the Bill.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have read every line of it. The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) tells me that its effect will be to stop me and farmers from putting in half an acre of potatoes.

The Minister for Mines: A quarter of an acre.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Unless we are licensed. I have grown more potatoes than has the member for Murray-Wellington and know what I am talking about.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I do not want class legislation nor do I want restrictions. I want everyone to have a fair go. Why is the Bill wanted if there is to be no restriction? I support the second reading because I have been asked to do so by some potato-growers in the district I represent.

MR. WILLMOTT (Sussex) [5.16]: I support this Bill. A similar measure was introduced by an hon. member in another place in the previous session, but it did not reach this Chamber.

Mr. J. Hegney: What is likely to be the fate of this Bill in that place?

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Bill will receive every consideration there.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do you think that will be so now the Government has introduced it?

Mr. WILLMOTT: All the growers in my electorate have been asking for this Bill for some considerable time. They think the licensing of growers is a step in the right direction. It has nothing to do with price fixing, or anything of that nature. It merely licenses growers and gives them some status in the industry. The potato growers in my area are very keen that unnaturalised people should not be licensed. That is quite proper.

In the past, unnaturalised foreigners have taken land from other owners on the basis of clearing it for the purpose of cropping potatoes. That is one way in which farmers can get their land cleared, but it is not the right way because it floods the market against the interests of the legitimate grower—the farmer who makes his living by growing potatoes. If unnaturalised aliens will not be registered, the Bill is everything that is desired. When they become naturalised, and landowners, they can be registered.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [5.18]: I had no intention of speaking from the producers' point of view, but as a consumer of potatoes I must say a few words. I am rather surprised at the Minister introducing the Bill because, during last session he said he was definitely against boards. We have enough boards, he said. It was during the discussion on onions that he expressed that opinion. The suggestion of the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty), that the acreage will be restricted, raises a definite menace.

Mr. McLarty: I did not say that.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: The hon. member mentioned a quarter of an acre. Any decent-sized family could eat in one year all the potatoes grown on a quarter of an acre. I do know that in Ireland, and other parts of the world, five acres is considered to be very little. The member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) has talked about waxy potatoes as being objectionable. I think they are the most delicious potatoes on the market. Others in this House may think the same. Why should he decry waxy potatoes? There are certain times, on the other hand, when the floury potato is required.

Mr. Stubbs: What is wrong with orderly marketing?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I know this about orderly marketing, that at one time one could buy fresh eggs and now only shop eggs, and potatoes are coming to the same position. We may not be able to buy potatoes in the future as cheaply as at present. I bought 5lbs. for 6d. yesterday. That, perhaps, does not suit the producer, but it certainly suits the consumer. If this board is created, the Minister should make it independent; and one having nothing to do with producers. They should not have a representative on that board, but there should be a woman on it because she would know more than men do about potatoes from the consumer's point of view.

We are apt in this Chamber to think, when we create boards, only of the persons immediately concerned, such as the producer, in the case of a board dealing with primary products. The consumer is left out altogether. The Minister should not allow the acreage to be small. Even half an acre would be much too small. I hope he will consider these points when replying, and not be led astray by my friends on my right and my friends on my left.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [5.23]: It is my intention to support this Bill. I did propose to do that as a silent member, but I am constrained, in view of the observations of the last speaker, to make some reference to the measure. The member for Subiaco (Mrs. Cardell-Oliver) loses sight of the fact that it is not the producer who makes the high costs for the consumer. It is those people who, as a general rule, lie between the producer and the consumer. I had before me an example a while ago given by

Mr. Piesse, whose name has been mentioned as one who has studied the potato industry. He said that one day potatoes were being sold by producers at approximately £4 per ton. The following day he, for the purpose of getting evidence for the case he was preparing at the time, bought some in a shop in Perth at 2d. per pound, which is nearly £18 a ton.

Mr. Stubbs: That is quite true.

Mr. WATTS: In between the figure of £4 per ton and that of £18, something very serious is wrong. It is to that point that the member for Subiaco, and others who believe like her, should give their attention. It is no use telling me that the producer should receive £4 a ton and the retailer £18. If we are to continue to have producers of primary products in this State, it is essential that they be given an opportunity to get a fair and reasonable price for their products. If the consumer finds himself, after that fair and reasonable price has been paid, in the position of having to pay too much for the product, I suggest he makes inquiries among those who operate in the transport and sale and other ways of the article in question.

Many examples of similar happenings between the producer and the consumer could be quoted, quite apart from the growing and sale of potatoes. It is not my intention to deal with that, but I suggest to the member for Subiaco that she makes some inquiries along those lines. I for one would not see the consumer paying an excessive price for an article, especially when I know the producer is not getting a commensurate figure. I am most anxious to see that the consumer receives a fair deal, but I am more than anxious—nay determined—to see that the producer is not going to suffer because the middleman is receiving too great a figure.

I would like to refer to one or two aspects of the Bill, and the first is this: Why are applications for licensing to be made to the Under Secretary? I gather from the wording of the Bill that the board, or advisory committee, will, in consequence have no say in the licensing. No provision appears in the Bill to indicate who shall issue the licenses. I assume from the wording of Subclause (2) of Clause 3 it is the intention that the Agricultural Department, or the Minister for Agriculture, should issue the licenses. I may be mistaken in that belief, and if so the Minister can correct me. If that is the intention I suggest the Bill should

be amended to provide that the advisory committee should have some say in the licensing.

The Bill contains a provision, as pointed out by the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith), which would enable the licensing authority to restrict the number of those engaged in the growing of potatoes. Up to a point that may be undesirable, but it is surely well known that there is only a limited market for potatoes in Western Australia, and that in normal times the Eastern States can cope with their own demands. It is useless for us in Western Australia to go "Hell-for-leather," as it were, in the growing of potatoes; at least until we have substantially increased our population, or substantially increased our demand. Nothing in the Bill prevents unlimited licenses being granted. The licensing authority will have to bear in mind the need, if it ever arises, for an increase in the area under potatoes and take action accordingly. The advisory committee in these circumstances should have more say respecting the issue of licenses than appears to be given by the Bill.

It also states that the fund shall be used, first, in defraying the costs incidental to administration and so forth. No limit is placed on the proportion to be used in that manner. It has been suggested to me by one interested in the potato industry that the greater part of the money should be expended in the organisation of the industry and the encouragement of the use of the potato, which, if it be a good potato, is a very fine diet for human beings.

The Minister for Agriculture: Not if you are on the "Hay Diet!"

Mr. WATTS: Possibly that is so. But those are extraordinary people. When potatoes are good food for the majority of humans, and when there is a substantial quantity of them in the State it appears to me that we should take a leaf out of the book of some of our Eastern States friends, who utilise the funds required by legislation similar to this to advertise in a big way, and so increase consumption. We do not want to see too much money expended on the gentleman issuing the licenses. I was wondering if the Minister could give us an estimate of the amount likely to be derived from the license fees under this measure, and the proportion it is proposed to expend on the administration.

The Bill will serve a useful purpose. If it is administered as intended, it will do no end of good to the potato-growing industry in this State. It will not do any harm to the consumer, but it will do some good to the producer. It is, after all, the business of this Parliament to ensure, as far as possible, that every section of the community gets a fair deal.

MR. BOYLE (Avon) [5.30]: I support the Bill and commend the Government for having introduced it. We have been told by the member for Subiaco (Mrs. Cardell-Oliver) that we are getting too many boards; that boards seem to be the order of the day. Why, every business concern has a board—a board of directors. What bank or other organisation could function without a board? And when a measure such as this is brought down, who could be better directors of the scheme than the producers themselves?

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: What about the consumers?

Mr. BOYLE: Members on this side of the House have no objection to consumers being represented on the advisory committee. The principle has been recognised in the legislation of Victoria, New South Wales and New Zealand, where the consumers are given representation. I have never raised any objection to the consumers being represented on such a body. All that members on this side of the House ask is that there should be a majority representation of producers. The Bill provides for two representatives of the producers and a representative of the Department of Agriculture to form the advisory committee. I would be prepared to agree to the appointment of a representative of the consumers, and I do not think anyone would object to the consumers being represented on the board.

Hon. N. Keenan: On what board?

Mr. BOYLE: What is the difference whether we call it a board or a committee? Its duty will be to administer the Act. I object to the catch cry that we are being governed by boards. Consider the Australian Wheat Board; this body administers some £27,000,000 to £30,000,000 worth of wealth a year.

Whenever there is production causes a glut in the market, no raised by the consumers. On

I saw first-class potatoes sold in the Dardanup district for 35s. a ton. The producers could not hold them and the market was glutted. I saw those potatoes retailed in Perth at 1s. for 20 lbs., which works out at about £5 10s. per ton. The potatoes had been delivered in Perth at a cost of about £2 5s. per ton and the middlemen got about 120 or 130 per cent. profit on the sale of those potatoes. Housewives were only too pleased to get 20 lbs. for a shilling, but I did not hear one word of sympathy for the producers who had been compelled to sell their potatoes for 35s. per ton.

Mr. Stubbs: Quite true!

Mr. BOYLE: Slowly but surely we have been brought to a realisation of the fact that regimentation is the order of the day. Everything is regimented. We have our arbitration courts—and rightly so—which set a standard of living for the workers in industry. By this Bill an endeavour is being made to set up an arbitration court for the producers of potatoes.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [5.34]: I had no desire to contribute to the debate until the member for Subiaco (Mrs. Cardell-Oliver) referred to the remarks of the member for Murray-Wellington, who, I thought, made an excellent contribution to the debate. Members will agree that the world today is suffering from self-interest and greed. That spirit has been displayed during this debate. Because the member for Subiaco gets soapy potatoes—

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Waxy!

Mr. THORN: —and because she is afraid that the consumer might have to pay a little more for potatoes, she is greatly concerned. I have no desire to criticise her unduly, but this is one of our troubles. Potato growers, who have experienced great difficulty in making ends meet, have asked for legislation that will enable them to market their potatoes in the ordinary way and get a fair price for them. The potato grower is engaged in a very doubtful industry. Each year his crop is subject to climatic conditions, and often it proves a partial or a total failure. So he is asking for legislation that will enable him to market his product in an orderly way and get a fair return for it.

Mr. Doney: Potato growing is nearly as a lottery as is wheat growing.

Mr. THORN: That is so. For the information of the member for Subiaco, let me say that the high cost of primary products to consumers is due to the actions of the middlemen, who are getting far too big a cut.

Mr. Marshall: They are mostly at Subiaco, too.

Mr. THORN: After the product leaves the consumer it passes into the hands of middlemen, who have a very close combine. They do not make any sacrifices.

Mr. Stubbs: They have their boards.

Mr. THORN: Yes, and they are well organised. The least we can do is to support the Bill. As has been pointed out by the member for Albany and the member for Murray-Wellington, this legislation will help us to deal with importations of potatoes from the Eastern States. If we have an organisation here such as exists in the Eastern States we shall have machinery that will enable us to confer with Eastern States growers, and regulate the market so that our growers will obtain somewhere near the basic wage return for their labour. It is idle to criticise legislation of this type. Members must realise that workers in industry and middlemen have their organisations. Every time I attempt to get protection of this kind for producers, the powerful organisations of middlemen work against me tooth and nail. That is one of the difficulties confronting us today. I hope the House will approve of the Bill.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [5.40]: The member for Subiaco (Mrs. Cardell-Oliver) appears to have stirred up a hornet's nest by entering a very mild although a very sincere protest on behalf of the consumers. Whenever the word "consumer" is mentioned, naturally a storm of protest arises from those who arrogate to themselves the right to represent the producers. We, as a Parliament, in my opinion, should endeavour to hold the scales evenly between the producer and the consumer, and not view the matter from one side only. The reason why the member for Subiaco was concerned on behalf of the consumers was because of the possible restriction of the area of land that would be used for the production of potatoes. There is no limit to the extent to which the area might be restricted if this Bill becomes law. All that we have been told about the middlemen is

absolutely foreign to the Bill. If the measure becomes law, the middlemen will still be in a position to make whatever fabulous fortunes they are supposed to be making. The Bill will not in any way affect the price that the middlemen will be entitled to charge for their services or the price that the public will have to pay.

This is simply a Bill to restrict in Western Australia the area from which potatoes may be produced where the area exceeds half an acre, and it is to come into force three months after the measure becomes law. We are all prepared to go a long way to help the producers to obtain a living, but there must be a point at which this help must stop. If it is possible that the land now used in Western Australia for the production of potatoes may be restricted to one-half or one-third of the present area, as it could be under this Bill, it would be a very dangerous law for us to pass. As I have already pointed out, we have to hold the balance between the producer and the consumer; we have to keep the interests of both sections before us.

I should like to have from the Minister for Agriculture some understanding as to what limit there will be on the powers to be exercised by regulation under this measure. The application for a license has to be made to the Under Secretary for Agriculture in the specified form, but nothing is said about any limit on the power or authority of the Under Secretary for Agriculture. The committee, which the member for Avon has commended in such a laudatory manner to the House, is nothing at all but an advisory committee to deal with the moneys collected by way of license fees. The committee will have nothing to say about the acreage that is to be planted, and nothing about the prices to be paid to the grower and charged subsequently to the public, with due additions to the middlemen.

The committee will have nothing at all to do with those matters, but its functions will begin and end with dealing with the expenditure of certain moneys that will be contributed by way of license fees. So we can put them on one side. They will not afford any protection to either the grower or the consumer. I do not know what is the object of putting them in the Bill. Surely the Under Secretary for Agriculture, if he is to be given these very wide powers, almost dangerous powers, could well be trusted

with the spending of the limited amount of money that the fees will create, in the best possible manner without having an advisory committee to tell him how he shall spend it. Still, that is proposed. It is part of the window dressing to make the Bill acceptable.

The Premier: That is apparently what the growers want.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The growers want an advisory committee to tell the Under Secretary for Agriculture how the amount collected by way of fees shall be spent? At the present moment they do not know what the amount will be. The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) says it will be very little.

Mr. McLarty: I did not say that.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Did he not say the fee would be a very small one?

Mr. McLarty: No.

The Premier: It would be a fair amount of money.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the fee is a small one, the amount collected must be extremely limited. But I am not concerned with that. What I am concerned with is that the proposed authority will operate in certain circumstances to the extreme detriment of the consumer by unduly limiting the area of land devoted to potato growing in this State, while a more forced demand would create an exorbitant price. It must be remembered that although it is perfectly true, as the member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) reminded the House, sometimes the grower gets a price so ridiculously low that it cannot possibly pay him to grow potatoes at that price, yet at other times he gets a price that is almost ridiculously high.

Mr. Fox: That is only when there are not any potatoes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Or because there has been a failure of potato crops in the Eastern States. Then the Western Australian grower can send his potatoes away and get a big price for them in the East. Those are considerations which apparently have been ignored—that the price obtained fluctuates to a degree sometimes extremely hostile to the grower and sometimes extremely hostile to the consumer. Now, if a Bill were brought down to create an authority which within the strict limits of reasonable would produce an even price for potatoes so that the grower would always get what was a fair and honest

work, and that the consumer would never be called upon to pay an excessive price because of crop failures over East, we would all agree to that.

We cannot, however, even for a moment consider such a proposal, because it interferes with interstate trade. If the season were favourable in Victoria or New South Wales or Tasmania and a large surplus of potatoes existed in those States, we could not prevent them from coming into Western Australia, and we could not by any legislation passed by this House fix the price at which those imported potatoes should be sold in Western Australia. That would be a breach of the Commonwealth Constitution, which assures absolute freedom of trade and commerce between all the States. So we are faced immediately with that difficulty.

The Bill will not give the growers what they are looking for, a fixed price for their product—a high price, or at any rate a fair price, for their labour. I admit that on many occasions they receive far less than a fair price, but the Bill will not cure that position. On the other hand, it may create the result that by undue restriction of area the consumer, the duty of protecting whom we are charged with, may be penalised to a great degree.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [5.52]: Perhaps I had better at once declare myself a potato grower before beginning to speak on the Bill. Previous to leaving school I planted tons of seed potatoes, and therefore I am qualified to speak on the subject of potato-growing. My association with it, which lasted until I was 17 or 18 years of age, compels me to feel a high degree of sympathy with the man who endeavours to make a living on the land in this country. I left farming to go to work in the timber industry, where I made a much better living, and more easily, than when I worked from dawn to dark on a farm. That is one reason why I support the Bill.

In my opinion this measure differs from any other Bill introduced here for the purpose of providing what is termed orderly marketing. The word "board" is not used, but the Bill speaks of a committee, which in effect would be a board. I do not agree entirely with the composition of the committee, two growers' representatives against Government representative. The Bill

must be viewed in the customary manner, like other Bills for orderly marketing and price-fixing, the latter being another name for the means by which orderly marketing is brought about. Orderly marketing, again, is instituted for the purpose of creating a fair price for the grower, who has the same right to a just return for his work as the professional man and others have.

The Bill looks a perfectly innocuous document, but its real sting is in the power to be given to the Minister to disburse the money arising from fees. Under the Bill the sky is the limit as regards the Minister's jurisdiction. It provides that the Minister has the right to expend this money in any manner which in his opinion is deemed to be best calculated to develop and protect the potato growing industry. I repeat, the sky is the limit to the Minister's powers in that respect. It is possible for him to authorise the committee to regulate individual acreages below half an acre, and also the aggregate acreages. The Minister is authorised to empower the committee to create methods of orderly marketing. Therefore I consider that members when voting on the Bill should be conversant with its provisions and should realise that the measure does provide for orderly marketing. I have no objection whatever to the Bill from that aspect, but what does give me concern is something along the lines of the question raised by the member for Subiaco (Mrs. Cardell-Oliver), as to the continued creation of boards and licenses. What comes to my mind now is the number of different licenses I am compelled to have in my home. I have a two-tree orchard, and for that I have a license. I have a license for my car. I have a license for my dog. I have a license for my firearms, a couple of guns. There is a license for the push bike, and another for the wireless.

Mr. Berry: Have you a marriage license?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. STYANTS: That license is not in my possession; I believe, by the law of the land, it belongs to my good lady. We have gone in for a deluge of licenses. If one had time to think of them all, one could add largely to the list I have given.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And then we call ourselves a free people!

Mr. STYANTS: Yes. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) objects to restriction of the liberty of the subject. The

member for Katanning (Mr. Watts) stated that potatoes were being bought from growers at £4 per ton and sold at £18 per ton to the consumer. I do not know that that would be an average example, but we do know that the middleman makes the biggest profit of the lot.

My belief is that if the representatives of the potato-growing industry had been more candid with us they could have told us quite a lot on that aspect. They could have told us, too, as regards both the naturalised and the unnaturalised foreigner growing potatoes, that middlemen provide the finance for the crops and get the foreigners to do the work. The middlemen are the marketing agents for the foreigners, and we see the Britisher endeavouring vainly to get a crop ready for marketing while alongside him is the unnaturalised foreigner backed by the middleman, who sees that the crop of the unnaturalised foreigner is brought to market and sold at top price, probably £10 or £12 per ton, while the Britisher, who has not the financial backing of the middleman, has his crop sold probably on a glutted market thus realising £4 or £5 per ton. That sort of thing is going on, and residents of potato-growing districts know that it is going on. They know that the potato-growing lands are being leased to unnaturalised foreigners by Britishers.

That is one reason why I welcome this Bill, the committee to be created by which will have some control over transactions of that kind and will see to it that the Britisher who is endeavouring to make a living for himself and his family gets his crop marketed at the same price as does the unnaturalised foreigner, who is backed by the middleman to put the crop in and take it off. Dealing with the aspect of foreigners, the member for Nelson said that half the employees on the goldfields were foreigners. A census was taken some years ago, and the proportion, instead of being fifty-fifty, was found to be about one foreigner in eight employees.

Something has been said about the quality of our lands for the production of potatoes. I think the member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) mentioned that matter. I do not intend to decry the State of my birth. Presumably most members know that Western Australian potato land produces on the average a heavier crop than does the potato land of any other State. It is all very well

to pick special parts of Victoria returning 20 tons to the acre, but on the average Western Australian potato land gives higher returns than does similar land in any other State. Our average is considerably above the Australian average. It is true that in production of every kind the middleman gets the greatest rake-off, and that is another reason why I am prepared to support this measure. I do not believe that the Bill is going to be the harmless proposition it would seem to be. Perhaps I should not say "harmless." I mean that it will not be the ineffective measure it would appear to be at first sight.

I am quite certain that representatives of the potato-growing districts of this State would not vote for such a measure if they thought that all it provided was all that it appears to provide, namely, that a committee shall be formed and the growers shall pay a license ranging from 10s. for growers whose acreage exceeds one-half an acre but does not exceed five acres, up to £3 for those growers whose acreage exceeds 20 acres. The growers are not so misguided as to vote for such a measure as that. They know that that portion of the Bill which I quoted gives the Minister certain powers to draft regulations which will protect them against unfair competition from unnaturalised foreigners and middlemen, and in that way they will get a reasonable return for the products they market. That, in turn, will ensure their having a reasonable standard of living comparable with that enjoyed by other sections of the Australian community.

MR. W. HEGNEY (Pilbara) [6.1]: I desire to intimate my support of the principle contained in the Bill. It is a wonder to me that potato growers, who are a very hard-working section of the agricultural community, have not previously organised themselves on the same lines as those in other branches of agriculture. There is, however, room for amendments to the Bill. I was pleased to hear the member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) mention that he would have no objection to a consumer's representative being appointed to the proposed advisory committee. In that regard the committee would be more or less on all fours with the personnel or constitution of a similar board controlling the milk industry. Like the previous speaker, I am not one of those who believe that the Bill only has regard for the registration of certain

potato growers. I look upon it as a basis for the future control and regulation of the industry, and as a measure making provision for the proper marketing of the product.

Mr. Abbott: And its production!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Yes. That obtains now in regard to the wheat industry. So far as acreage and the sale of potatoes are concerned, the Minister has certain more or less unlimited powers, and so far as I understand the measure the advisory committee will have power to deal with moneys subscribed or collected under the Bill, which also stipulates that—

Any moneys expended under this Act shall be wholly applied in and towards the promotion in Western Australia of the production, marketing, treatment, and sale of potatoes. Such moneys shall be expended for such purposes as in any particular case the Minister may approve, or generally, as may be prescribed.

It is on account of the fact that the advisory committee is to be given those powers, that it will be charged with the responsibility of distributing the money, that I suggest a consumer's representative should be appointed to the committee. As this is the first Bill of its kind dealing with this particular industry, I consider that the largest acreage to be free from registration should be increased from one-half an acre to one acre.

I do not think that is vital to the principle contained in the Bill, and suggest that if such an amendment were made in Committee, in the light of experience gained in the next 12 months or two years, the Minister—and I hope the same Minister will be in office—would be able if necessary to make any further alterations. I have no doubt that any amendments that are deemed to be warranted will be made. I hope that the second reading will be agreed to, that the Bill will be passed in a form acceptable to both sides of the House and to both primary producers and consumers, and that the measure will prove of considerable benefit to the potato-growing industry.

MR. BERRY (Irwin-Moore) [6.5]: I am in favour of the Bill because I think that anything we do to organise primary production is a step in the right direction. With the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Styants) I think that this is an age of regulations. I, too, could enumerate various licenses that I have had to take out. It may be that primary industries are losing a certain amount

of freedom by the passing of such regulations and through such control being exercised, but under our present financial system there does not seem to be any alternative. That was a fact recognised months, if not years, ago, in countries outside Australia. One has only to consider the history of rubber, tin, coffee and tea to realise that it was not until those industries were subject to regulations similar to those suggested in the Bill that they made any financial progress. I assure members that after attempts had been made to regulate the primary products to which I have referred, not only did the industries enjoy prosperity but strangely enough the whole country concerned became prosperous because the buying power of the producers was increased. They were in a position to buy more because their industry was made profitable.

The statement has been made that it is a pity foreigners should be allowed to enter industries while Australians and people of British stock leave them. The reason probably is that the industry concerned is so impoverished and unattractive that English-speaking people desire to leave it. Again like the member for Kalgoorlie, I once grew potatoes—but not for very long! Like him, I was very happy to get out. Any Bill introduced into this Chamber, designed to help the man on the land, whether he be a potato-grower or a grower of any other kind of product, will receive my support.

We were told by the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) that what was needed in this House was a proper idea of balance, I assume balance between the two extremes representing producers and consumers. With that I agree. I think that the time is long overdue when we should cease confining our attention to extremes. We should tackle this question of the middle man with a view to ascertaining where is the discrepancy between the price paid for the raw products and that paid for the articles sold to the consumers, about whom the member for Subiaco (Mrs. Cardell-Oliver) was so concerned. I think it will be found, oddly enough, that it is not the small storekeepers who are making much money. They are in a somewhat similar position to that of the primary producers. We can only assume that somewhere between those two extremes is someone who is exploiting the position.

I agree with the member for Nedlands that it is our duty to go to every possible length to ascertain where the discrepancy is. I do not, however, agree with his statement that there is no need for a Bill of this description, because of varying prices. It is a well-known fact that if prices for potatoes are £20, £25 or £30 a ton, it is generally because there are not many potatoes. For the most part the grower is, therefore, not reaping a benefit. We had a similar occurrence in 1914 with regard to hay, the cost of which I believe rose to £14 a ton. That was because there was no hay. As the Chinaman aptly says: "Plenty of fruit, no price; no fruit, plenty price." That is a state of affairs which I think applies equally to potatoes.

In regard to the question as to who receives the difference in the price paid to the primary producer and that paid by the consumer, I have been told on good authority that the ordinary weeties we have for breakfast, worked out on a bushelage wheat basis, cost £5 16s. a bushel. That is considerably more than I have ever received for wheat. I am deeply anxious to see some form of organisation such as the Minister proposes rather than allow our primary industries to be carried on in the rag-tag bob-tail manner in which they are being conducted.

If one considers any primary producer who has joined the Army one will be struck by two facts. The first is that the man has been better fed and looks happier and healthier, and the second is that he will assure anybody who asks him that under no circumstances does he desire to return to his farm. The reason is that farming operations have never been controlled by himself or his confreres but by all these boards about which the member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) spoke. This city bristles with boards. All business bristles with boards. No business can be conducted without them. The Minister has told us that a board is needed to control the marketing of potatoes. He has my full agreement, and I support the Bill.

MR. ABBOTT (North Perth) [6.13]: I intend to oppose the Bill because it creates another monopoly. First of all we have a liquor monopoly, and licenses to sell liquor are vended by the Government for a considerable sum.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Do not forget that you belong to a monopoly!

Mr. ABBOTT: Next we have a milk board, and a considerable sum is paid for a license to produce milk. Now I suppose the Government will call tenders for the production of potatoes. If it were merely a question of allowing potato-growers to organise the selling of potatoes, I would have no objection to the Bill, but the purpose of the Bill is to determine who shall grow potatoes and I have every objection to that. We do not want more monopolies and more licensing. We do not want another board to say who shall join the industry and who shall not. Why should not every industry be open to anybody competent to engage in it?

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [7.30]: I was surprised to hear the member for North Perth (Mr. Abbott) say he was opposed to the Bill because it would create a monopoly. If he had read the Bill, I think he would have seen that it meant nothing of the sort. There will be no monopoly. All the Bill does is to give statutory authority for the registration of potato-growers, and for payment by them of a fee for registration. It also sets out in a vague manner what shall be done with the money. The Bill contains nothing more nor less than I have stated.

Mr. Marshall: What is its objective?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know. That is in the lap of the gods. I was surprised at the member for North Perth, and think he might have indicated a little more broadly his reasons for opposing the measure. I do not look upon the Bill as of any great value. It does not go far enough for my liking in the direction of orderly marketing. We have heard a great deal about orderly marketing for a long time past.

I hope some day we shall have something along the lines of legislation that has been adopted in Queensland. The legislation there is in skeleton form, so that any of the producers may organise themselves under it to the end that they will get at least what every member of this House desires, namely a fair return for their labour. Every labourer is entitled to compensation for the work he does.

Mr. Marshall: You abolish the Legislative Council, as was done in Queensland, and we will give you that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The hon. member is talking wildly.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Will the Leader of the Opposition address the Chair.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I will take no notice of the hon. member.

The Premier: He is giving you the quid without the quo.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am sure we all desire that those people who produce shall get some return for their money. During good seasons and when times are prosperous and prices favourable, we find that potato-growers, in common with many others, are endeavouring to dispose of large quantities of the commodity they have grown at prices actually far below the cost of production. There is only one alternative for them, namely the bankruptcy court. I was surprised to hear the member for North Perth put forward the argument he did, and I hope the House will not allow itself to be led away by it.

There will be no monopoly under this Bill. The Minister has no power to refuse to register anyone who wishes to grow potatoes. I do not desire members to think that much benefit will be derived by producers from this legislation, because they can get very little benefit from it. It provides opportunity for the registration of growers, and for charging them a fee, and with the money so obtained to attempt to popularise the commodity in question. I do not know what other ideas the Minister has on the subject; all those questions will remain largely in the hands of the committee, which will do what it considers necessary.

Hon. N. Keenan: What income do you think the advisory committee will derive from the fees?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have no idea what the amount will be, but I know what the fees per acre will be.

Hon. N. Keenan: The income will be about £400 a year, sufficient to pay the secretary.

Mr. McLarty: They will come to double that amount.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The fees are set out in the Schedule, and vary from 10s. to £3 as a maximum for one grower. I do not know whether the fees will remain at

that. A member sitting behind me suggested that the consumers should have representation on the committee. I point out that the consumer does not enter into this matter. The Bill contains no power to fix prices, and I do not think prices could be fixed in that way. I would not like to be a member of the committee if I had to carry the responsibility of a test case in the court. I do not think the Bill provides any power to fix the price of potatoes. Furthermore, it cannot have the effect of increasing prices.

I desire to refer to some of the remarks made by the member for Subiaco (Mrs. Cardell-Oliver). She must realise and admit that, if we are to be fair to those who go into the country and produce the food requirements of the people, the consumers must be prepared to pay a reasonable price for the products so produced. I am not going to allow one section of the community to exploit another section. If the hon. member had made that statement, I think every member of the House would have endorsed it. If I may be permitted to interpret the new order, I think it will mean some legislative enactment that will prevent one section of the community from exploiting another.

Sometimes it is desirable that we should take away some of the freedom accorded to people, and I suppose this Bill will take a little freedom from one section of the people. While I suppose that is a good talking point, I feel there is very little in this Bill to talk about. It will prohibit the production of potatoes to any area in excess of half an acre unless the producer himself is registered. It will charge him fees at the rate set out in the schedule, which the Minister says he is prepared to amend. I hope the member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) will not insist upon the amendment to which he referred, namely one that would have the effect of placing a consumer representative upon the committee. This is merely a question of distribution of money paid by the potato growers for their own benefit; nothing more nor less.

I am afraid the growers will be disappointed with this measure, and I warn those members who are supporting it. It may be that this is a foundation for further legislation, and that this Bill will be a means to that end. I support the measure, but wish to see what effect it will have. I do not desire to take money from the in-

dustry unless those who are putting it into the fund in question are likely to get full value for what they pay.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [7.37]: I support the Bill, although it is impossible to express any great enthusiasm for it. It is more in the nature of a hybrid measure than any other term I can use in respect of it. As stated by the Minister, unfortunately it does not tend in any way to interfere with or have anything to do with marketing control. It appears that it is likely to afford an opportunity for the better rationing of production in good as well as in bad seasons. I fail to see, therefore, that this can be of any great value to growers. I would have liked to see the Minister take up the matter boldly and bring forward a Bill that would be helpful to growers, and have the effect of ensuring for them at least a minimum price for their potatoes.

Provision is made whereby a certain fee shall be charged, or different fees charged, according to the area under cultivation. Here again a principle is repeated whereby the amount payable is not on equal lines. Once a grower cultivates an area of over 20 acres, his payment is still limited to £3. That may not be a very serious matter, but it seems to me wrong in principle that there should be a variation in the rate of the fee. If a person went in for potato production in a large way and had 80 acres under cultivation, he would still pay only £3, whereas if another person had an area not exceeding 20 acres under cultivation, he would pay the same amount.

I would like to have seen brought down a Bill that would be of real assistance to potato growers, although this one may go a little way towards helping the industry. Then there is the question of the investment of the funds collected for the benefit of the growers. In that respect the Bill lacks that vigour which is essential if the true principles of orderly marketing and the care of those engaged in the production of this commodity are to receive consideration. I shall support the Bill, but am disappointed that it is not more vigorous, more definite and more helpful in its objective.

MR. RAPHAEL (Victoria Park) [7.43]: I am one of those who desire that people who labour shall be paid a living wage for the articles they produce. That applies, of

course, to producers generally. Members, however, must begin to realise that the time is arriving when the creation of boards, such as has been going on for the past few years, must come to an end. I am a representative of an industrial suburb. Many of my electors are workers living on the basic wage. They enjoy only a limited income out of which to purchase the necessities of life for their families. As a result of the creation of all these boards I find there is a limit to the production of commodities that are necessary for the rearing of families. Only a little while ago the Onion Board was formed. I foolishly went into a shop in Perth to buy 2 lbs. of onions, for which I had to pay 1s. 7d.

Mr. Sampson: You should have gone to Victoria Park where onions are much cheaper.

Mr. RAPHAEL: The illustration I have quoted will show members what is likely to happen when the advisory committee referred to in the Bill has been created. Again, I point out that the Commonwealth Government set up an Apple and Pear Board.

The Minister for Mines: A Dental Board was also set up.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Much to my disgust. I was not in favour of it.

Mr. Sampson: Out of that evil came good.

Mr. RAPHAEL: As a result of the creation of the Apple and Pear Board, people were limited in the quantity of apples and pears they could buy because of the high price placed upon those commodities. The members of that board were prepared to see thousands of tons of apples or pears buried in orchards or fed to pigs.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! We are not discussing apples and pears now.

Mr. RAPHAEL: No, but I wish to draw an analogy between what one board has done and what is possible under the Bill.

Mr. Sampson: And you are indulging in exaggeration.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I want to refer to the effect such legislation has on the poorer sections of the community who have been denied commodities they require.

The Minister for Mines: The Bill does not provide for a board.

Mr. RAPHAEL: But it does provide for a limitation of acreage under potatoes.

Members: No!

Members: Yes, it does.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I do not care in what light those members who favour the Bill view the matter, but I say definitely that power is provided so that, by regulation, the acreage under potatoes may be limited.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The Bill provides no power for a license to be refused.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Should a potato-grower sell some potatoes under the lap, he will suffer a penalty.

Mr. McLarty: There is nothing in the Bill to prevent such a sale.

Mr. RAPHAEL: There is nothing to stop one doing what one desires to do. Extensive powers are to be given to the committee that is to be set up, and we know what such bodies have done from time to time. I have had the misfortune to appreciate what the Milk Board has done, and in that light I appreciate what the potato committee may do. The Bill may not provide for the creation of a board, but nevertheless I suggest that what is to be established is a well-hidden board. The phraseology of the Bill refers to it as a committee; but the functions of that body will be the same as those of a board.

Mr. Doney: It is not to be given the right to make such decisions as you suggest.

Mr. RAPHAEL: But the committee will have the right to bring various matters before the powers that be and the latter will make the decisions. It is to be an advisory committee, and the committee may consider that Mr. So-and-so's license should not be renewed because he had grown too many potatoes, or sold some under the lap. It is useless for members to shake their heads. I am fearful that, should ever Country Party members occupy the Treasury bench, the result may be severe from the standpoint of the working class.

The Minister for Mines: Do not be pessimistic!

Mr. Hill: The working class would receive a fair deal.

Mr. RAPHAEL: If the working class received a deal similar to that which they experienced when the National-Country Party Government was in power some years ago, they will certainly get a rotten deal. At any rate the member for Albany (Mr. Hill) was not in the House at that time, and he had not the opportunity to witness Labour members week after week urging the right of the people to live.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I will deal with that phase if you like.

Mr. RAPHAEL: And I will go as far as the hon. member likes on that subject.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Victoria Park had better get back to the Bill.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I am in favour of a man receiving a fair return for a fair day's work. The Bill contains nothing to say what will be the extra cost of the committee to the potato growers, nor what the extra cost of potatoes themselves will be to the public. No matter how we may view such legislative proposals, the creation of boards always means increased costs. This is not a matter of orderly marketing. We had an experience in connection with eggs. If the grower wants his eggs candled, it costs him an extra penny a dozen.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: No, 3d. a dozen.

Mr. Sampson: Not at all; not more than a penny.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I was under the impression that the cost was about a penny. Anyhow, a producer told me it cost him a penny to get his eggs stamped; I do not know if the expense had mounted up to 3d. before it was completed.

Mr. Sampson: You are not speaking of a potato stamp?

Mr. RAPHAEL: There must be expense in connection with the running of the board or committee. Who will pay for that expense?

Mr. Hill: The potato growers.

Mr. RAPHAEL: No, the workers—not the potato growers.

Mr. Hill: Not under this Bill.

Mr. RAPHAEL: It has been so under each other measure we have passed, and the same result will follow if we agree to the Bill under discussion. It will mean increased taxation. The extra cost is passed on to the working class.

Mr. Hill: No, it is not.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I am sorry the member for Albany is so dense. If he had had much experience in the purchasing of goods he would not have interjected in that way. On every occasion increased costs are passed on to the purchasing public. In this instance it will apply to potatoes, which may be regarded, practically speaking, as the staff of life for many of our people.

Hon. C. G. Latham: This legislation will not fix prices; competition has that effect.

Mr. RAPHAEL: This will mean imposing a limitation upon acreage.

Mr. McLarty: Nothing of the sort!

Mr. RAPHAEL: I do not care how the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) views the question; I am convinced that gradually control will be exercised over the growing of potatoes. A limitation will be imposed upon the acreage under potatoes, no matter what we may do to prevent it. Once the power is given to the committee, we can bet our bottom dollars the committee will go ahead.

Mr. Boyle: The committee may increase the acreage.

Mr. RAPHAEL: If there is no worry on that score, why introduce this legislation? Why adopt that course if someone does not wish to get control? As the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) has already indicated, we cannot control the price of potatoes imported from the Eastern States. We cannot debar interstate trade. There is a roar when the price of potatoes goes down and they become cheap on the local market, but there is no roar on the part of the growers if they can sell their output in the Eastern States at huge prices. Why not have a tomato board?

The Minister for Mines: That is the last on the list.

Mr. Withers: And we can soon squash that one.

Mr. RAPHAEL: If those growers can organise themselves and—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot discuss tomato growers in speaking on the Bill before the House.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I am sorry if I am out of order, but I find it impossible to make a comparison between what has been done under other boards and what may be done under the Bill now before us, without referring to other matters. I think it is time the Government called a halt to this type of legislation. We have had one board after another created.

The Minister for Mines: There is only the tomato board left.

Mr. RAPHAEL: While having to vote for the Bill, I am definitely opposed to it.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [8.54]: The Bill, as I understand it, represents an effort to stabilise the industry of potato growing. Stabilisation is another means of creating a standard of living. To me just as it seems right that we should have a basic wage in order to maintain the standard of life of the worker, so it should be right, by legislation, to endeavour to give protection to all sections of the community subject to the rise and fall of prices because of disorganisation of markets, so that their standard of living is reduced far below the Australian conception of that standard. The Minister knows from experience over the years that potato growing has never been a stable industry but has always been more or less interfered with, not from the standpoint of the standard of the product or of markets, but because of disorganisation amongst the potato growers themselves. Consequently he has introduced the legislation.

I speak with some little experience because I was associated with a committee that created a pool for potato growers. That pool was wonderfully successful, all things taken into consideration. The main difficulty experienced at that time arose from the fact that there were so many Southern Europeans and Italians engaged in potato growing. While those people were enthusiastic with regard to joining the organisation, they did not seem to realise their consequent responsibilities and reserved the right to put in such quantities of potatoes as they thought would give them the advantage to be gained from the pool while keeping out sufficient to give them an advantage outside the pool.

Those foreigners would enter into an undertaking to combine with others, but when it came to a question of actually putting their commodities into the pool for the purpose of orderly marketing, they broke away from their undertaking and thereby to a very great extent reduced the efficiency of the pooling arrangement. It was a very anxious time because when such people were prepared to enter into a pooling scheme and then subsequently broke away during the currency of their undertaking, the whole foundation of the scheme was shattered and control of orderly marketing was completely lost. Because of that experience I favour legislation, for I realise that such move-

ments can only be undertaken by the exercise of some control over the individual.

For instance, for years a voluntary organisation was tried out in connection with the dried fruit business. All manner of means were availed of in an endeavour to bind those concerned into a union of growers. One way was to ask them to put up deposits as a guarantee of good faith, but even then we could not get some of those growers to abide by their undertaking. There were always those who were willing to participate in such an organisation, but, after years of struggle among the grape growers and dried fruit producers, it was ultimately decided that Parliament should take a hand and apply to those sections of producers exactly what the Minister proposes to extend to the potato growers in the Bill under discussion.

The suggestion has been made that we should not have these close corporations and that we should not require registration under such legislation. That suggestion never appeals to me. I believe in trade unionism. For instance, I believe when the Lumpers' Union at Fremantle finds that the earning capacity of its members has been reduced—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I think the hon. member is getting away from the Bill.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am giving an illustration of how control—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member's remarks are well away from the subject matter of the Bill, and I must ask him to return to a consideration of the measure. There is nothing in the Bill about the Fremantle Lumpers' Union.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No, but I wish to give an illustration just to show—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I want the hon. member to stick to the Bill.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The Bill provides that there may be a restriction of area and consequently the producer will not be able to use all his land and employ all his energies in order to attain a given standard. The Minister says that there should be restriction and control.

Mr. Doney: Are you sure you read that?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is the inference to be drawn.

Mr. Doney: Ah!

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I will not say it is definite, but something will have to be done. There must be control. Just as it is

right in trade unionism to exercise control where conditions call for it, so is it necessary in the case of the primary producer. It is consistent to say that the producer has the right to organise so as to maintain the value of his product and to create and maintain a standard of living comparable to that of the recognised standard of Australia in just the same way as it is consistent to say that the working man has that right. Every section of the community has the right to organise in order to protect the activity in which it is engaged. I therefore welcome legislation of this kind. I believe dentists should be licensed in order to guarantee efficiency. With a rabble there is no efficiency. Potato growers will be a rabble unless they are properly organised and their industry is controlled.

Mr. Raphael: What about licensing politicians?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: If politicians were licensed some people would be in a bad way. I am afraid that politics is an activity that would fall in, but I do not want to go into those details, because, Mr. Speaker, I would be out of order.

I support the Bill because it will give the growers a measure of control; it will give them the means by which they can organise themselves so as to maintain a fair standard of living. I do not care by what means that is done as long as a start is made. I am prepared to give the Minister the thin edge of the wedge, as I have enough confidence in him to know that he will penetrate just as far as he can do justice to the producer and to the consumer in the best interests of the State. But until we give the Minister some measure of control he will be helpless in this matter. I remember that when I was Minister for Agriculture I had the same application and faced the same difficulty. We tried in those days to get the necessary legislation but my friends of the Country Party in those days were hostile. They were bitterly opposed to any organisation of this kind.

Mr. Sampson: You do not show much consistency.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Today they have seen the light. They know perfectly well that Labour's policy is the sane policy.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is nothing in this Bill about the Labour policy and what the Country Party were doing.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I submit the Bill is all policy. It is a policy of organising the producer of a particular commodity. We tried to do the same thing some years back, but met with resistance by the Country Party. Today I am pleased to note a good deal of support for this measure on the part of Opposition members. I am glad my friends on the Opposition have realised the advantage of organisation. Politicians may talk, but they cannot achieve much in matters of this kind unless Parliament puts someone in control. The Minister should be given power to control the proposed board and to maintain a fair price, which would ensure a decent standard of living for the potato growers.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [8.5]: I have listened attentively to the speeches in this debate, particularly those made on the Opposition side. It is remarkable what a change has come over the Opposition in the last few years. In fact, only the representatives of a privileged profession have run true to form.

Several members interjected.

MR. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. FOX: If I may be allowed to reply to an interjection made by the member for Victoria Park (Mr. Raphael) as to the price of onions—

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member is allowed to speak to the Bill and to nothing else.

Mr. FOX: I wish to say that the board will have nothing at all to do with prices, because this is not the onion-growing season.

MR. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. FOX: I am pleased to support the second reading for reasons similar to those advanced by the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson). We believe in organisation and we believe that workers everywhere are entitled to a decent standard of living. I am sure members on this side of the House are prepared to give every assistance to the pastoralists, who at present are carrying on under adverse conditions. I quite realise that this Bill is only a starting point. Much must be done and later it may be necessary to limit the production of potatoes. What harm will there be in that, if we had an abundance?

We can grow ten times as much wheat in Western Australia as we require for our

own needs, but what is the use of producing three to four times the quantity of any commodity if we cannot ourselves consume it or dispose of it to others? My desire is to see the potato growers and other primary producers progress, and I hope the time is not far distant when they will receive a guaranteed price for their produce, a price that will enable them to pay the men in their employment a wage sufficient to ensure them a decent standard of living. This it is not possible to do today. I understand that in New Zealand many products have a guaranteed price. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading and I trust the Bill will prove to be of great assistance to the potato growers. The measure will not materially affect my district, because the quantity of potatoes grown there is very small.

MR. HUGHES (East Perth) [8.7]: I am opposed to the Bill because, although I do not know of any potato growers in East Perth, I know of many potato consumers and many potential consumers, if they could get the potatoes. I submit the Bill is starting at the wrong end. We ought not to restrict production unless we are satisfied that all the people who can eat the food have got the food. Potatoes are of no use to anyone; they do not produce any real necessary substance; they merely produce surplus fat. Unless a person is engaged in physical exercises which enable him to throw off this surplus fat he ought not to eat potatoes at all.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I know many thin people who eat potatoes.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. I have had an experience in this matter as extensive as that of anybody else, and I know what food makes a person strong.

Mr. Rodoreda: Did you every try spinach?

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. It is recognised that if a person is to undergo any violent physical strain he must not eat potatoes. I did not taste a potato for four months before I raced, because it was recognised that potatoes did not add to the strength of a person.

MR. SPEAKER: In what part of the Bill is that?

Mr. HUGHES: In the very substance, the very elements which make the potato and the potato is the fundamental element of the Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the hon. member had better get back to the Bill.

Mr. HUGHES: I have the objection to this Bill that I have to other legislation of its type. It is pure, unadulterated syndicalism and it is as far from the policy of the Labour Party as the poles are asunder. It is not related to the Labour Party's plank of socialisation of industry. It is simply building up a little group that will get into a privileged position and exploit the rest of the community to its own advantage. I think this is the acid test: Take any patch of potato-growing land in the State the day before this Bill is passed and ascertain its value; then ascertain its value the day after the Bill is passed. That value will be found to be several times higher.

When we pass a Bill like this we make a gift of so much capital to the person who owns the land. If we are to continue doing this, we ought to evolve some scheme whereby the unearned increment will not accrue to the landowners, but to the State as a whole. I do not think it will be denied that the Bill will definitely make it more difficult for people to procure potatoes. The very object is to limit the supply and thereby increase the price, so that the potato growers will get a better return for their labour. But the inevitable result will be to make it more difficult for some people to get potatoes. I have not seen an onion in East Perth since we passed a similar Bill relating to onions.

The Minister for Mines: It is not the onion-growing season.

Mr. Tonkin: Onions are 7d. a lb.

Mr. Rodoreda: Ninepence ha'penny a lb.

Mr. HUGHES: That is the first objection I have to the Bill. The second is based on the broad principle that the sovereignty of Parliament will be taken away if we continually create these boards. No power will be left to Parliament at all. If the Bill passes, as I suppose it will now that it has the blessing of the member for Victoria Park (Mr. Raphael)—

Mr. Raphael: No. It has not my blessing. Do not worry about that!

Mr. HUGHES: If the Bill passes, why should not the Minister administer it? Why cannot he rely upon his technical officers? So long as the Minister administers this legislation there is Parliamentary control, because the Minister is subject to Parliament. But if we create this proposed board

we shall take control out of the hands of Parliament, through its instrument, the Minister, and place it in the hands of an outside body. We all know how arbitrary these boards become. We know how difficult it is for people desirous of obtaining licenses to approach these boards.

A third objection I have to the Bill is that a person securing a license will be required periodically to renew it. I cannot understand why that should be required in a case such as this. Once a person obtains a license, with proper reservations for its cancellation if he does not carry out its terms, why put him to the expense of applying for a license each year, filling up forms and making application year after year, and building up an additional branch of the Civil Service to record the applications, 90 per cent. of which are formal! If a man is to be told he can grow potatoes, then give him a license and let him go on growing them until such time as he does something to forfeit that right. Why make him fill in a form each year applying for a renewal of his license?

What is going to happen to the person displaced as a result of this restrictive legislation? Whilst we are protecting certain people and assuring them of an adequate standard of living, we take no account of the person we prevent from getting a living. We are going back to the 11th century. Everybody has to be in his guild; he cannot grow potatoes unless he is in the potato-growing guild. He cannot get in.

Hon. C. G. Latham: A man cannot work at a trade unless he is trade unionist.

Mr. HUGHES: That is so, but he can join the union.

Hon. C. G. Latham: No, he cannot!

Mr. HUGHES: If he cannot he should be able to.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! We are not discussing trade unions.

Mr. HUGHES: Once the people get a license to grow potatoes they will be in the same position as a person who receives a license to run a hotel. A person can take a block of land today worth £400, and, by getting the right to erect licensed premises on it, it becomes worth anything up to £10,000 overnight. Surely that increment belongs to the State and should be brought into the State, even if it is only put into some fund to give relief to those people precluded from entering the industry.

So long as we have Section 92 of the Constitution we will always be up against the problem that we cannot stop potatoes coming in from the Eastern States. We can restrict our area, but we will not be able to stop people from the Eastern States bringing in their commodity. If the Bill does go through I hope we will eliminate boards altogether and let the Minister administer the Act. It is his function. Fundamentally he is appointed by Parliament to do it. If he does not do it his actions can be questioned in Parliament. But what can be said to a board? Parliament cannot say anything to it; and it can do just as it likes. If two representatives of the growers are appointed to the board, naturally they will look after the interests of the growers and the consumers will be left out in the cold.

Mr. Raphael: The consumer has not even one representative.

Mr. HUGHES: That is so. I can understand how this will affect a constituency such as Victoria Park, which, like East Perth, contains a large number of people who have large families—

Hon. C. G. Latham: Who eat this surplus food.

Mr. HUGHES: —and low incomes. This, unfortunately, is the type of food that these people can afford to buy. It would be much better if some of the people, particularly the children, who live in these constituencies could eat the surplus fruit instead of fruit-growing having to be restricted. Not only should the children of Victoria Park and East Perth be able to have this fruit, but also those in the outback mining areas. It would be much better to let the surplus be consumed in that way instead of trying to save a few growers. Where shall we finish? We shall be making provision for beans, peas, spinach and all sorts of things. I propose to vote against the Bill, and I hope a division will be taken so that we can see who is for taking the food from the people and who is not.

MR. F. C. L. SMITH (Brown Hill-Ivanhoe [8.21]): So many members have spoken on this measure that I feel constrained to add a few words. It might be thought that those who are silent are in favour of it. I am opposed to the Bill. If it achieves its object the result will be that the price of potatoes will be much higher than it usually

is when there is a glut, and just as high as when there is a shortage. The average price which the consumer will have to pay will, therefore, be much higher. It seems to me to be a measure in which the producer of potatoes is going to join hands with the middleman of whom we have heard so much. He is going to say to this middleman, "I am not going to interfere with the profits you are able to make through exploiting the consumer, but I am going to see that I get a fair cut, and so between us we can exploit the consumer to a greater extent than at present."

This is not the way to deal with the question of a fair price to the producer. A fair price to the producer should be aimed at through some price-fixing arrangement, which not only controls the price so far as the producer is concerned—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is too much noise.

Mr. F. C. L. SMITH: —but will also control it so far as the consumer is concerned. The Bill aims at appointing another board, although it is camouflaged under the term "committee." Although many Country Party members in this House are talking about the necessity for a board for orderly marketing, the leader of the Country Party in another place recently issued a warning against the appointment of boards and stated that boards were legion in this State, and that every second person in Western Australia was a member of a board of some kind or another. I do not know what excuse will be given for this additional board. I presume it will be consistent with the views expressed respecting another board to which the leader of the Country Party referred. I do not wish to say anything further in connection with the Bill.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [8.25]: During the discussion on this Bill various points of view have been placed before this House. It seems that the inauguration of boards is likely to go on almost indefinitely. It is not so many years ago—within the last half century—when it was held that production would never be able to keep pace with the needs of the increase in population. The celebrated doctrine called the Malthusian doctrine held that population increased in arithmetical progression to production. The author of this doctrine pointed out that production would

never keep pace with the needs of the population. We, however, now find that the reverse has taken place. Production has outstripped the need of the population because of the application of science to the production of potatoes, and other commodities, and because there is a definite decrease in the rate of population.

This measure evidently becomes necessary to organise those in the industry, and the method of organising will be to restrict production. Power will be sought to say to individuals, "It is not much use engaging in this industry because there is no one to consume the products of your labour." That hardly applies even in connection with workers. From time to time criticism is levelled against workers in connection with their trade union organisation. The analogy is drawn between the organisation of the trade unions and an organisation such as this. The difference is this, that the trade unions did not ask for an Act of Parliament to organise them.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is nothing in this Bill about trade unions.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: That is so, but nevertheless reference has been made to them. The people in this industry should be able to organise themselves. It is not Parliament's job to do it. I have read the Bill and actually there is nothing in it.

Mr. Doney: Then what is your objection to it?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I do not know why I waste time on it. The growers are supposed to have an organisation competent to organise them. This measure shows it has fallen down on its job.

Mr. Berry: Who organised the Arbitration Court?

Mr. J. HEGNEY: Parliament created it, but the trade unions were organised long before. The growers are entitled to a fair thing for the results of their labour, but if this measure is passed there will, no doubt, be a restriction. Fifty years ago the French economist Gide, who was a recognised authority, put forward his theories which are the reverse of the position today; that is that the population is decreasing in every country in the world because of birth control.

Mr. SPEAKER: Birth control is not in this Bill, nor is population.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The necessity for this Bill arises because potato growers are not able to sell their product at a fair price. The member for Murray-Wellington said that foreigners have been introduced into this industry and are producing so many potatoes that the price is insufficient to enable the industry to carry on. It is also submitted that many of these men work for other farmers on the basis of leasing a certain acreage whilst they do a certain amount of clearing. Those things do affect the potato market. If there is a decline in the population, people are not available to consume the potatoes.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: And some people are underfed.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: They will be more so if the price of 5 lbs. for 6d., mentioned by the hon. member, continues. There has been such a definite trend in the direction I have stated that it is necessary to have various boards to deal with commodities and the marketing of them. Take the wheat industry: Because of the difficulties, there is to be a restriction in production. Farmers have definitely been urged not to produce more than a certain quantity of wheat because no market is available for it. The next thing we can expect is that potato growers will be urged not to produce because there is no market for their commodity. We are living in a strange age when such things happen.

The men engaged in potato growing are entitled to the fruits of their toil and to the benefits arising from the marketing of their commodity but, as has been pointed out, this problem is being tackled from the wrong end. Middlemen are getting the rake-off, the consumer has to pay, and the producer is not receiving enough to enable him to carry on his industry. I am prepared to vote for the second reading, but I can see little or nothing of value in the Bill, even from the point of view of orderly marketing. Members opposite, who represent the growers, think that the Bill will bring them some benefit, but I fail to see that it will.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. P. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne—in reply)
[8.32]: My worry in connection with the Bill is whether I misled Cabinet into believing what I thought was in the Bill. I do not think there is anything in the measure dealing with the price of onions or with dental boards or with birth control.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is not in order in discussing those matters.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not discussing them.

Mr. Raphael: Better get on to potatoes.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I also think it necessary to point out that those who believe the Bill contains something about the Malthusian theory are in error.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You can give illustrations of anything you like on the second reading.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There is a very close alliance between potatoes and weight control, but there is nothing about weight control in the Bill.

Mr. Hughes: Less potatoes, less weight!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Since the Hon. H. V. Piessie has interested himself in potatoes, we can take it he is interested not only in potato control but also in weight control. I was surprised at the references to class legislation—the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) introduced this point—but the only class in this instance is that of potato growers. In spite of the interpretation placed on various clauses of the Bill, all that is intended is to license those who grow half-an-acre or more of potatoes and to register them, which will enable us to get a clear statistical register of growers and of production, and to appoint an advisory committee to decide how the growers will spend the money belonging to themselves on the written authority of the Minister. That is all the Bill contains.

There is nothing in the Bill about a board. There is no analogy to be drawn between the proposed advisory committee and a board. The functions of the committee will be very limited indeed.

Mr. Doney: On what do you suggest the committee is likely to spend the money?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have been asked how much money is likely to be raised from the license fees. At this stage I should conjecture that, based on acreages and the number of growers according to the Government Statistician, some £700 or £800 a year would be the maximum amount.

Mr. Raphael: Which the consumer must pay!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is perhaps regrettable that the debate was not adjourned earlier to permit some hon. members to peruse the Bill. The measure gives no power to acquire and no power to fix a price. The object of the Bill, as was mentioned clearly when I moved the second reading, is to enable us to get information that we have no possibility of obtaining to-day. We want to secure the best possible information with regard to planting and to be able to give seasonal advice and, as to the license fees, to expend the money in the best interests of the industry. There is no provision in the Bill for the limitation of acreages.

Mr. Raphael: What about the regulations to be brought down?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If we only knew what sort of amendments the hon. member and others might move to any Bill presented to the House, we would be in the happy position of being able to formulate regulations in advance and present them when the Bill was introduced. When this Bill is passed, if it is approved, I should like to see regulations introduced immediately to show that it is the intention of the measure, as has been explained, that there shall be no restriction of acreages, that there shall be no power of acquisition, that there shall be no board appointed, and that the powers are simply to license those who grow potatoes and register them as growers.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You clearly have power to make regulations.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: When I took the Bill to Cabinet, I had no knowledge of the interpretation that members would place upon the various provisions. What they have read into the measure is hard to believe because it is not there. It is perhaps just as inexplicable as the reason why any schoolboy named Murphy is always called Spud. There is no reason why the interpretations that have been mentioned should be placed on the Bill. There is no suggestion that licenses shall be confined to those who are at present growing potatoes. The member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) asked why growers should periodically come up for licenses. The reason surely is obvious. A grower who has a license for half-an-acre or one acre this year might wish to grow 25 acres next year.

Mr. Hughes: He could not, unless he had a license, because his license would be for half-an-acre.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If he wished to grow potatoes next year on an area in excess of that for which he was licensed, he must make a fresh application.

Mr. Abbott: And it may or may not be renewed.

Mr. Hughes: Suppose the grower did not want to increase his area, he would still have to apply.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: To seek a renewal of his license would not be irksome. It would suit the grower, and the department would have information regarding the position in the industry. We have not that information today.

Mr. Watts: If there was no renewal of licenses, you would not get any revenue.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I see no objection to these people having an opportunity to organise their industry, particularly as they have requested to be allowed to pay for it. In Committee I intend to propose two minor amendments, one affecting the class of magistrates to hear any cases and the other to increase the license fee for areas of more than 30 acres. This is necessary because those sowing over 30 acres are the ones from whom we require most information, and it seems right that they should pay an additional fee for an area of that extent.

Mr. Hughes: There is no right of appeal if a license is refused.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think there is any likelihood of its being refused.

Mr. Abbott: But it might be refused.

Mr. Raphael interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I wish I could get the member for Victoria Park to read the Bill.

Mr. Raphael: I have read it and, after your explanation, I am not going to vote for it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is not incumbent on the hon. member to vote for the Bill, but I am satisfied that if he read it and desired to understand it, he would reach an entirely different conclusion. I confess that, regarding some of the legislation in which the hon. member has been interested, I have—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is not in order in discussing matters of that kind. He is now replying to the debate.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I submit the Bill with all its imperfections, believing that it entails no more than I explained in moving the second reading.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	34
Noes	9

Majority for 25

AYES.

Mr. Berry	Mr. Millington
Mr. Boyle	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Panton
Mr. Cross	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Doney	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Fox	Mr. Seward
Mr. Hawke	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Styants
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Hill	Mr. Triest
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Warner
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Watts
Mr. Latham	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Mann	Mr. Wise
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Withers
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Raphael
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hughes	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Marshall
Mr. North	

(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Potato growers to obtain license:

Mr. HUGHES: What will entitle a person to a license, or what will disentitle him to one? Under the clause, an applicant may not get a license. There is nothing entitling an applicant to receive a license automatically. Can any person now growing potatoes obtain a license, and can a new grower obtain a license automatically?

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes; anybody can!

Mr. HUGHES: That is not anything like a reasonable interpretation of the clause. A license may or may not be granted by the person to whom application is made.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The same thing applies to a dog license.

Mr. HUGHES: No. A dog has to be registered when six months old. Subclause 3 does not say that anybody can get a license. If that is the intention, anyone who has an acreage will automatically get a license and any person who obtains an acreage automatically gets a license. Should not the clause provide that a person should not grow potatoes unless he is registered? Suppose someone applies to the secretary for a license and the secretary does not bother to grant it or refuses to grant it, the person might continue growing potatoes and thus commit an offence. There is nothing to say that the secretary will grant a license or will state the conditions under which he will refuse it. I suggest that the Minister reports progress and gives the Committee time to consider the framing of an amendment to meet the position.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause 1 the word "half" be struck out.

The area would then be one acre. Many people grow their own vegetables and it is possible they might exceed the half-acre provided in this subclause. Should they do so, they will render themselves liable to prosecution.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It would be unwise to make the alteration. The hon. member may appreciate this point: On half an acre of irrigable land in this State it is possible to grow six or seven tons of potatoes. That shows the necessity for the provision as it stands.

Mr. McLARTY: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment. A man growing half an acre of potatoes grows them to sell and he is the person the Bill deals with.

Mr. J. Hegney: Could not he give them away if he desired?

Mr. McLARTY: There is nothing in the Bill to stop that.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Murray-Wellington must address the Chair.

Mr. J. Hegney: Milk cannot be given away.

Mr. McLARTY: If the amendment is carried it will defeat the object of the Bill.

Mr. Raphael: That is what I am after.

Mr. McLARTY: I am aware of that. That is my reason for opposing the amendment.

Mr. RODOREDA: The member for Murray-Wellington told us that if the amendment were carried the object of the Bill would be defeated. I would very much like some member in support of the Bill to tell the Committee what its real object is.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I support the amendment, notwithstanding that the Minister has pointed out that six or seven tons of potatoes can be grown on half an acre of irrigable land. This legislation is experimental, and I submit that the objective of the sponsors of the Bill will in a large measure be met if they agree that the qualifying area shall be one acre. It is stretching the point too far to suggest that a man must obtain a license in order to plant three-quarters of an acre with potatoes.

Mr. HILL: I oppose the amendment. The object of the Bill is to raise funds for the benefit of the industry. As the member for Murray-Wellington has pointed out, a person who plants an acre of potatoes is a commercial grower and ought to be prepared to assist in the financing of a scheme for the benefit of the industry. I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment.

Mr. RAPHAEL: The Minister has asserted that if the amendment is carried it will defeat the object of the Bill.

The Minister for Agriculture: I did not say that.

Mr. RAPHAEL: The interjection came from the Government bench, anyhow.

The Minister for Agriculture: No; it was the member for Murray-Wellington who said that.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Then I apologise. I would have no heart-burning if the Bill were defeated. I would not shed tears on my wife's shoulder tonight in such an event. I realise, however, that people requiring food for their families should be allowed to purchase it. Farmers in the Gingin and Toodyay districts often agree to exchange commodities with each other. That is because they receive such poor prices for their wheat.

Hon. C. G. Latham: At Gingin?

Mr. RAPHAEL: Yes.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I have not heard of it.

Mr. RAPHAEL: No, because the Leader of the Opposition does not go there as often as he should. I go up there!

The CHAIRMAN: Will the hon. member kindly address the Chair?

Mr. RAPHAEL: I know there are farmers in the Gingin district, 20 or 30 miles further along, some of whom grow one crop and others another crop and they exchange commodities. Under this measure they will not be able to continue doing that. The Bill is based on very fertile land, such as that in the district of the member for Murray-Wellington which produces good crops. But we have to look at the other side of the picture and consider the people who have to grow potatoes on very poor land. There are sandy plains at Gingin and the crop produced from an acre there is very different from that mentioned by the hon. member and the Minister. Ten tons to the acre are produced on beautifully fertilised ground where people have had money to give the crop the necessary attention. It is a different proposition on poor land. The potatoes grown by people who have poor land and have not the necessary fertiliser to accelerate growth are much smaller. It would be wrong for Parliament to limit this to half an acre. There are families—probably the Leader of the Opposition knows some of them—comprising about 15 members, who grow sufficient for their own needs. I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition has been visiting there or not. I have seen two acres of potatoes growing on one farm.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I have heard about those two acres.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the hon. member kindly resume his seat! I direct the attention of members to the fact that I demand decorum and some degree of dignity while a member is orderly debating. This is my final warning. If members refuse to obey my call for order and continue to be responsible for the undignified conduct evident in the last moment or two, I shall take action and some members will not have the pleasure of contributing further to the debate. That is final!

Mr. RAPHAEL: As it stands, the Bill will impose a hardship on many people who do not grow potatoes for sale. The member for Murray-Wellington and the member for Albany have said that anyone growing over half an acre grows to sell and, unless the Bill is agreed to, their license fees will be lost. Is the Bill to be a money-making venture? Some members seem to be fearful that we shall lose a lot of money as a result of some growers not being registered. I do not think the Min-

ister should agree with that outlook. The member for Roebourne has asked what the Bill is for. Now we are finding out! Apparently it is regarded as a revenue-producing concern! I hope the amendment will be agreed to.

Mr. CROSS: I support the amendment. We should not bother with people growing less than an acre of potatoes. Some people may think no potatoes are grown in the Canning district, but the Canning River area is the only place in the State that can grow 15 or 16 tons to the acre. There are people in that locality who are growing from a half to three-quarters of an acre of potatoes and to license them is ridiculous. They are growing for their own use. Being market gardeners, some of them may take a couple of tons to market. Now it is proposed that they should secure a license to enable them to deal with an odd load or two.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I hope the amendment will not be agreed to. In my opinion the half acre was mentioned for the particular purpose of not interfering with what might be termed the backyard grower. Quite a number of people in the metropolitan area grow a few potatoes in their backyard. The usual building site in the metropolitan area is a quarter-acre block. By the time a house and a garage have been erected there is not much of the land left for a vegetable garden in the backyard. At least seven bags of seed potatoes are needed to crop half an acre, and I cannot imagine many metropolitan working class people buying seven bags and expensive manure. What the majority does is to get about a stone of potatoes and plant them in the back yard with a little stable manure. The Bill is not intended to interfere with those people. Once an acre is put under crop the grower is undertaking a commercial business. The object of the Bill is to charge a fee to potato growers to enable them to control their own affairs. People are allowed to grow half an acre of potatoes without having to secure a license. The money collected from registration fees will be spent in the interests of the potato growing industry. Probably one of the main directions in which it will be spent will be in the control of various diseases. Doubtless the committee will consist of

people who understand the industry and will be able to advise the Minister as to how the fund shall be disbursed.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not want the Minister to deal with that clause. We are dealing with the amendment to Clause 3 moved by the member for Victoria Park.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: It would be in the best interests of the Bill to allow the clause to stand as printed.

Mr. SAMPSON: I would remind members that one-quarter acre is the area allowed under the Marketing of Onions Act. I would also remind the member for Canning that his statement that the land abutting on the Canning River produces an average of 15 tons per acre—

Mr. Raphael: He did not say that at all!

Mr. SAMPSON: He said that land produces 15 tons per acre.

Mr. Cross: So it does. You ask Packer.

Mr. SAMPSON: It is wonderful land, and I am amazed at the member for Canning, seeing that the land produces three times the average crop, wanting to increase the area to one full acre before the land is registered. He has put up a very sound reason why the area should be maintained. Any person who has an acre of that land, or any of it at all, and uses it for potato-growing should be registered.

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	9
Noes	33
Majority against	24

AYES.	
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. McDonald
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. North
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Hughes	Mr. Cross
Mr. Keenan	(Teller.)

NOES.	
Mr. Abbott	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Berry	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Boyle	Mr. Seward
Mr. Coverley	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Doney	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Fox	Mr. Styants
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Triat
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Warner
Mr. Latham	Mr. Watts
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Mann	Mr. Willmott
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Wise
Mr. Millington	Mr. Withers
Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Panten	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. HUGHES: I move an amendment—

That in line 6 of Subclause 1 the words "obtained a license" be struck out, and the words "registered himself as a grower" inserted in lieu.

It is agreed that the object is not to compel a man to obtain a license which he may or may not get, but merely to register himself as a grower. As I read the clause, he must obtain a license from some authority which may or may not grant it. No conditions are laid down which entitle or disentitle one to a license. If the real object is to secure registration the Bill should say so plainly. The grower would then merely go along of his own volition and register himself.

Mr. McDonald: Like orchard registration.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. A person who has the root of a fruit tree in the ground has to register as an orchard, and nobody can say him yea or nay. That root can mature into a tree without any danger of a criminal offence being committed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The purpose of this Bill is to provide for an Act to license potato-growers. "Licensing" in this case becomes synonymous with registration. In a subsequent paragraph in the clause being discussed provision exists for application to be made, upon which application and the payment of the prescribed fee the license shall be issued. It is unnecessary to delete these words.

Mr. WATTS: I was hopeful that the Minister might agree to accept this amendment. It would bring to an end the enthusiasm displayed against a very reasonable Bill. There is some substance in the view expressed by the member for East Perth, although I have the greatest confidence in the Minister's bona fides in this matter, and I know exactly what he intends. Unfortunately there is a feeling that the right to grant the license connotes the right to refuse it. Because of that fear, it has been argued, particularly since the tea adjournment, there is some attempt to restrict the acreage. I am perfectly certain there is no such desire, and no such intention on the part of the Minister. It would not make the slightest difference to the revenue available for the purposes of this Bill if "registration" were provided instead of "license." The Bill has no provision, as the Minister suggests, that the licensing authority, whatever it may be, must issue or renew a license. No harm

would be done if "registration" were the word used instead of "license." If I could see that the Bill would be spoilt by this amendment I would not suggest that it, or anything similar, be agreed to.

Mr. McDONALD: There is an element of doubt. As I understood the Minister, the object is to register growers in order to ascertain how many there are and gain some knowledge of the extent of production. The member for Katanning says that the amendment will not detract from the merits of the Bill and the objects of the Minister. If there is any possibility of power being given to exercise discretion, many members like myself would like to see some safeguard provided. We would not be prepared to leave the great power of restriction in the hands of the Under-Secretary. I hope the amendment will be considered.

Mr. HILL: I support the views of the member for Katanning. The annual report of the Potato Marketing Board of Tasmania contains a copy of the rules and regulations, subparagraph (c) of which states that "registered" shall mean enrolled on the official register.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Bill is designed to license potato growers. The term "license" is used throughout the Bill. This is to enable growers to conform with requirements and to enable us to give them a license, permit or sanction to grow the specified acreage for which they pay a prescribed fee. The Bill will be preferable in its present form.

Mr. HUGHES: Surely there is a difference between registering and licensing, particularly where the licensing must be done by some person other than the grower and the grower has the right to register himself!

Mr. RODOREDA: If we add to Subclause 2 words to the effect that the Under-Secretary shall issue a license—

Hon. N. Keenan: You have not provided that an application for a license may not be refused.

Mr. RODOREDA: Under my proposal the word "license" would be retained and the wishes of the Minister and other members would be met.

Mr. ABBOTT: If the word "registration" is used, the Bill will have to be recast. The same object could be attained if, at the end

of Subclause 2, the following words were added:—"and upon such application for a license, it shall be granted."

Progress reported.

BILL—FIRE BRIGADES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th October.

MR. WARNER (Mt. Marshall) [9.27]: The Minister for the North-West, in moving the second reading, told us that this was only a short measure. The same remark has been made about many other Bills, and though they have been short in words, they have led to long and tedious debate. This Bill, however, can be included in the category of short measures and the amendments are certainly brief. The object is to alter the basis of contributions, and the main effect will be the reduction of the amount to be contributed by the local authorities. From this point of view the proposal deserves careful consideration, for when a reduction is granted to one party, somebody else must pay more in order to equalise the total collections. In this instance, according to the Bill, the difference must be made good by the insurance companies. The Minister told us that about 100 fire insurance companies are operating in the State, and those companies will have to provide additional funds equal to the reductions granted to the local governing bodies and the State Government.

According to the figures quoted by the Minister, which appear to be correct, approximately £100,000 has been realised by the fire insurance companies by way of annual profits on their business. That is certainly a large amount of money to be secured in profits. Therefore it seems to me that the extra amount demanded by this Bill, spread over the whole of the companies, is quite reasonable, more particularly when we consider the relief it will afford to the local governing bodies. Consideration must be given to the local bodies for several reasons. Their revenue has been appreciably reduced because of the lower prices received for commodities raised in their areas and through settlers being driven off their holdings. Further, the recent rationing of petrol will lead to a considerable reduction in their receipts from license fees.

When we come to observe that the Act has not been amended for so many years, we realise that representatives of local governing bodies in this Chamber have missed an opportunity to secure great help for those concerned. The matter has been overlooked in the past, but it must not be missed on this occasion. The figures supplied by the Minister are illuminating in so far as from them we learn of the great differences in the amounts paid by our local authorities compared with amounts paid by local authorities in the Eastern States. From the statement made by the Minister it appears that Western Australian local authorities pay on a far higher basis than do local authorities in any other State of the Federation. The Bill before the Chamber proposes to alter the bases of contribution thus: Insurance companies from three-eighths to five-ninths; local governing bodies from three-eighths to two-ninths; the Government from one-quarter to two-ninths. I have given the Bill a fair amount of thought, and taking everything into consideration I believe that I should be acting wrongly if I did not give the measure my full support. In the past the insurance companies have been on an excellent and lucrative wicket. I support the Bill the more readily because the saving to the local governing bodies will benefit a big percentage of men on lower incomes, who in the past have contributed largely to the happy position of the companies. We would not be acting in the best interests of the people if we did not give our full support to the alterations which the Bill proposes.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [9.33]: Seeing that the parent Act was passed 25 years ago, I must say I feel disappointed at the tinkering nature of the alterations proposed in connection with fire brigade charges. Members opposite may have derived the impression that local governing authorities in country districts will secure considerable relief, but the amounts they pay for fire-fighting costs are in the aggregate not great. The major portion of the saving will be made by the city of Perth; in fact, Perth will save more than will all the rest of the local authorities throughout the State put together.

Ever since the passing of the Act, strange to relate, the local authorities have paid the greater portion of the cost of fire protection throughout Western Australia. The

Minister for the North-West may reply that the insurance companies have paid three-eighths of the cost and the local authorities three-eighths also. That is all very well as far as it goes, but those payments do not represent the whole of the cost borne by local authorities, which have always paid the cost of installing hydrants. Local authorities in the greater metropolitan area know something about this, because it has proved a fairly expensive pastime for them. I will quote the relevant figures for South Perth. Installation of hydrants cost that municipality a total of £685 during the last five years, in addition to ordinary costs. In 1937 installations of new hydrants cost South Perth £132; in 1938, £161; in 1939, £54; in 1940, £204; in 1941, £134. The Melville Road Board, portion of which is in my electorate, has spent in the last four years nearly £250 on installation of hydrants. These expenditures are considerable, but represent only a fraction of what was recommended by the Fire Brigades Board.

Certainly the number of fire hydrants in the Melville district is totally inadequate, even in the settled areas, where the protection should be sufficient. To make up the leeway by installing all the hydrants requested by the Fire Brigades Board would cost the Melville Road Board at least another £1,000. Similar conditions prevail in the Canning Road District. The Canning Road Board has not spent a great deal in this respect, because it is a poor board. When the Fire Brigades Board has asked the Canning Board to put in 10 hydrants, it probably put in one. The Canning Road District carries a scattered population; nearly 4,000 people reside in it, but they are spread over a large area. Members should recollect that a hydrant costs about £12, and that the cost of all hydrants installed has been met by the local authorities. The total cost of all installations made by local authorities is very large.

To me it is amazing that they did not combine long ago to insist that the insurance companies, whose risks they were protecting, should pay a fair share of the cost. The Bill does not seek to remedy that anomaly. The local authorities will, under the Bill, remain responsible for the total cost of installation of hydrants; but the position will be somewhat fairer because the charge on local authorities will be reduced and that on insurance companies increased.

I had anticipated that the Minister would bring down a comprehensive amending Bill and take advantage of the changes that have occurred during the 25 years the Act has been in operation. Years ago fire protection services were rendered by horse-drawn machines, and each local authority had—and still has—its own fire district. For a good many years an engine could not be sent from one district to another without the consent of the other district. The present position is that a system of stations exists in the metropolitan area, and that some local authorities are sheltering behind the city machines and paying little or nothing towards the cost of fire protection.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not wish to burke discussion, but the hon. member is getting wide of the Bill. All the Bill provides for is the local government contribution to the Fire Brigades Board.

Mr. CROSS: That involves this aspect.

Mr. SPEAKER: It has nothing whatever to do with the Bill. I must ask the hon. member to stick to the Bill.

Mr. CROSS: Very well, Mr. Speaker. The contributions made by the two parties, local governing authorities and insurance companies, in my opinion should have been adjusted long ago, and an amending Bill should have been brought down to reorganise the whole system. The cost of hydrants should be allocated in a different manner altogether. There should have been a single fire district, and there should also be a flat fire rate. All parties would then contribute in fair proportions. It must be admitted that the larger proportion of the cost of fire protection should be borne by the fire insurance companies, who get the benefit of that protection.

Fire brigades protect the risks for which premiums are collected by those companies. It does not matter twopence to the local authorities, except that the residents are affected as to whether or not hydrants are installed. Although I am not satisfied with the Bill—I do not think it goes far enough—I shall support it because I believe it will afford some relief, long overdue, to local authorities. It ought to have gone further and made some alteration with respect to hydrants. In my opinion, it is quite unfair that the cost of these should be borne wholly by the local authority. If the actual figures were known, I believe it would be ascertained that the system of hydrants in operation at

the present time, particularly in the greater metropolitan area, has cost the local authorities scores of thousands of pounds. I support the second reading.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [9.41]: This Bill is confined to a variation of the basis on which the cost of our fire brigade services is maintained. As it is now, and has been for the last 25 years, the local authorities find three-eighths of the cost, the fire insurance companies three-eighths and the State two-eighths. It is now proposed that the insurance companies should find five-ninths, the local authorities two-ninths and the State two-ninths. The result will be that the local authorities and the State will each contribute substantially less, and to the extent that their contributions are reduced, the deficiency will be made up by the increased contribution of the fire insurance companies. The Minister has very properly told us of a desire to relieve the local authorities from part of the obligation they now bear, and of course the State is always pleased to be relieved of part of any obligation it may have to bear. But there is another point of view and I have asked the fire insurance companies to let me have the latest information of fire brigade practice. I would like to tell the House what that position is. The member for Canning (Mr. Cross) is quite right in saying that our fire brigade legislation is due for an overhaul. That was recognised in England, where a Royal Commission, known as the Riverdale Commission, was appointed to examine the whole system of fire brigade organisation in England. It brought in a report in 1936 and two years later—in 1938—the Imperial Parliament passed a new Fire Brigades Act.

The contribution by fire insurance companies towards the cost of fire brigades, which we see in our present legislation and which obtains, in fact, in the legislation of other States, has a historical background. Members will recollect from their reading that in the early days of the last century there were no organised fire-fighting appliances as far as the local authorities and the Government were concerned, but the fire insurance companies instituted and themselves maintained wholly a fire-fighting service. They did so because they had

insured the buildings. Neither the local authorities nor the State had done anything to provide for an organisation to fight fires. From the fact that the fire insurance companies themselves inaugurated the first fire-fighting services arose the traditional idea that there should be a contribution by those companies towards the cost of fire brigade organisation. That has continued up to the present day, in Australia at all events, on the theory that although the State or the local authority took over the control and management of fire brigades, the fire insurance companies, being parties interested, should contribute a part of the maintenance of the fire brigades. That was all considered by the Riverdale Commission in England, which came to the conclusion that it was quite wrong in principle to compel fire insurance companies to contribute towards the cost of fire brigades. I will read the relevant portion of the report of the Riverdale Royal Commission of 1936.

Mr. Cross: There are hundreds of boards in England and hundreds of methods of collecting fees.

Mr. McDONALD: Not now!

Mr. Cross: Yes, there are.

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. member has not read the recent English legislation of 1938.

Mr. Cross: Yes, I have seen it. There are still over 200 boards.

Mr. McDONALD: In England there are still some fire brigades which are under the control of local authorities or local organisations, but as I read the English Act of 1938 the whole idea was to consolidate the control of the fire-fighting organisations, that is, the peace-time establishment. Since the war started, of course the fire-fighting appliances have increased to a tremendous extent. One of the early Royal Commissions in England dealing with this subject published a report in 1923. This was a Commission which preceded the Riverdale Commission of 1936. The Royal Commission of 1923 said this—

There appears to be no more reason for the fire department of insurance companies to subsidise fire brigades than for the marine department of insurance companies to subsidise lighthouses or the burglary department of insurance companies to subsidise the police.

That is the view, taken after careful consideration, by the Royal Commissions in England, and it was incorporated in the English Fire Brigades Act of 1938. There in England, in 1938, by this legislation for the first time fire insurance companies ceased to be required to make any contribution, and the principle was accepted that the maintenance of fire-fighting appliances and fire brigades was the function of the State, just the same as were the police, lighthouses and various other organisations, such as traffic authorities controlling streets and keeping them free from accidents. These were charges upon the people, the ratepayers and taxpayers in general, and should not be put even in part upon individual sections of society. So that is the last word in England on the relationship between the fire insurance companies and fire brigade organisations. That principle has also been adopted in South Africa, but so far not in Australia, because it is a very recent change in England. It is only three years old today.

What I want to say to the Minister who introduced the Bill in what I might term a very fair way in putting forward the point of view of the local authorities, is that I think, with the member for Canning (Mr. Cross) to some extent, that this matter might well be deferred and the whole fire brigade organisation considered in the light of modern events and developments, so that there might be taken into consideration not only what the member for Canning says about the development from horse-drawn vehicles to mechanically-propelled vehicles, but also modern views as to the basis of contribution towards the cost of fire brigade installations.

The Bill proposes that we should adopt the basis of the South Australian Act as regards contributions by fire insurance companies. In South Australia by a Bill passed some ten years ago, the insurance companies contribute five-ninths and the same ratio is proposed here. I am informed that the South Australian Act was passed in the depression years at a time when it was particularly desired to relieve local authorities and the State and, like so many Acts passed in depression years and supposed to be of a temporary character, it has very firmly entrenched itself ever since. But South Australia is the only State in the Commonwealth in which as large a pro-

portion as five-ninths is exacted from the insurance companies. In South Australia the insurance companies are required to pay five-ninths, which is equal approximately to 55 per cent. Next we have New South Wales which requires 50 per cent., Queensland 43 per cent., Victoria 33 per cent., and Tasmania 33 per cent. It is proposed to raise our contribution to make it equal to that of the highest in the Commonwealth.

There are some arguments of weight against the principle which obtains in this Bill of passing the cost of fire brigade establishments on to the fire insurance companies. I do not propose to go into them in detail, but fire brigade installations are a service to the whole community, and the whole community is taxed, or should be taxed, to meet their cost. If the insurance companies are to pay, as we now propose they shall, 55 per cent., or any other percentage, of the cost of fire brigade installations, that amount paid by the companies will of course be paid by the people who own houses and insure them. In the end, through premiums, the people themselves pay all these costs. The result is that when part of the cost of fire brigades is borne by the insurance companies and, through the insurance companies, by the people who own properties and insure them, it means that those who insure their property against loss by fire pay twice, first of all—

The Premier: No, that is not so! If a person does not insure, he has to pay all the cost of fire brigade service at the time of the fire.

Mr. McDONALD: That is so; I am coming to that. Apart from what the Premier mentions, under the system now proposed the people who insure will pay twice. They will pay as ordinary taxpayers and then pay the amount the insurance companies pay on account of the fact that they pay their premiums. They will therefore pay more than will people who own property and do not insure. As the Premier pointed out, by the terms of our Act, if premises are not insured and are burnt and the fire brigade attends, there is power for the brigade to claim against the owner of the insured premises the cost of the service the brigade has rendered.

The Premier: They do, too!

Mr. McDONALD: No doubt they do. But after all a man may go for many

years, and must do so on the ordinary ratio of premiums to total cost of claims, without having a fire, and without having to pay twopence to a fire brigade for services rendered in extinguishing a fire. The mere fact that occasionally some person not insured may have to pay the whole cost of services rendered by a fire brigade does not make much difference to the fact that under this system the people who do insure will pay for the upkeep of fire brigade services more than will the people who do not insure because they will pay first as ratepayers and secondly through their insurance premiums.

The Minister was not quite well informed as to the number of insurance companies to which this obligation extends. I think the number he mentioned was 108. Actually, of those 108 insurance companies operating in the State, there are many who do not touch fire insurance at all and do not contribute anything towards fire brigade maintenance. They deal with all kinds of insurance—motor vehicles, aviation, marine, and so on. Those who are actually contributories to the cost of fire brigade services in this State number 73.

Mr. Cross: There is a list in the annual report.

Mr. McDONALD: Actually, as there are many subsidiary agencies, the real number will probably be smaller still. Of the number who actually do contribute and pay this proportion of the cost of fire brigade maintenance, there are many that contribute a very small sum. Many contribute merely the minimum of £10. With regard to those who do larger business, they will pay in the first place a substantially increased sum, because in his second reading speech the Minister said that the operations of the Bill would increase the contribution from the insurance companies from £26,000 a year to £39,000. There will thus be a substantial increase.

What I suggest to the Minister is this: Review the whole matter of fire brigade legislation, not only from the technical point of view but also from the point of view of the burden of contributions and how it can be borne, taking into account the findings of the Royal Commission in England and the determination arrived at in the English House of Commons and m-

bodied in the 1938 Act. The Royal Commission recommended that this kind of contribution was against the principle that no section of the public should be taxed or compelled to pay for services rendered to the whole public. People paid for those services in ordinary tax, and it was pointed out that it was just as unfair to exact additional contributions as it would be to tax shipowners towards the cost of maintaining lighthouses, or to tax various people who might be insuring against burglary or things of that kind with a certain portion of the cost of maintenance of the police. It is a matter that might well be considered by the Minister and his advisers, and after they had considered the convictions arrived at in England on this subject, a Bill with up-to-date modifications to meet existing conditions might be brought forward in a comprehensive form.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [10.1]: I propose to support the Bill, not because I am very concerned about the amount that local authorities have been contributing in the past, but because the conditions in this Bill are fair and reasonable. There will, of course, be a saving to local authorities, and quite a substantial one. It will reduce their contribution by about 40 per cent., and at a time when they are likely to lose revenue from various sources, some outside their control and some occasioned by legislation. Local authorities will be appreciative of the fact that they will save some small amount in their expenditure as a result of this measure.

My friend, the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) suggested that it is reasonable that insurance companies should not subscribe, and he proposes, without saying that that should be the method adopted in Western Australia, we should have some comprehensive review of the whole of the legislation appertaining to fire brigades. After hearing his remarks and those of the member for Canning (Mr. Cross) I am inclined to the view that it might be a very good idea. In fact, it would be, but it would take some considerable time. At the moment we have this legislation before us, and we have to make up our minds as to whether the contribution of the local authorities should be decreased and the contribution of the Government decreased by

a small amount, and the contribution of the insurance companies increased.

It has been suggested that the net result of an increase to the insurance companies would be an increase in insurance premiums. There is no justification for such an increase. Without there is some substantial change in their financial positions from the point of view of fire insurance, making imperative an increase of their premiums, I suggest the Minister takes steps to protect the public, because I believe such increase would be unwarranted through the passing of this Bill.

I have here an invaluable little book issued under the authority of the Chief Secretary. It is known as the "Pocket Year Book." Taking the figures for the year 1938-39, the last available, and which I may say compare with those of the previous five years I find that the revenue from insurance premiums for fire insurance reached a total of £375,000. I understand these figures are collated by the Statistician from returns supplied by the insurance companies. In consequence there is little margin for error. As against that total they paid, in the same year, £82,000 in claims. It is apparent there was an amount of £290,000 more received in premiums than was paid in claims for fires. That is a very substantial total.

The premium amount in excess of claims represents something like 400 per cent. We come to expenditure other than claims, and we find there were commission and agents' charges totalling £59,012, and other expenditure £119,000. I presume, and I think rightly, that the other expenditure includes the £26,000 which the insurance companies at the present time are liable to contribute to the Fire Brigades Board. The total of all these items, claims, commission and agents' charges, and other expenditure, is £260,000, so that in the year under review a net amount was available of £114,000, which represents approximately 30 per cent of the total premiums received, and 150 per cent of the amounts paid out in claims. I do not fear the consequences so far as these institutions are concerned of the additional amount they are asked to pay under this measure.

I have never had the opportunity to examine the report of the Riverdale Commission, to which the member for West Perth made reference. I have no doubt that

in addition to the grounds, on which he touched lightly, other grounds were given by the Commission for what I understand was their suggestion that insurance companies should be substantially relieved.

Mr. McDonald: Totally relieved!

Mr. WATTS: Notwithstanding that Commission, it seems reasonable that insurance companies should contribute to the cost of maintaining fire brigade institutions. If I think back for a moment to the town from which I come, Katanning, I find that a very substantial revenue is received every year by the insurance companies operating there for the insurance of the various premises in the town which are of a capital value of some £750,000, and in which town there has not been a fire which required a claim of any size to be paid—no building has been destroyed or damaged—for approximately 12 years. I do not know what achieved that—whether it has been the good fortune of the community, or whether it be due to the fact that at times there has been no water and therefore the people have been exceptionally careful. Those times, I hope, are well past now. Nevertheless, those are the facts.

The local authorities as the member for Canning has stated, have been put to considerable and constant expense respecting the maintenance of hydrants, pipelines and so forth, and that maintenance has been rendered even more difficult at times by the intermittent flow of water. They have received no contributions or assistance whatever, as the hon. member mentioned, from the insurance companies, for whose benefit—to a very large extent collaterally—as well as for the benefit of the people who own the property, this expenditure has been incurred. If the local authorities took no interest whatever in such matters, and were not compelled to do their duty in that regard, and a fire broke out, it would not be extinguished in the premises in which it commenced or anywhere near them, but would probably wipe out blocks, to the great detriment of the insurance companies. So I argue there undoubtedly is or should be an obligation on the part of the insurance companies to contribute, and the only question that then arises is what is a reasonable contribution.

Probably a fifty-fifty basis would be the most satisfactory. Heretofore the Govern-

ment and the local authorities have paid a little more than have the insurance companies. Now we are asking the insurance companies to pay a little more than is paid by the local authorities and the Government. In view of their revenue from this type of insurance, and in view of the fact that they must expect, if they are to be afforded efficient protection, to pay for it, as we all have to pay for things for our own benefit that we want done efficiently, even if only for our benefit in common with that of other people, we should agree to the Bill, which will do the local authorities some good and will do the insurance companies no harm, and will have the business of fire brigades carried on in future as efficiently as I believe it has been in the past.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [10.12]: The member for Katanning (Mr. Watts) has somewhat shut out from his mind consideration of the principle put to the House by the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) that a public service should be paid for by the public and not by one or other section of the public. His argument, if I grasped it rightly, is that because the insurance companies receive a large sum of money for insuring property against the risk of fire, they should contribute to the upkeep of fire brigades to put out fires, and the question of the amount should then be considered. Let us for one moment contemplate a case of insurance against burglary. Almost every house owner who has anything of value in the way of furniture or other articles insures against burglary.

The Premier: Or a wine cellar.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes, it would be wise to insure that. Personal effects are insured. A burglary may be committed on the premises in the evening or early hours of the night when the occupants are absent at the theatre or elsewhere, and goods of a purely personal character to the value of £30, £40 or £50 or more may be stolen. A prudent person insures against the risk of such loss. Would members suggest that because an insurance company receives a premium for protecting that risk it should pay for the upkeep of the police? That illustration points the principle which the member for West Perth has brought before the Minister as being a matter that should probably be considered before replacing the old statute

with one that will in some degree repeat the errors of the old statute. I desire to second his remarks.

If there is one thing that distinguishes the Parliament of England from any other Parliament in the world it is that it endeavours always to act on broad principles in the laws it enacts. The worst feature of legislation is to ask someone else to pay for something that benefits another section or to pay for a service which is really a service to all. It is of no use the Premier reminding the House that the man who does not insure has to pay for the services of the brigade in the event of a fire. That would not happen once in 500 times, and what would be his view of the matter? Once in 500 times he would be a loser; meanwhile he would pay nothing. This means that those who are more prudent and more careful not only pay the insurance companies for this increased demand made upon them but also contribute to all the other taxes required to maintain our social system. I hope the Minister will carefully consider the appeal that this Bill should be based on some broad principle and not merely on a haphazard tradition that has come down from the past.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1941-42.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 9th October; Mr. Withers in the Chair:

Vote—Workers' Homes Board, £5 (partly considered):

Hon. N. KEENAN: I should like to be informed whether the McNess Housing Trust is administered by the Workers' Homes Board?

The Premier: No.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Then I should like to know how the policy of the trust is determined.

The PREMIER: The members of the trust are the Secretary of the Workers' Homes Board; Mr. Alfred Carson, who is associated with the Silver Chain; and the

late Mr. W. D. Hardwick, who died very recently. The vacancy will of course be filled by the Government. All the work done by the Workers' Homes Board in connection with the trust is done gratuitously.

Hon. N. KEENAN: What control is possessed by the Government over the trust? Is the policy of the trust in any way dictated or even suggested by the Government?

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is governed by an Act of Parliament.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The policy is not. It is a policy that varies in a manner difficult to understand. Sometimes applications are refused because of the frontage not being sufficient, and yet other applications are granted with even less frontage. I know of a case in which the land was entirely desirable except that the frontage was limited. There the applicant was told that there was a rule to the effect that a certain frontage had to be possessed by a block before the block could be acquired. In what way is the policy of the trust framed and determined? Is there any suggestion that the trust should not carry out work of a particular character, or that it should, if possible, erect homes in suitable localities even where the area of land must be restricted because, obviously, where land is valuable the applicant can have only a small area of it?

The CHAIRMAN: Is the McNess Housing Trust connected with the Workers' Homes Vote?

Hon. N. KEENAN: I must acknowledge that I am not in order.

The PREMIER: The history of the McNess homes is well known. Some local authorities and the Town Planning Commissioner set their faces against building dwelling houses on very small blocks. If the local authority concerned agrees, the McNess Trust generally agrees to the erection of a wooden house on a small block. The trust has practically unlimited powers regarding expenditure of money within the ambit of the Act. The Secretary of the Workers' Homes Board endeavours to keep the policy of the McNess Housing Trust somewhat on the lines of the Workers' Homes Board.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I support the remarks made by the member for North-East Fremantle on Thursday last. Now I would like to say something on behalf of "C" class men, who experience great diffi-

culty in getting homes and often have three, four or more children. I have had requests from them to see whether it is not possible to get them either workers' homes or McNess homes.

The CHAIRMAN: I would not proceed with McNess homes.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: These men ask me to endeavour to get homes for them from the Workers' Homes Board. Most of them have no means whatever, and the board's reply has been that they cannot possibly pay the rent—this although they receive considerable amounts from the State for the support of their wives and children. Their rent would be more certain than that of most other men, because they have the State behind them. I think the better course would be not to increase the grant, but to allow these men to obtain houses.

The Premier: They can get a house by putting down a deposit of £1.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I have never yet been able to get a house for any of these men in my district, although they are perfectly respectable men. They are, however, on State allowance. They live in Subiaco, but in part houses.

The Minister for Mines: What is called a cheap house could not be built in Subiaco.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: No, but there are other districts. My appeal is that the Workers' Homes Board should provide these men with houses. They do not care where they go as long as they can get homes. As things are, they are hounded about from place to place. If they take a part house the owner of the other half does not want the children, who are there only on sufferance. I hope the Premier will do something to make homes available for these men.

The Premier: Under the leasehold system homes can be obtained for an initial deposit of £1.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I was informed by the secretary of the Workers' Homes Board that it was impossible to do anything for these men because they could not pay rent.

Mr. FOX: I believe there has been a departure from the principle which was responsible for the passing of the Workers' Homes Act. At the outset that measure was enacted to enable those people who were most in need of houses to secure them.

But that is not the position at the present time. There are a number of widows with children in this State who cannot obtain a home from the Workers' Homes Board.

The Minister for Mines: They could not do so when the scheme was introduced.

Mr. FOX: Nevertheless, that should be the object of the board. Many men in constant work and in receipt of fairly good salaries can make their own arrangements, yet we find that they are able to secure workers' homes in aristocratic suburbs. Those needing assistance are families who have lost their breadwinner and consequently cannot obtain a house unless assisted by the State. In most cases these families get a small allowance from the Child Welfare Department and live in the poorest type of house, for which they must pay from 10s. to 12s. a week, and sometimes more. These houses are without bathrooms, washing troughs and other conveniences and really ought to be demolished. It would not be difficult for the Government to raise a little extra taxation from people in receipt of incomes over £1,000 and up to £5,000. That taxation should be earmarked for the purpose of providing homes for people who have no chance of providing houses for themselves. I would tax the person in receipt of a lower income, say, £600 per annum, and thus members of Parliament would be included.

The Premier: I think Mr. Curtin will be attending to them!

Mr. FOX: The present position is disgraceful, when we have so many people in the State very well off.

The Minister for Mines: Oh!

Hon. N. Keenan: Do you mean the members on the Treasury bench?

Mr. FOX: They are well off, too. I would favour taking a fair cut from their salaries in order to provide houses for the people I have mentioned. There are people receiving salaries higher than those paid to the members on the Treasury bench. In Western Australia, 1,060 persons receive salaries between £1,000 and £1,500; 422, between £1,500 and £2,000; 296, between £2,000 and £3,000; 92, between £3,000 and £4,000; 87 between £4,000 and £5,000; over £5,000, 59. A tax of 3d. in the pound on those incomes would raise about £40,000. The people so taxed would not go short of a meal, a bed, a suit of clothes or some necessary stimulant.

The Premier: The hon. member is out of order. He should have discussed this matter on the last item.

Mr. FOX: A person buying a workers' home for £800 has a period of 35 years in which to pay for it. He pays instalments of about 25s. per week and by the time he has concluded his contract he has actually bought $2\frac{1}{2}$ houses; that is, if he lives long enough. We realise that the whole thing is wrapped up in the question of interest charges. I noticed recently that the Federal Government intends to inaugurate a housing scheme and that representatives from this State will be invited to attend a conference on the subject. I hope representations will be made for money to be forthcoming to build workers' homes and other homes at a rental charge of not more than 2 per cent., which ought to be quite sufficient.

The CHAIRMAN: Will Ministers please keep order? I am unable to hear the hon. member speaking.

Mr. FOX: I am quite in agreement with the condition that houses should be built on lots of not less than 50-ft. frontage. There is ample land available in Western Australia and the people should have as much open space as possible. It is better to have a quarter-acre block, although it is fairly large for one person to keep in order, than to have houses built against each other, leaving no room in which children may play. I hope that as a result of the proposed conference to be held in Melbourne we shall be successful in obtaining cheaper money with which to build homes for the class of people I have mentioned.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am afraid the previous speaker is not practical in his ideas.

The CHAIRMAN: I must request the hon. member to confine himself to the Workers' Homes Board, and not trouble himself about the previous speaker's ideas.

Mr. SAMPSON: Unquestionably the Treasurer is unable to find the money required to build so many additional workers' homes. It would be better, instead of build-houses at £800 each, to provide smaller amounts in order to permit the building of a greater number of houses. A person who can afford to build a house costing £800 ought to be able to make his own arrangements.

The Premier: You cannot get much of a place for less.

Mr. SAMPSON: For £800 one can get a very good home.

The Premier: No!

Mr. SAMPSON: The building by the board of homes costing £800 in effect prevents many people from securing a home at all. Another discouraging feature is that it takes at least 12 months to obtain the board's approval for a home. Although I am not an advocate of weatherboard homes, in the circumstances there may be no alternative.

The Minister for Mines: Where do you suggest they should be erected?

Mr. SAMPSON: In any of the suburbs.

The Minister for Mines: Can they be erected?

Mr. SAMPSON: I should say so.

The Minister for Mines: You ask the local governing bodies.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SAMPSON: At all events, there is a belief abroad that Ministers have some power over local authorities, and if these have done something which they should not have done they can be overridden.

The Minister for Mines: Not so far as local governing bodies are concerned, while you people are over there.

Mr. SAMPSON: I find that the people over here have practical minds and are anxious to assist, but however sympathetic the Treasurer may be he cannot provide very many homes of a value of £800, and those who are in need should receive consideration. A person requiring a specially good home should be able to look after himself, make arrangements with a builder and raise money through one of the building societies and thus become more or less independent. His position does not call for special sympathy. There are many other people who require a home, even if it is a weatherboard home. If properly finished with plasterboard ceilings and linings, a weatherboard home can be quite comfortable.

The Minister for Mines: How many rooms? Four?

Mr. SAMPSON: The house would have to be built according to the needs of the family.

The Minister for Mines: A four-roomed house of that type would cost £750 at present.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am afraid the Minister is quite out of touch with the costs.

The Minister for Mines: You are out of touch.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope this cross-firing will cease.

The Minister for Mines: We are not cross-firing; we are giving the hon. member information.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am very sincere about this. It always seems to me to be so futile to provide what are really comparatively expensive homes for some people while for those who are most in need of a home no money is left. They go on waiting. It takes at least 12 months to get approval, and even then there is no certainty. I understand there are requests for very many homes. I have previously said this and others have said it, and it is an absolute fact, that the special needs of a big section of the people call for a cheaper type of house. It is no use saying it costs £720 or £750 to build a weatherboard house. I know different.

The Minister for Mines: You said a weatherboard house, with plasterboard linings, etc.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes. The Minister would not expect people to live in a weatherboard house that was not decently lined.

The Minister for Mines: No, I would not! But you try to build one for less than £750!

The Minister for Labour: Do not take any notice of him!

Mr. SAMPSON: I know people who built a fine place at Kalamunda with a front and back verandah for £550.

The Premier: How long ago?

Mr. SAMPSON: Three years ago.

The Minister for Mines: Back in the dark ages!

Mr. SAMPSON: The price of timber has not increased to a very great extent, but I know there is sales tax to be added. However, if the Minister for Mines is determined that nothing can be done for these people—

The Minister for Mines: I do not want to lead people astray by telling them that houses can be built at that price.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am positive they can be.

The Minister for Mines: You know they cannot. You have a try!

Mr. SAMPSON: They can be if workmen can be secured. That is the one difficulty. Every time I say this I suppose the Minister

will say it cannot be done. It is possible for homes to be erected at a price less than £720 as stated by the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: I said £750.

Mr. SAMPSON: It is possible for such homes to be built and properly finished with plasterboard for much less than that.

The Minister for Mines: Why should these people have to live in weatherboard houses? They are entitled to brick houses the same as you are.

Mr. SAMPSON: Of course they are, if the Treasurer can find the money!

The Minister for Mines: Who said he could not?

Mr. SAMPSON: I have told the Minister three times that it is impossible for the Workers' Homes Board to find the funds and the Minister's persistent contradiction will not alter the fact that the money is not available. As I know the Premier would like to build better homes, and is unable to do so, I say we should allow those who want more expensive homes to look after themselves and let us care for those unable to do what is required.

Mr. SEWARD: Some years ago I made a plea under this vote for the Government to adopt the policy of extending the benefits of this scheme to country districts. The Government has a very good precedent in New Zealand where I think that last year, speaking from memory, £4,000,000 was allocated for the erection of workers' homes.

Mr. Styants: The people never own homes there. That is the trouble. They pay rent for them.

Mr. SEWARD: I am referring to workers' homes.

Mr. Styants: They do not build workers' homes there.

Mr. SEWARD: If we could do something of that kind here in the majority of cases we would have the benefit of the Government owning the security. I do not advocate building brick homes to which members seem to be so wedded. There are only certain parts of this country in which the bricks can be made. Over a very extensive part of the country is to be found plenty of sand and to say that cement brick homes cannot be erected for under £800 is ridiculous. A good cement brick home can be built in the country for under £600.

Mr. Doney: Two years ago! Could that be done today?

Mr. SEWARD: In the country towns I refer to such a house could be built for under £600.

Hon. C. G. Latham: If a man makes his own bricks!

Mr. SEWARD: Surely we can get away from contractors who want to force up prices. We are not wedded to those people. In New Zealand years ago all the homes were practically of reinforced concrete. Even the biggest places in the city were being built of reinforced concrete. It is difficult to get iron for that purpose today, but we can use cement bricks and erect very useful and attractive houses. I would like to see the benefit of this scheme extended to the country areas. If anybody suffers from the lack of decent housing conditions in this State, it is the farmers. If this boon were conferred on the farming community the farmers could make bricks themselves on their own property and the wastage of bricks and the cost of carting them from the places where they are made would be avoided, and the money thus saved could be put into the erection of the house. I appeal to the Government to see whether something of that nature could not be undertaken. There is a section in the Agricultural Bank Act enabling a certain amount to be set aside for the erection of a house. I think it is 60 per cent. of the value of the house. It is all very well for the Government to say it has not the money. As was pointed out during the general discussion on the Estimates, the Government is getting millions more per annum than its predecessors did, and I think it is only reasonable that a certain amount should be set aside for the erection of homes in country districts.

Mr. MANN: I notice that the Federal Minister, whose name I cannot remember, intends going into the question of workers' homes. It is, I understand, to be an Australia-wide scheme.

The Minister for Works: You mean War Service Homes?

Mr. MANN: No, this is a housing scheme generally.

Mr. Doney: The Minister concerned is Mr. Frost.

Mr. MANN: If we are to have a contented rural population it is time the farmer had a suitable house in which to live. We have heard from the cross-benches what the farmer's accommodation is. They say he

sleeps in the stable, the fowlyard, or anywhere else. He is forced to live in the most pitiable hovel. He cannot afford proper accommodation. No health authority in the metropolitan area, or any town, would permit such conditions. The farmer is entitled to the conveniences of the city house, if we are to help our rural population. Factories are going ahead in the cities on war production and with the better wages men will leave the country towns. There is, today, a move of population from the country to the city. The wives of many men who have enlisted have decided to live in the city because it is cheaper. In my home town there is not a dearth of houses. There will be a call for buildings during the war period due to the shift of population to the metropolitan area. If ever a housing scheme is evolved, or attempted, throughout Australia, it should apply not only to the cities but to the farming areas as well.

Mr. J. Hegney: Dr. Page put the Housing Trust into operation.

Mr. MANN: It is the future which has to be faced. The cockies are the salt of the earth and the backbone of the country.

Mr. Cross: Hear, hear!

Mr. MANN: These people are worthy of consideration.

Mr. CROSS: One of the Ministers said there were not many areas in which wooden houses could be built. That is true.

Mr. J. Hegney: That does not apply to Belmont, Bayswater, Maylands, Morley Park and Bassendean.

Mr. CROSS: That is so, but in the Caning area there is quite a lot of good building land near the new munitions factory, but it is not possible to get a house there. A deputation waited on the Premier recently and suggested that he arrange for the Workers' Homes Board to get a block of land and build 50 or 60 houses in one lot. The board could do that and there would be a demand for the houses. It would be able to do it cheaply. I do not see why that could not be done.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Wooden or brick houses?

Mr. CROSS: They could put up wooden houses. These could be erected at a cost of £450 and sold to the people at 15s. a week, which is all they can afford to pay. The Workers' Homes Board should begin a post-war planning period for a big hous-

ing scheme. It is bad luck for Russia that the war came when it did, because one of the last schemes entered into by Russia prior to the war was a tremendous housing scheme. It was started in 1938.

Mr. Sampson: Would they be under the Workers' Homes Board?

Mr. CROSS: They started to rebuild Moscow. Up to the outbreak of war they had half completed the reconstruction. They demolished all buildings except the Government buildings.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You are referring to the Kremlin.

Mr. CROSS: They rebuilt all residential houses.

Mr. Mann: How do you know?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. CROSS: In Western Australia at present there is a tremendous shortage of houses to be rented at anything from 15s. to 25s. a week. Immediately a house is available for sale or letting dozens of people come forward. There have been two or three families in a house. A block of flats is being built in Stirling-highway, and will not be completed for three or four months. It is not possible now to get one of those flats, so great is the demand for houses. Special consideration should be given so that the poorer people can get houses at a price they can afford to pay. I appreciate the fact that the Premier put an item on the Estimates under which we could discuss workers' homes. I hope we will have fruitful results because people in the greater metropolitan area, just as well as in the country areas, are aware that there is today the greatest shortage of houses this State has experienced.

Mr. STYANTS: I regret that the Workers' Homes Board has been unable to build homes on the goldfields. The principal reason is the inability to get reasonable tenders and the excessive cost of building. The best tenders received for similar houses to those erected for about £450 and £475 three years ago are in the vicinity of £650. Not only has the cost of building risen to an almost prohibitive height in the metropolitan area, but it has retarded the building of homes on the goldfields.

If the Workers' Homes Board is going effectively to deal with the matter of providing homes for the people it should not be dependent on calling tenders. I believe

an excessive profit is being made. The board should either work in conjunction with the Public Works Department or have its own staff of building artisans. That is the only way in which to attack this problem. Many building artisans have enlisted, though builders are not permitted to enlist as such, and there is a shortage; but if the Public Works Department collaborated with the Workers' Homes Board to build homes and if in addition the State Sawmills supplied timber at cost price, I believe the price of these homes could be reduced considerably.

The member for Pingelly quoted the New Zealand scheme. I visited New Zealand three years ago and I should not like to exchange our workers' homes scheme for that of the Dominion. The New Zealand scheme is not comparable with ours in any sense. It does not permit of a man owning his home. The Government builds the homes and the men pay rent for them, but the homes never become the property of the occupants. True, enormous sums of money are spent in the provision of homes, but not homes in the sense we provide whereby a person may repay a certain amount each week and eventually make the home his own. Further, a home provided here for 25s. or 27s. 6d. a week eventually becomes the property of the occupier, but in New Zealand the charge is 32s. 6d. or 35s. a week and the home never becomes the property of the tenant. I agree with the member for Beverley that people in the country have a right to workers' homes, but this question must be approached carefully. I understand that at Gnowangerup 16 workers' homes are vacant at the present time and that in Katanning quite a number of workers' homes are also vacant.

Mr. Mann: I was referring to farms.

Mr. STYANTS: I am quoting country towns. I was told by the board the other day that there are 16 workers' homes in Gnowangerup at present vacant.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I think that is too high because Gnowangerup is hardly big enough for such a number.

Mr. Doney: I do not think there would be that number in Gnowangerup.

Mr. STYANTS: In the town of Katanning some years ago, workers' homes were over-built, and there is a danger of the same thing happening at Geraldton.

Mr. Marshall: I do not think so.

Mr STYANTS: At present there is an acute shortage of houses at Geraldton and a number of workers' homes have been built there. After the war is over and the personnel of the air force is reduced, there will not be anything like the present demand for workers' or other homes at Geraldton. We ought to expend more money in providing homes for the people. Nothing produces contentment in a man so much as having a home of his own. This is a laudable objective we should set out to attain—to give every man possible a stake in the country, a home for himself, his wife and dependants. We could not do better than investigate the problem of providing a skilled body of building artisans to work in conjunction with the Workers' Homes Board, and the board would then be independent of calling for tenders, which often results in excessive prices being asked for the erection of these homes.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Superannuation Board, £2,460—agreed to.

Vote—Miscellaneous Services, £774,831:

Item, Exchange on overseas interest, payments and remittances, exclusive of exchange on expenses of converting overseas loans or specific remittances to pay for plant and material, £500,000.

Mr. MARSHALL: Will the Premier explain what arrangement is made for the payment of exchange and to whom is it paid? Half a million of money is involved and we ought to know something more than we are usually told about this item. Some arrangement is evidently made for the payment of the money and somebody must receive it.

The PREMIER: If we wish to transmit money to England to meet obligations there and the exchange rate is against Australia, we have to pay exchange on Australian currency. The Commonwealth Bank meets these commitments in the different values between Australian and other currencies. Our pound is valued at 20 per cent. less than the English pound. If we wish to transfer money to England we have to pay 25 per cent. on Australian currency because exchange is against us. It is all a matter of the value of money. Although the people of England call something a pound and we in Australia call something a pound,

the two notes might be of very different value. If we returned to the gold basis, things would be different, but we would have to pay about £2 10s. per sovereign whereas in England one could be obtained, if available, for £2. That shows the difference in the value of money here and in England. There is no escaping the exchange rate. We pay this money to the Commonwealth Bank. Most of the money transferred to Britain is required to meet interest payments on debts contracted many years ago. All goods purchased in Britain are quoted in sterling, and to get sterling we have to pay 25 per cent. on Australian currency. There is no secret or funny business about it. It is a charge for service rendered and to meet the difference in the values of the two currencies. The easy way to reach an understanding of the position is to find out what would have to be paid for a sovereign in Australia as compared with England.

Mr. MARSHALL: If what the Premier has said is correct, the exchange rate would be automatic, and would fluctuate with the value of gold. But nothing of the kind takes place. The exchange is pegged, deliberately fixed. Therefore it has no relation to the actual value of currency, but is decreed at a given ratio. This State has paid as much as 30-odd per cent. by way of exchange. When a big noise had been made, the exchange was reduced to 25 per cent. I shall give consideration to what the Premier has stated, and shall discuss it further if I am re-elected.

Item, Expenditure as may be necessary owing to war conditions, £80,000.

Mr. DONEY: This item shows an increase of £43,478. May I ask for details?

The PREMIER: We do not know what the expenditure will be under this item. The Government has undertaken fairly large liabilities. We debit to this item the amount of reductions made in soldiers' fares, as it would be entirely unreasonable to require the Railway Department to carry men 200 or 300 miles for 5s. and then ask it to do the same for other than soldiers. It really loses on carrying soldiers.

Mr. Doney: Do you think it really does lose?

The PREMIER: Yes, and it is not fair that the department should bear that loss. Under this item there is also expenditure for extra police on account of the war.

Item, Royal Mint, additional grant, £12,000.

Mr. RODOREDA: What is the reason for the increase of £6,561 in this item? Already £25,000 annually is granted to the Mint under a special Act.

The PREMIER: There has been a great shortage of pennies and half-pennies in Australia, and the Commonwealth Government has made arrangements for copper coinage to be minted in the Perth Mint, a thing never done previously. The necessary preparations have cost a considerable amount. The money received from the Commonwealth for the work results in a profit to the State.

Mr. Rodoreda: This is reproductive expenditure?

The PREMIER: Yes. The Mint is conducted differently from other governmental activities. The Master of the Mint is in London—really the Imperial Government. All the accounts are kept in London. We make a grant in order that the Perth Mint may operate. Usually the operations of the Mint are such that it gets round; occasionally it makes a profit of £400 or £500 in a year. The Master of the Mint in London is in charge of British mints all over the world.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Forests, £31,655—agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.18 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 15th October, 1941.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

PAPERS—LIQUID FRUIT COMPANY.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [4.34]: I move—

That all papers in connection with the financial assistance given by the Government to the Liquid Fruit Company be laid on the Table of the House.

There should be no necessity for a motion of this nature, as Parliament is entitled to know how Government funds are being expended. Why all the secrecy? It is difficult for me to understand. On a previous occasion similar information has not been refused. On the 9th September last, a little over a month ago, I asked the Chief Secretary the following question:—

1, Has the Government made any monetary advances to the Manjimup Dairy Produce Co. Ltd.? 2, Has the Government made any promises to assist that company financially? 3, If any advance, guarantee or financial assistance has been given, what is (a) the value thereof; (b) the reasons for such assistance?

I received the following reply:—

1, No. 2, A guarantee was given for a portion of the overdraft of this company. 3, (a) A maximum guaranteed overdraft £3,000; (b) a guarantee was given in order to safeguard the interests of suppliers by securing for them payments for milk and cream supplied.

The question I asked the Chief Secretary on the 7th October was on all fours with that particular question, as to which the desired information was furnished, yet there was a refusal to supply the information regarding the Liquid Fruit Company. The question regarding the company was as follows:—

1, Has the Government made any monetary advances to the Liquid Fruit Company? 2, Has the Government made any promise to assist the company financially? 3, If any ad-