

amounts retained, such as a provision for accumulated long service leave, have resulted in tax payments almost as great as the actual provisions.

It is to be noted that Co-operative Bulk Handling is the only bulk handling authority in Australia which pays tax. Apart from South Australia, the other authorities, being governmental or semi-governmental, are exempt from taxation. The South Australian authority is exempt from income tax as a result of a decision of the Taxation Board of Review, which passed its decision on two factors incorporated in that company's memorandum and articles of association. Firstly, that company is not permitted to declare a rebate or dividend; and, secondly, in the event of its winding up, the assets are distributed to the Government of South Australia. As a result, in South Australia the authority has been able to accumulate funds and this season has reduced the rate of toll from 5c to 4c a bushel.

Recently the Commissioner of Taxation was approached by Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited to ascertain whether an alteration to its memorandum and articles of association would secure exemption under section 23 (h) of the Income Tax Assessment Act. The commissioner indicated qualified acceptance depending upon the facts and law operative if the proposal was proceeded with. After much consideration of the best method to achieve this, the company's solicitors suggested the proposed amendment to the Bulk Handling Act which is now before the House, rather than an alteration to the memorandum and articles of association.

This amendment to the principal Act prescribes the manner to be applied to the income and property of the company, and, on the Bill becoming law, the company would be in the same position as South Australian Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited.

No part of the surplus could be distributed to the growers, but to offset this the directors have in mind recommending a reduction in the rate of toll at the outset, and as funds are accumulated there is no doubt that substantial reductions will be possible in future years.

The scheme was placed before the shareholders at the annual general meeting held in March of this year. There were 102 shareholders present at the meeting and 101 voted in favour of the resolution.

Should the proposed amendment be not acceptable, the company would have to ask shareholders to amend the memorandum and articles of association, then request an amendment to the Bulk Handling Act and possibly to the Companies

(Co-operative) Act. The proposal incorporated in the Bill and suggested by the solicitors of the company is deemed to be far simpler, and I commend it to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr. Gayfer.

House adjourned at 5.57 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, the 10th August, 1971

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. L. C. Diver) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

SUPPLY BILL

Assent

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor and Administrator received and read notifying assent to the Bill.

QUESTIONS (2): ON NOTICE

1.

TRAFFIC

Breath Analysis Tests

The Hon. R. J. L. WILLIAMS, to the the Minister for Police:

(1) Since the introduction of breath analysis tests to determine the percentage of alcohol in the blood of a person believed to have committed a traffic offence when driving a motor vehicle in an intoxicated condition, how many persons, in contravention of this part of the Traffic Act, have been—

- (a) convicted of one offence;
- (b) convicted of more than one offence;
- (c) imprisoned?

(2) During this period—

- (a) what is the total amount of fines paid by the convicted offenders; and
- (b) how many deaths have occurred resulting from all traffic accidents?

The Hon. J. DOLAN replied:

- (1) (a) Since the date of introduction of the tests in 1965 there were 7,621 convictions.
- (b) Separate statistics of those convicted for more than one offence are not kept.
- (c) The total number of convictions include those fined and imprisoned. No separate statistics are kept.

(2) (a) \$1,056,609 (Metropolitan area only).	
(b) Metropolitan	713
Country	840
Total	1,553

2. TOWN PLANNING

Corridor Plan Study

The Hon. F. R. WHITE, to the Leader of the House:

With reference to the article on page 2 of *The West Australian* dated Thursday, the 5th August, 1971, and bearing the title "Government gets Ritter to Study Corridor Scheme", would the Minister advise—

- (a) is the appointment of Mr. Ritter to report on the Corridor Plan a vote of "no confidence" by the Government in the Town Planning Commissioner, his departmental officers and the Metropolitan Regional Planning Authority; and
- (b) in view of Mr. Ritter's already published eight page booklet titled "Breakthrough or Breakdown a Crisis in Regional Planning" that criticises the Corridor Plan; how can the Government expect an impartial report?

The Hon. W. F. WILLESEE replied:

- (a) No. It is considered desirable to have alternative professional advice to assist in arriving at a final decision.
- (b) The integrity of a professional man of international standing is expected to be such that he would not do other than present an analysis and conclusion based on fully authenticated and documented evidence.

POTATO INDUSTRY

Inquiry by Select Committee: Motion

THE HON. V. J. FERRY (South-West) [4.38 p.m.]: I move—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the Potato Industry in Western Australia and to make such recommendations as are considered desirable to encourage greater productivity and expansion of the industry, including processing and export trade opportunities, with view to bringing further benefits to growers and the general public.

Mr. President, I wish to direct the attention of the House particularly to the wording of the motion because, in my view, it

is very important. I draw the attention of members to the word "productivity", because I believe the potato industry is capable of far greater productivity. I will enlarge on this during the course of my address.

Let me say at the outset that I have a very high regard for the potato industry of this State. It is a relatively stable industry, and because it is at this time in such a relatively stable state, I am of the opinion that the time is opportune for a Select Committee of this House to examine the industry in all its depth and breadth with a view to bringing far-reaching benefits to all concerned.

We realise that over the years, for one reason or another, there have been areas of discontent and at the present time the industry is going along on a fairly even keel. Therefore, there is no heat of the moment or great emotion attached to the industry; yet I will endeavour to point out that there are areas in which there is a need to have this great primary industry of Western Australia thoroughly examined. In so doing, and if my motion is agreed to, I hope the industry as a whole will be examined.

The potato, of course, is actually an underground stem called a stolon, modified to store nutrients for a new plant after a certain dormant stage. Potatoes are affectionately referred to as praties, or spuds, among other terms of endearment. Nevertheless, the potato is a tuber which has a skin with cells for holding nutrients and water. The potato is an essential and perishable commodity and, indeed, I would submit the industry itself is sensitive.

I trust the industry will not turn out to be perishable as a result of my action in moving this motion, because I believe it is a good industry which needs to be nurtured and encouraged to greater things by way of greater productivity and expansion. I submit that a Select Committee comprising members of this House would serve the industry well. I have framed my motion accordingly and it is my hope that the House, having heard my submission and after due consideration, will agree to the appointment of a Select Committee which will follow the normal pattern of having one member from each political party represented in this House of review.

I could further mention, for the sake of the record, that it is my understanding that a Select Committee appointed under our Standing Orders does not have power in itself to bring about changes in an industry; but, in fact, it reports upon the industry after due deliberation and as a result of its findings. The report is then presented to this House, more usually accepted, and it then becomes public property which may be used as a basis to promote further benefits to the industry.

Might I say at this juncture, without being at all disrespectful or seeking to reflect in any way upon this Parliament, that I believe—having regard for the word “productivity” to which I have referred in the motion—this House itself may be capable of greater productivity to further the interests of Western Australians. In this respect I believe we are capable of contributing towards greater productivity by the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into this very industry. Having heard the remarks expressed by members during recent debates I am encouraged to believe that this Chamber could, in fact, engage on additional duties apart from its normal legislative procedures.

I hold the view—contrary to that which is sometimes expressed by others—that this House serves a very useful purpose indeed. As we know it has 30 members representing areas throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia; and I regard it as a most responsible House of review—which it is. When one considers the role it plays in having to review all legislation brought before Parliament—which must be approved by this House before it becomes law—and when one further appreciates that there are 51 members in another place as against 30 here, I believe there is some relevance in respect of the question of responsibility. I say this without meaning to reflect in any way upon the lower House or upon the integrity of its members.

I believe this House is capable of even greater service to the community and I am convinced a Select Committee would be a worthy adjunct to the work already being undertaken. I further submit, Sir, that the potato industry of Western Australia is a subject worthy of inquiry and review by a Select Committee of this House.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The Standing Orders of this House provide for Select Committees.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: Indeed, they do. I believe we will, perhaps, see a little more of this work being undertaken in the future. It is sometimes said that members of Parliament, particularly those representing rural electorates, do too little too late in respect of helping an industry, or primary industries generally. It is further said at times, rightly or wrongly, that they should show the way in relation to these industries.

Let us reflect for a moment upon the situation which exists throughout Western Australia in particular, and Australia as a whole, in regard to the rural economy. Having reflected on this and considered the points I make this afternoon I believe members will in due time support my move for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the potato industry of Western Australia. In addition to the

economic conditions prevailing in the rural community today, there is a cry—and it is gathering momentum—for greater diversification of activities on rural holdings.

Could I for a moment refer to the apple industry which, as we well know, is facing increasing difficulties in this direction; particularly with the possible entry of Britain into the European Economic Community. We find that apple growing may not be as lucrative as it has been in the past and, therefore, there may be a greater leaning towards other rural activities; one of which could well be potato growing. I merely make the point that in order to protect the potato industry we must anticipate what may be the situation in the near future and, perhaps, in the long term.

May I make it clear that it is my wish and desire to assist all sections of the potato industry; from the growers, particularly, through to the consumers; which involves the housewives, the professional catering services, and, indeed, the tourist industry. The potato industry is somewhat unique in its operations. In my view it would be incorrect to call it a closed industry. It is certainly a controlled industry, but it is not closed because new growers are admitted to the industry from time to time at the discretion of the Potato Marketing Board. So it is not a closed industry, but, indeed, a controlled industry.

The Potato Marketing Board constituted in Western Australia under an Act of Parliament commenced to operate on the 18th October, 1948. This followed the Australian Potato Committee which was set up to handle and administer the industry under war-time national security regulations; and in 1955—16 years ago—the industry was examined by a Royal Commission.

Today the industry has approximately 800 licensed potato growers. The main production is in 'wares, which are the potatoes we eat. Production has risen from 40,600 tons in 1947-48, with an average yield per acre of 5.9 tons to 55,278 tons in 1969-70, with an average yield per acre of 9.48 tons. Quoting from the board's figures, total production reached a peak in 1968-69 of 5,906 acres producing 61,727 tons of potatoes with an average yield of 10.44 tons per acre.

The total gross sales last season amounted to \$4,717,743, and the average selling price to all growers was \$78.85 per ton.

The potato industry in Australia is handled in segments, State by State, and there is no overall marketing or controlling authority. In this country there are three potato marketing boards in existence—these are in Western Australia, in South Australia, and in Tasmania. The other three States did, in fact, have potato marketing boards following the cessation of the Australian Potato Committee. However, the boards in Queensland, New South

Wales, and Victoria were dispensed with during the early 1950s, and the only boards remaining in Australia are those in Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania.

There is, of course, a difference between the functions of the remaining boards. In Western Australia there is controlled planting of potatoes, whereas in South Australia and Tasmania there is no control of planting, although there is control, to an extent, of marketing.

In Western Australia we have the advantage, or disadvantage, of being geographically removed from the Eastern States, whereas in the other States, interstate trade is carried on freely, by virtue of section 92 of the Australian Constitution. Western Australia is in a slightly different position. However, in the Eastern States there is encouragement to trade freely between those States.

I could refer to the United Kingdom Potato Marketing Board. To some extent, I have studied what transpires in the United Kingdom in respect of the potato industry. I do not want to refer to everything that board does, but there are one or two features which I feel are worthy of note, because they are relevant to what we may, or may not, do in Western Australia.

I would point out that at the present there are 45,000 growers in the United Kingdom, and the total acreage under production is in the order of 555,000 acres. The board is engaged in an advanced programme of research and publicity; it employs a Press officer, and has established a publicity department. It also uses a firm of publicity agents which specialises in food publicity.

The United Kingdom board arranges cookery demonstrations throughout the country, in co-operation with the gas and electricity boards which provide the venue, the equipment, and the audience, while the Potato Marketing Board provides the demonstrator. This is a popular and a cheap method for the board, and it also satisfies the gas and electricity authorities, since it also publicises their equipment.

The board also prints various types of posters of modern design together with attractive potato price tickets which it gives to retailers for the marking of their potato prices. At the same time the board is engaged in a publicity campaign which includes a competition for a good potato slogan. The first prize is a new Rover 2000 car. This is in direct competition with a similar campaign being organised in the United Kingdom by French potato growers who are offering a Renault as first prize. Apparently the potato growers in the United Kingdom face competition from European growers.

I understand the most successful campaign organised by the United Kingdom board was one urging people to slim with

potatoes. Within two days of this campaign being launched, the board received 25,000 inquiries.

The board also produces cookery books, six of which have now been published, glamourising the product and getting away from the concept of using potatoes only for chips, roasts, or boiling.

Finally, the board has established stands at agricultural and similar shows, both for cookery displays and to provide information to encourage farmers to use the best way to grow, store, and handle potatoes.

To illustrate the point in respect of publicity, I will refer briefly to some of the publications which the board in the United Kingdom has distributed. The first one I have in my hand is entitled *Midweek Cookbook—200 Ways with Potatoes*. As I flick through this publication members will be able to see some of its contents. It is beautifully illustrated and contains many gorgeous dishes which one can concoct with potatoes. The booklet is well documented, and I had great difficulty in salvaging it from my own household.

Another publication I have is a pamphlet entitled "Slim with Potatoes." This again is nicely illustrated, and contains desirable weights for men and women of 25 years and over, the amount of calories that should be consumed, the nutritive value of potatoes, and similar information.

A little coloured card is used in the retail shops to advertise potatoes as being ideal for baking. Another little pamphlet is entitled "Salad Days with Potatoes All the Year Round" and this contains appropriate recipes. Yet another is entitled "Potato Recipes Pop on Some Potatoes for a Tea-time Treat". This also contains appropriate recipes.

Apparently one of the most popular pamphlets is that entitled "Slim with Potatoes Target for Health" and this also contains appropriate tables on the inside. I also have a coloured pamphlet entitled "Slim with Home Grown New Potatoes." This is quite attractive and is illustrated with the British Union Jack.

So it goes on. The final publication I wish to bring to the attention of the House is entitled "Seed Potatoes from Great Britain." This is a pamphlet put out by the Potato Marketing Board of the United Kingdom. It is very colourful, and illustrates the varieties and types of potatoes together with their characteristics—whether they be good for roasting, frying, or cooking in some other way.

The potato industry in Western Australia has very many facets; the chief of which is, perhaps, research. Of course, research embodies investigation into such aspects as soil, water, fertiliser, varieties, and the like. The soil is a very important consideration, because it needs to be friable and capable of crumbling, so that when the tubers are removed from the ground they can be removed with a minimum amount

of damage being caused. It is not much good planting potatoes on rocky areas or in abrasive soils, because the tubers can be damaged easily when they are removed. When they are grown in rocky areas they grow into misshapen forms. There is a great field of endeavour in research.

Another facet which concerns the industry is the question of inspections; and this means the inspection of growing crops, and the inspection of the actual 'wares'. Such inspections are generally undertaken by officers of the Department of Agriculture.

Coupled with the inspections a check must also be kept on the various diseases which affect the potato. There are a number of diseases, but fortunately for Western Australia we do not have the worst of them. I could, however, name bacterial wilt, leaf roll which is spread by aphids, and infestation of eel worms in some districts.

The Hon. R. Thompson: On the point you have made in regard to research, will you give an idea of what the proposed Select Committee should look into?

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: In respect of research, there needs to be co-ordination between the research section and the Western Australian Potato Marketing Board—the authority which is charged with the responsibility for the marketing of potatoes. I could illustrate this exercise by saying I realise the Department of Agriculture has, over a number of years, carried out some very good research in respect of different varieties of potatoes.

The Potato Marketing Board is charged with the responsibility of bringing to the public a product which is of an acceptable standard, and of reliable quality. It is not easy for a grower to experiment with new varieties of potatoes, because it is not always a profitable exercise. A grower knows that he can sell his Delaware and Sebago varieties, and this causes a hindrance in respect of the development of new varieties.

The Hon. R. Thompson: How many varieties do we grow in this State now?

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: We mostly grow Delaware and Sebago for the home market, but some growers have experimented with new varieties including the red-skinned Norland and the yellow-fleshed Greta. Several varieties are available in this State. As a matter of fact, there are thousands of varieties of potatoes. Research into the different types needs to be co-ordinated so that the new varieties which are developed can be produced commercially. Under our present marketing system there seems to be some problem associated with the supply of new varieties to the public.

In referring to diseases; those of us who can recall some of the history we learned at school will remember that the potato has played a very important part in the life of one particular community. Indeed,

the potato has interfered with the very survival of a nation. In 1845 and 1846 the potato crop in Ireland was a complete failure. The complete failure of that crop occasioned by late blight caused widespread famine and the outbreak of disease such as typhus which took a terrific toll of the population. Between 1845 and 1851 no less than 2,000,000 people migrated from Ireland to other countries.

The Hon. J. Dolan: Those people helped to improve the other countries.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: I think that would probably be correct. I would venture further and say that Ireland has not yet recovered from the setback of having its population reduced from 8,500,000 to 6,500,000.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: The Minister forgets that it takes all sorts of people to make a world.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: Another problem associated with our potato industry is the licensing of growers. Licensing involves the allocation of licenses, the imposing of penalties and that sort of thing. The licensing system has caused quite a deal of heartache to some people, and this area of the industry should also be examined. Associated with licensing, of course, is black marketing. I think it is fair to say there are only a few growers who do not have licenses. The situation was quite different a few years ago.

I would also suggest that a degree of black marketing is being carried on by some of the licensed growers themselves. This is brought about by the fact that we have a marketing system which is advantageous to most of the growers. There will always be those who will take advantage of a marketing organisation. Marketing organisations seem to provide avenues for black marketing, and accordingly this area of the industry also needs to be examined to ensure that the genuine growers are not penalised by those who sell on the black market. Of course, there has to be a seller on the one hand and a buyer on the other. Those who buy black-market potatoes are not free from guilt.

A very important aspect of the potato industry, which has not yet been examined completely, is that of processed potatoes. I refer to potato crisps, French fried potatoes, flour, meal, and flakes. Quite a number of these products are imported into Western Australia. During 1969-70 Western Australia imported 65,784 lb. of potatoes—in packs not exceeding 1 lb.—to the value of \$8,353. In packs exceeding 1 lb. in weight the quantity of potatoes imported was 327,060 lb. for a value of \$31,053. The total cost was \$39,406 for imports from overseas during one year.

In the previous 12-month period the value of the imports was a little higher at \$45,125. The imports of potato flour meal, and flakes into Western Australia

from the other States totalled 195,236 lb., to a value of \$72,398. That figure is a little less than the figure for the previous year when the imports from the Eastern States were valued at \$116,115. So it can be seen that the value of imports can vary between \$111,000 and \$161,000 in a matter of two years.

There is a market in Western Australia for processed potatoes, and this is an area which requires very close examination to see whether our own growers can participate in this market. I am not suggesting we restrict free trade: We thrive on it; it is our lifeblood. However, surely there is an opening for the processing of potatoes, and there should be an investigation to see if we can capitalise on that opening. Only yesterday I purchased, for the first time in my life, a product of the United States of America. The product was a packet of crinkle cut French fried potatoes, and they were very nice too. The fact that those crinkle cut French fried potatoes came from the United States of America, and the fact that other fried potatoes are available from the Eastern States, points to the need for us to look into this area also to see whether our growers can, in fact, capitalise on this market.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: How much did the potatoes cost?

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: The cost was 27c. Our marketing method in this State ensures that the consumers receive potatoes of a reasonable quality. Our system of marketing involves the growing of three crops: early, mid, and late. Various methods of storing are employed, some of which are fairly crude. Some potatoes are stored in the ground so they do not lose weight, and others are stored in bags, heaps, sheds, and under trees. Generally, such storage is a rather crude operation. The cool storage of potatoes has not yet been investigated to any great extent in this State, but a lot of work has been done on this aspect overseas. Investigation has been carried out in the United Kingdom, in America and, to a lesser extent, in Victoria. Some of the other States have carried out investigations but very little has been done in Western Australia.

The early crop of potatoes is planted during June-July and harvested during October-December. The mid crop is planted during August-October, and harvested during January-March. The late crop is planted during November-May, and harvested during March-August. Because of the high cost involved in the planting and harvesting of the late crop—through the hottest summer months when irrigation is used widely—it would seem within the bounds of possibility that this crop could be included with the mid crop which is grown virtually during the spring and early summer. In my opinion the mid crop could be doubled, and the late crop deleted.

The only way to do away with the late crop would be to have cool storage facilities available so that the potatoes grown during the other periods could be stored and kept in good condition. Other products are kept in cool storage, and released to the market in an orderly fashion and in good quality.

I believe that those growers who normally grow during the summer period—the late crop—could be relieved of that job. Quite a number of those growers also cultivate apples during that period, and if they could be relieved from potato growing they would be able to devote all their energy to apple growing or to some other agricultural activity. Some of those growers might even be able to take a holiday, which many of them have not been able to do for several years. It is necessary to inquire into the cold storage of potatoes. A lot has been done in this direction both overseas, and in Victoria.

The State Electricity Commission, in Victoria, has distributed a publication called *How electricity aids the potato farmer*. The publication is well documented, and it represents good business on the part of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria. The commission intends to sell electricity to be used in the cool storage operations. The publication sets out various types of cool stores and their operations.

The question of transport also needs to be examined. At present potatoes are carted by road transport and rail transport, and we should endeavour to find out whether or not the system can be improved.

To divert slightly, but still dealing with potatoes, I was made aware recently that during the war of the Bavarian succession during 1778-79, there was a misunderstanding between Austria and Prussia. The war which resulted was named the Potato War. Very little fighting was involved, but supplies were cut off. Those supplies included potatoes—which were an important part of the diet of the people concerned—and so the war became known as the Potato War. However, that is by the way.

The potato has its place in history; not only in Ireland but also in the Inn River district of Austria. This river is a tributary of the Danube which, of course, has been made famous by Strauss in his *Blue Danube Waltz*.

Another facet of this product which, I feel, requires examination, is the grading and inspection of potatoes when they are dispatched by the producers. The inspections could be carried out at the point at which the potatoes leave the property and the grading could be done at the point of delivery.

This is something which has caused a certain amount of heartburning and needs to be tidied up. The method of marketing has evolved from the days when we could

not buy washed potatoes. Today, however, washed potatoes are available and these can be bought enclosed in polythene bags. This of course brings its own problems, because when the skin of the potato is bruised it is easily visible and, being more apparent, there is a tendency for there to be a higher rejection rate because of this damage.

Another problem associated with the polythene bagging of potatoes is that the potatoes are inclined to break down more readily as a result of their being exposed to rays of light; then, again, we also have—as we all know—the problem of “greening”.

The rate of rejection of potatoes is increasing year by year. The figures I am about to give are, I understand, the percentage rates of rejection of potatoes in Western Australia. In 1969 the year's average rejection was 4.91 per cent.; in 1970 it was 5.19 per cent.; and for the six months of 1971 it is up to 6.47 per cent. This rather adds strength to the thought that this method of washing potatoes is bringing fresh problems to the industry.

The Potato Marketing Board's premises are now situated in Short Street, East Perth, which is a good central position. The board also has a depot at Robb Jetty. I believe I am right in saying that the depot at Robb Jetty was established to take advantage of the overseas export markets. This may be correct thinking, but I raise the point that a Select Committee could well investigate and decide whether this type of establishment would not be better placed at a rail terminal such as Kewdale.

The Hon. R. Thompson: It was established at Robb Jetty because the board had to vacate its High Street premises at Fremantle.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: This could be right, but I question whether the depot is situated at the right point in this day and age. I will show later that the export trade is not of great moment—although it is a valuable outlet. We have more sales on the home market.

Another feature of the marketing system is that agents are employed throughout the potato-growing areas, and the board has a distributing agent in Perth to co-ordinate the various sales. Down the structure of the marketing system we have wholesalers and the retailers who, of course, supply the consumers.

I would mention that at least some of the wholesalers distribute twice weekly to the metropolitan stores, and I commend them for this, because I believe it is an excellent service. I have witnessed some of their deliveries and the system under which they operate and, I repeat, it is most commendable. This system ensures a quality product at all times. I believe that a lot of

the troubles about which we hear in connection with potatoes being seemingly below standard are the result of retailers buying in too many potatoes at one time and not quitting them quickly enough; or alternatively, storing them incorrectly in their shops.

We are fortunate in Western Australia in having a good consumer market—a home market. As I mentioned earlier, the main varieties are the Delaware, the red-skinned Norland, and the Sebago. We have also produced the Greta, which is a yellow-fleshed potato which has been sold on the Singapore market and one or two of the other Asian markets.

We have, however, an expanding and growing State population. According to the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority the metropolitan area has expanded to 650,000 people and the projected increase to 1989 is expected to be 1,436,000. At that time the population of the State could well be expected to pass the 2,000,000 mark.

Accordingly there is little doubt that we have a growing market for our potatoes. Included in that we have a growing metropolitan market and a growing market in the north-west where, if all goes according to plan, there could be in a very few years' time 250,000 people. This market, of course, exists in a hot climate, and a Select Committee could well look at the possibility of marketing potatoes in this type of environment.

The growers have their problems and the crops are determined by the marketing authority—by the board itself. I have no quarrel with that. As I have mentioned previously, there are three crops and three separate pools deal with potatoes from each crop.

On the home market the prices have been fairly good and the returns to the growers on the export trade have been somewhat varied, because the Delaware—the potato we normally eat—does not command the large price overseas that we would like it to command; whereas the sale from seed potatoes is indeed a lucrative one.

The average price last season was something like \$78 a ton to the grower. I notice in Victoria the contract price for potatoes by arrangement was as low as \$55 a ton—that is for contract lots.

I believe the appointment of a Select Committee could well help review the Marketing of Potatoes Act and the regulations associated with that Act. One of the functions of the committee would be to see whether some improvement could be made. The board, of course, operates under the Act and it is comprised of six members, one of whom is the chairman.

I would like to say here and now that I have no intention of casting any doubt at all on the composition of the board or the personalities involved in its composition.

That is not my intention as it relates to any section of the industry. The board has a job to do and I certainly do not envy the board its job.

The marketing authority arranges production to meet the domestic trade and the small surpluses are sold to the Eastern States, to ships' stores and, for the most part, to Singapore. There is another trade as distinct from the Delaware trade. I refer of course to the trade in seed potatoes which has been fairly lucrative. Quantities of this seed are sent overseas to places like Ceylon, Mauritius, and East and West Pakistan.

In mentioning the value of the overseas export trade in respect of seed we find, according to the official report of the board, that for the year ended the 30th September, 1970, there were 1,900-odd tons of seed shipped to Ceylon and 160 tons to Mauritius. Had it not been for the total absence of shipping to Port Louis in mid-1970, a further 120 tons would have been shipped to Mauritius.

Prices are fairly good, but we do have a problem inasmuch as we have some disease in the seed-growing areas of the State. This tends to cast a shadow over this outlet. A Select Committee could well look at this situation, also, with a view to suggesting how to overcome the problem.

On the home market there was a shortage in 1969-70, and it was necessary for the board to import some 1,541 tons of potatoes from the Eastern States to make up the deficiency here. All these potatoes were inspected by the Department of Agriculture at Kewdale. Quite a number of these potatoes were rejected—as they might well have been—because the quality was poor in some cases. To illustrate the care taken by the department I would point out that out of a total of 2,460 tons of potatoes imported by various merchants over one period, 380 tons were in fact rejected. This is a fairly high rejection rate.

The potato industry in this State is structured by zones. Each zone is represented by the growers' association. There are nine zones throughout the growing areas. When I gave notice of this motion I immediately wrote to all the chairmen and secretaries of the zones throughout the industry advising that I was taking this action and explaining why I was doing so.

I also wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Potato Marketing Board, a copy of which I sent to the Manager of the Board explaining the reason for my proposed motion. I would like particularly to stress—as I did in my letter—that it is not my intention or desire for an examination to be directed against any section of the industry. I believe that an examination of the industry by a Select Committee appointed by the Legislative Council will serve the potato industry well, and I trust the House will agree to the motion.

I did this as a public relations exercise and also as a matter of courtesy, because it is, after all, their industry. I feel it is up to us to try to make the industry even better than it is at the moment.

The Hon. R. Thompson: What was the response to your letters?

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: I have not had any official response to the letters I wrote, because quite a number of the zones have not yet met. Their meeting times are dates set but I understand they have not had time to meet and reply officially to my letters. I have had only a few indications on a personal basis and those that I have received are favourable.

My personal relationship with those engaged in the industry is cordial, and I have a high regard for the work they are doing. We must appreciate that merely because we have a marketing board established does not mean that it can perform miracles. The board requires the co-operation and good will of all concerned. I dare say that broad statement might very well apply to any marketing authority, because such authority does really require the co-operation and goodwill of all concerned to make it work satisfactorily.

I wish to pay a tribute to the horticulture section of the Department of Agriculture for the work it is doing. I do believe that a Select Committee, if appointed, could consider the relationship that exists between the work done by this section and that done by the marketing authority with a view to ensuring co-ordination.

The Potato Industry Council has operated in this State since 1968 and its purpose is to consider matters of broad interest to the potato-growing industry, to maintain liaison between sections of the industry and to recommend appropriate action by bodies represented on the council, which comprise two representatives each from the Potato Growers' Association of Western Australia, the W.A. Potato Marketing Board, and the Department of Agriculture of Western Australia under the chairmanship of an officer of the Department of Agriculture.

This Potato Industry Council has met six times since its inauguration.

[Resolved: That the motion be continued.]

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: I have not very much more to say. The potato industry council has met six times—on the 1st February, 1968, the 5th November, 1968, the 24th April, 1969, the 31st October, 1969, the 2nd October, 1970, and the 19th March, 1971.

I commend the industry on the formation of this council. I believe it has served a very useful purpose in liaising with the various sections. However, I feel the committee could look at the desirability of having more frequent meetings. There

may be good reasons why this is not necessary. At one stage the council did not meet for 12 months. This seems a little long to me and I feel the point could be looked at.

Public promotions and sales promotions play an important part in the welfare of the industry. I have referred to the United Kingdom marketing board and its sales promotion exercises. The Select Committee could examine this system with a view to adapting some of the proposals to promote greater sales of this product in Western Australia.

The United Kingdom potato slimming campaign produced 25,000 replies within two days. Applying the *pro rata* figures for our population, we could have had something like 2,000 replies in two days. This could have a bearing on the quantity of potatoes we sell.

The potato crop is a valuable cash crop. It represents regular payments to the growers. The growers and their financing houses can budget and the community generally benefits by the cash flow. This cash flow helps to sustain people in rural districts. It is a form of decentralisation, and indeed, supports business enterprises. I will not detail these, except to instance food stores, hardware merchants, chemists, and the like. The industry also helps to augment services within a community; such services as schools, hospitals, local government, transport establishments, fuel suppliers, and, indeed, aerial spraying operators have also come into this industry in recent times. The potato industry affects the very social structure of a community as it relates to the churches, sporting activities, and other social events.

Mr. President, I submit that the potato industry of this State is a complex and unique industry. I ask members to reflect upon the aspects I have dealt with. I believe a Select Committee comprising, I would hope, representatives of each of the political parties represented here, would allow evidence to be submitted by organisations, or any individuals with an interest in the potato industry. I envisage the committee visiting the potato-growing areas, taking evidence on the spot, and discussing the problems of growers on their own properties. I also envisage the committee hearing evidence from wholesalers, retailers, consumers, exporters, processors, or would-be processors, if we can encourage this aspect of it.

I believe this is an industry which affects nearly every household in Western Australia. It is not just a local south-west industry; it is a Western Australian industry. Even the tourist industry and the professional caterers have—if I can use the expression—a finger in the potato pie. Of course, more particularly, it concerns those engaged in the industry, of which there are 800 or thereabouts at this point of time.

I would like to again refer to the rural economic conditions prevailing today. As members of Parliament I believe it is our duty to help encourage greater productivity and expansion of the potato industry for the welfare of all our people.

I trust my motion will have the support of the House. I have a very high regard indeed for this particular industry and it is my desire that all sections should receive help by way of an independent, unbiased report. I trust in due time, as a result of our deliberations the industry will show this expansion and productivity.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. W. F. Willesee (Leader of the House).

FIREARMS AND GUNS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

THE HON. J. DOLAN (South-East Metropolitan—Minister for Police) [5.36 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Department of Labour has written to the Commissioner of Police concerning the I.L.O. Convention No. 111 "Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) 1958", pointing out that sections 8(3) and 10(3) of the Firearms and Guns Act appear to discriminate against the Asian and African races inasmuch as these individuals are required to have specific approval from the Commissioner of Police before the issue of a firearm license can be made.

The Commissioner of Police in his absolute discretion may withhold such consent. There is no right of appeal for these people under the Act.

All other persons of European stock, Australian Aboriginals, and those of the Jewish or Lebanese races, have a right to appeal to a police or resident magistrate where the Commissioner of Police refuses the issue of a firearm license.

Inquiries reveal that in recent years no Asians or Africans have been refused firearm licences by the commissioner and, therefore, discrimination has not been practised. However, in the light of world knowledge, the wording of section 8(3) at present certainly appears to have overtones of racial discrimination which is obnoxious, and furthermore, is not in accord with Article 2 of the United Nations International Covenants on Human Rights, which states—

Article 2

(1) Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Do you think this sort of discrimination should be taken out of all Acts?

The Hon. J. DOLAN: I do not know all the Acts in which this occurs. I will certainly have a look at them. In my opinion this matter should be rectified.

The Commissioner of Police and his officers are in full agreement with the proposal to repeal subsection (3) of section 8 of the principal Act.

I wish to make reference to section 10(3) which is mentioned. Section 8(3) and section 10(3) are complementary. As long as section 8(3) remains in the Act, section 10(3) is also discriminatory. If section 8(3) is removed, then section 10(3) has no application at all.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. A. F. Griffith (Leader of the Opposition).

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

THE HON. W. F. WILLESEE (North-East Metropolitan—Leader of the House) [5.40 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, the 17th August.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.41 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, the 10th August, 1971

The **SPEAKER** (Mr. Toms) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

SUPPLY BILL

Assent

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor and Administrator received and read notifying assent to the Bill.

QUESTIONS (19): ON NOTICE

1. HOUSING

Langford

Mr. **BATEMAN**, to the Minister for Housing:

- (1) When is it anticipated the sewerage line will be extended to the Langford area?
- (2) Was Mr. Brittain reported correctly when he stated the Commission was examining alternatives to speed up the occupancy of the homes?
- (3) If (2) is "Yes" what are the alternatives he had in mind?
- (4) When is it anticipated that the homes already constructed can be occupied?

Mr. **TAYLOR** replied:

- (1) The sewerage system for stages 1 and 2 of Langford is operational. The system for stage 3 is expected to be fully operational by December, 1971.
Temporary measures for disposal of effluent will commence in September, 1971.
Stage 4 sewerage system (where building has not commenced) is expected to be operational March, 1972.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) (i) By amending the sewer reticulation schedule to coincide with the completion of homes.
(ii) By expediting connection procedures.
(iii) By implementing a tankering service pending completion of major pump stations.
- (4) In stages 1 and 2, occupations are proceeding at present.
In stage 3, it is expected that occupation of completed houses will commence in September, 1971.

2. STATE HOUSING COMMISSION

Regional Office: Merredin-Yilgarn

Mr. **BROWN**, to the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Is it proposed to establish a regional office of the State Housing Commission in the electorate of Merredin-Yilgarn?
- (2) If "Yes" when and where?
- (3) What staff would be required?

Mr. **TAYLOR** replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) At Merredin. The Commission has purchased premises previously owned and occupied by the Rural and Industries Bank in Bates Street. Arrangements are now in hand for renovations and internal modifications, and tenders will be called soon. It is hoped to commence operations from this office this financial year, dependent on overall Government policies for recruitment of additional staff.
- (3) An establishment of fifteen officers has been approved.

3. MEDITERRANEAN FRUIT FLY

Eradication

Mr. **REID**, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Is the Department of Agriculture at present undertaking an eradication programme for Mediterranean fruit fly in Western Australia?