

was not my experience. In those years I never had a case where any man had difficulty in understanding the various qualifications appearing on the card. If he could not give the answer offhand, he could always get it at home. After all, the liquid fuel license application is much more complicated and every car-owner manages that. Where I did find misunderstanding was at election times, when there was a lack of knowledge on the part of the voter that he had to fill in three different claim cards to enrol for the Legislation Assembly, the Commonwealth and the Legislative Council, and I have long contended that a simple arrangement between the State and Federal electoral authorities could solve this difficulty by providing one form only, adequately framed and supplied at all post offices. When the voter filled in the form and forwarded it to the electoral authority, he would, if qualified, be automatically enrolled for all three. A note in heavy type could inform him that, if not qualified for the Council, he could apply later, when he was duly qualified.

Then, again, I desire to offer one comment on the amendment foreshadowed regarding the extending of the franchise for the Council to soldiers not otherwise qualified. As an ex-soldier I would say this: If the vote had any value, so far as re-establishing the soldier in civil life was concerned, or helping him in any practical way, I would gladly agree to the suggestion, but I cannot see that it would help him in the slightest degree. Only in a very few cases would he be interested. As one with experience, I would say that the soldier has urges and inclinations natural to his years, but I can solemnly assure members that the desire for a vote is not one of them. In fact, the whole of his training, with its emphasis on regimentation, its restrictions and controls, coupled with the uncertainty of his future and his inability to plan ahead, tends to destroy his sense of individuality and his appreciation of the responsibilities of citizenship.

I will make one more observation. A friend, who attended the Prime Minister's election campaign meeting in the Perth Town Hall, said he was struck by two things. First, that over 90 per cent. of those present were 40 and over, and secondly, that it was the lives of these younger folk who were

not present, and who apparently were not interested, that would be the most affected by the proposed programme of legislation. These, Mr. President, are the realities, and we must carefully and constantly bear them in mind when we are called upon to consider extending or liberalising our franchise qualifications.

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

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the 26th November.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.35 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 21st November, 1946.

	PAGE
Question: Royal Perth Hospital, as to opening of new building	2105
Builders' Registration Act, as to limit for un-registered builders	2106
Leave of absence	2106
Bills: Sale of Hay, 1r.	2106
Hairdressers Registration, 3r.	2106
Cemeteries Act Amendment, 2r.	2106
Marketing of Potatoes (No. 2), 2r., Com.	2107
Adjournment, special	...

The **SPEAKER** took the Chair at 2 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION.

ROYAL PERTH HOSPITAL.

As to Opening of New Building.

Mr. **NEEDHAM** asked the Minister for Health:

1, What progress is being made towards the completion of the Royal Perth Hospital?

2, When will it be ready for the reception, accommodation and treatment of patients?

The MINISTER replied:

1 and 2, Rapid progress is being made generally, but completion depends upon availability of materials, especially engineering equipment and supplies from Eastern States and abroad.

A date for occupation cannot be suggested because of these uncertainties.

BUILDERS' REGISTRATION ACT.

As to Limit for Unregistered Builders.

Mr. NORTH (without notice) asked the Premier:

1, In view of the problems created by the housing shortage, does he favour lifting to a higher figure the limit of £400 to which unregistered (but otherwise efficient) builders are now confined?

2, If so, how much should it be raised?

3, If the answer to No. 1 is Yes, will he introduce the necessary legislation?

The PREMIER replied:

1, 2 and 3, The administration of the Builders' Registration Act is in the hands of the Minister for Works and I am asking him to give consideration to the points raised.

BILL—SALE OF HAY.

Introduced by Mr. Seward and read a first time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Read, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Berry (Irwin-Moore) on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—HAIRDRESSERS REGISTRATION.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—CEMETERIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [2.6] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is introduced for the purpose of overcoming a difficulty which has arisen in connection with the management of cemeteries. In certain

instances in the past, it has been proved to be advantageous for the trustees of the larger cemeteries to have one or more of their employees living either within the cemetery itself or in close proximity to it. For this purpose, some cemetery boards have built houses on suitable portions of the cemetery site under their control, a procedure obviously advantageous to the care-taking of the cemetery. There has been no reason to question these actions, and the matter has not come under notice because the authorities have been able to arrange the necessary finance from their own funds. However, the trustees of one cemetery now desire to borrow money from the Workers' Homes Board for the purpose of erecting a dwelling for an employee. The Workers' Homes Board is unable to consider the application as the trustees cannot offer a satisfactory title to the land on which the dwelling is to be erected. It is considered extremely likely that similar cases will occur in the future; consequently it is deemed desirable to amend the Act in order to confer powers in this direction.

The Bill is largely self-explanatory. Briefly, it will give power to the trustees of public cemeteries to erect or purchase a dwelling for use by their employees. The trustees will be able to utilise land within the cemetery site which will be set aside for the purpose, or any other land they may acquire with that object in view. For instance, the trustees may desire to acquire a block of land in close proximity to the cemetery. The trustees will lease or rent the house so erected to the employee concerned. They will not, however, be able to transfer the freehold to an employee. This provision I consider essential, as it is undesirable that the house should be used for any purpose other than that contemplated by the Bill. The trustees are also given power, subject to the approval of the Minister, to expend money from their revenue, or to borrow money for the purposes of this measure. This matter also originated from an application to the Workers' Homes Board to build on behalf of the trustees of a cemetery, and power has therefore been included in the Bill for that purpose. So if the trustees of a cemetery desire to borrow money from the Workers' Homes Board, or to get the board to build for them, and the board is prepared to do so, that can be done under this measure.

The Bill enables the Workers' Homes Board to erect dwellings for use by the employees of the trustees on terms to be arranged between the trustees and the board. That is all it contains. I think it will appeal to members that where trustees of a cemetery which is some distance from a town—and most cemeteries are in that position—desire to have a caretaker, it is necessary that there shall be a place for that caretaker to live. This Bill will give the trustees the right to provide for such living accommodation, and sets out how that is to be done. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Thorn, debate adjourned.

BILL—MARKETING OF POTATOES (No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 19th November.

MR. HOAR (Nelson) [2.13]: I consider this Bill is a praiseworthy attempt by the Government to perpetuate as far as possible the stability of potato-growers' conditions and prices that have obtained since control was first exercised in 1942. The reason for the measure is obvious. The history of the potato-growing industry in the years prior to control was one of extreme price fluctuation. I have had sent to me by the Potato-growers' Association a list covering the monthly prices and showing the way they moved up and down in a crazy sort of manner from 1933 to 1941. That list indicates the desperate conditions that can occur in this industry as, indeed, in quite a number of private industries, without some measure of control.

The list shows that the average monthly price f.o.r., Perth, during the years 1933 to 1941 varied as much as from £3 12s. 6d. a ton in December, 1933, to as high as £22 in September, 1939. The prices over the intervening years reveal that unless some measure of control is exercised, the same extreme fluctuations will take place in the future that occurred prior to control. Neither the unfortunate grower nor the consumer at any time received the benefit of the price fluctuations in the years before control was established. The grower had no guarantee at any time of what prices were

likely to be, and no guarantee of security in connection with the financial outlay and the risks he was taking. It is a matter of fact that prices have been known to fluctuate as much as £5 a ton within two days, and it was not the consumer or the grower who received the benefit of such changes but the individual who worked in between the two and was prepared to speculate on another man's labour and the outcome of that labour.

The difference between the grower's price and that charged to the consumer, before control, was £9 3s. 2d. per ton, but the difference since control was instituted has been only £4 12s. 6d. per ton. This suggests clearly to me that someone in between the producer and the consumer was getting a rake-off far in excess of the value of the service he rendered. A number of previous speakers on this measure have shown some little reluctance to accept a continuance of control in this industry, but if anyone cares to look into the past and study the figures I have here, thoroughly examining them for the years I have quoted, I do not believe he would hesitate to support a measure such as this which is designed to provide not only stability for the grower but a reasonable price to the consumer.

I am very glad to know that the Minister contemplates, during the Committee stage, moving an amendment to widen the franchise of the growers. So far as I can see, it would be most undemocratic from that point of view to pass the Bill in its present form. If we did, we would have a situation where a commercial producer, who is a man producing three or more acres of potatoes, would be the only one entitled to hold a position on the board, and the only one entitled to vote for any member of the board. There would be hundreds of other growers producing from less than three acres who would be able to participate in branch discussions throughout the State but would be denied the right of voting and selecting their own representative. I am glad the Minister has made it clear that he intends to move an amendment that will bring in a number of other growers, and so widen the franchise.

There appears to me to be one important difference between what the Bill proposes in the way of marketing and sale of potatoes and what is already in existence under Com-

monwealth regulations. Under the Federal scheme, the Potato Distribution Committee sells potatoes at the best wholesale price obtainable; and if that price is not sufficient, in the opinion of the Commonwealth Government, it is increased according to the agreement in existence. There is no provision in the Bill for such a guaranteed price. I can appreciate that. But I would like to know, when the Minister replies, what steps will actually be taken, either under the measure or by regulation, to ensure that a fair price will be paid to the grower but that at the same time the consumer will not be overcharged. I know that the Bill proposes the setting up of a potato marketing board which has very wide powers and the composition of which leaves very little to be desired so far as overall representation is concerned. Out of a board of six members, the growers will have the very fair representation of three and the Minister will appoint two consumers' representatives, one of whom shall have mercantile experience. So it appears on the face of it that the composition is quite sufficient to govern all known factors likely to arise in regard to production and marketing.

But, so far as I can see, from the reading of the Minister's speech and a study of the Bill, unless the member of the board representing the consumers and having mercantile experience can go to the board meetings with a full knowledge that he has the confidence of all other wholesale or retail merchants in the industry—that is to say, unless he can go before the board knowing that he can speak confidently on their behalf—I do not see how the board can function in a way to control the price that the consumer will ultimately have to pay. I know that the board's power that enables it to regulate the supply of potatoes on the State market would assist greatly in governing the price, but to me it appears clear that unless some arrangement is agreed upon and included in the Bill, or in a regulation, governing just how much a wholesale merchant or retailer can charge to the public for these potatoes, the purpose of that part of the Bill can be defeated. Unless there could be some representation on the board governing that phase of the industry it is possible that difficulties may arise. So far as I can see it is an excellent Bill, and I have no

doubt the Minister has a ready answer to what appears to me to be a problem regarding the wholesale merchants and the retailers. When he replies I hope he will refer to that aspect because, unless it is governed by some other method, it will simply mean that the functions of the board will move backward to the grower with beneficial results but not go any further forward to the consumer in the control of prices. I believe, not wishing to anticipate trouble, that if something could be included to cover that aspect, the Bill would be much more acceptable to the community as a whole.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [2.22]: This is a Bill that is confronted with a certain number of difficulties. For instance, no State Government can prevent the importation of potatoes into its State; nor, indeed, can any State Government or Parliament prevent the importation into the State of any goods grown or manufactured in the Eastern States, or anywhere outside of Western Australia. Neither can a State Government, or a State Parliament, prevent the export of goods which are grown or manufactured in a State, except in the manner provided in the Bill, which is by acquiring those goods in their entirety—that is within the power of a State Parliament—when the State instrumentality can do what it likes with the goods it has so acquired. That is the process brought into action by the Bill, and it is perfectly within the competence of the State Parliament. A matter that has arisen in the course of the debate is that some complaint has been made that under this Bill there will be no guaranteed price to the growers. Such a price could only operate if there were an undertaking by the guarantor, who in this case would be the State Government, to pay certain moneys by way of subsidy to the industry if the market price fell below the guaranteed price. That action is beyond the competence of the State Parliament or the State Government because, strange to say, under the Commonwealth Constitution the only industry which a State Government or a State Parliament can subsidise is the mining industry. So these two matters, which have been referred to, are excluded for want of jurisdiction by this Parliament.

In normal circumstances I am entirely, antagonistic to Bills of this character for the reasons that they are one more restriction on the liberty of the subject and on the enterprise associated with that liberty which has meant so much to the development of all parts of the Empire and, very largely of course, of this part. I believe that measures of this kind inevitably tend to create a monopoly. Let us consider the Bill. It is certain that the board, under the powers given to it, will license a certain number, and only a certain number, of people to grow potatoes, and a great many will be refused. That is the commencement of a monopoly. So, normally, I would be antagonistic to the Bill, but I am informed—and I have taken some trouble to find that the information is correct—that the experience in wartime—particularly that of selling potatoes by the Deputy Controller of Potatoes under the Commonwealth administration—has imbued the minds of growers, and others generally associated with the trade, with the idea that those conditions should be perpetuated, or at any rate continued for the time being.

I am quite aware that one of the conditions, perhaps the most attractive of the lot, that is the payment by the Commonwealth of a considerable amount of money to the industry, is not within the power of this House to continue. But the other conditions are such that we have the capacity to continue them in operation. In consequence of that opinion, we have the Bill. But in some respects, as pointed out by the member for Nelson, it differs from the practice that was in vogue under the Commonwealth regulations. It differs in one phase, particularly, in that it entirely puts out of existence the wholesale merchants dealing in this particular produce. They are not mentioned here, whereas by the Commonwealth practice their services were used as agents of the Deputy Controller. What better men would it be possible to use as agents? They have spent a lifetime in the trade and have established connections in various markets outside of Western Australia—in India, Capetown, Singapore, and of course, the Eastern States—for the disposal of this particular produce. Therefore they were infinitely the best people to use as agents—not as principals or

men buying at a price and then selling to their advantage, but working on a commission basis. The Commonwealth Deputy Controller who used them that way achieved, we are told, a very excellent result.

The Minister has been good enough to allow me to discuss the matter with him, and I propose, when the Bill is in Committee, to have included in it, as well as the powers already set out for the registration of agents, authority for the board to register selling and distributing agents, and therefore to avail itself of the services of men of experience, knowledge and other advantages in connection with the marketing of potatoes. The series of clauses, which will be necessary to achieve this objective, will be identical with the provisions of the Bill governing the registration of agents and I hope, therefore, it will be acceptable to the House because the trade will suffer a great loss if the men best versed in the handling of this produce should be shut out from giving any assistance to its marketing. That is so clear that the growers themselves have informed those merchants of their desire that this inclusion shall be made and, with them, waited on the Under Secretary of Agriculture with a request that he accept that view. That is a matter which I will explain at somewhat greater length when the Bill is dealt with in Committee.

Unfortunately I was precluded from putting my amendments on the notice paper by two sets of circumstances. One, of course, was that I had not got them ready, which probably is the only circumstance I need mention. However, they were ready today but with the small amount of power available at the Government Printing Office a member must have his amendments in the hands of the Clerk at least 24 hours before they are required if they are to be printed at all. I have had some copies typed and I will circulate them amongst members.

Mr. Thorn: The agent takes the *del credere* risk, too.

Hon. N. KEENAN: No, he will not do so under the proposal I shall submit. The distributing agent will be simply an agent who will be appointed and who will be liable to the cancellation of his appointment at the discretion of the board. The only right to remuneration that he will have will be such as the board, with the consent of the

Minister, is prepared to pay him. There will be no question of his being a del credere agent, obtaining some large income from the business, unless the board should find it necessary to adopt that course and the Minister saw fit to agree to that step being taken. There are a few other amendments that are really consequential upon that major alteration. One will deal with the matter referred to by the member for Nelson.

Under the Bill, one member of the board is to be a person acquainted with, and having a commercial knowledge of, the trade. As that hon. member pointed out, no person will fill that category to a higher degree than the wholesale merchant who undoubtedly is a person qualified to speak with full knowledge of this trade. Therefore, when we are dealing with the clause setting out the composition of the board I shall ask the Minister to accept an amendment in respect of the two members to be appointed to represent the consumers with the object of ensuring that one of those members shall be a registered wholesale distributor—not any Tom, Dick or Harry, but one approved and registered by the board as a wholesale distributor. That is all I intend to say on the Bill because I do not feel qualified to speak as to its merits. I am not in touch with the industry to such an extent that I could say that this is a good Bill for its purposes. On the face of it, it is repugnant to me, but because of wartime experience and the claims of all parties concerned that this form of legislation should continue, I lay aside my repugnancy and merely draw attention to these various points in a desire to make it a more workable measure.

MR. ABBOTT (North Perth) [2.35]: I am not particularly enamoured of the Bill. As others have stressed, it seeks to continue certain restrictions that were deemed necessary owing to war conditions. I regard it as rather unfortunate that those concerned consider necessary the continuance of those restrictions even after the state of emergency that brought them into existence has ceased. If it is requisite for that to be done in the interests of the potato growers, I cannot see why it is not equally necessary in respect of other forms of industry. Should the legislation prove successful, we may in the near future have applications from other sections of industry, such as the fruitgrowers, for

similar legislation and their requests will be proffered with equal justification.

Mr. Needham: This applies to the dairying industry already.

Mr. ABBOTT: Only to portion of the industry. This type of Bill tends to create monopolies and I fail to see how people can favour it, seeing that that means merely improving artificially the conditions under which a favoured class works. If they do so, it must be at the expense of some other sections of the community. It is hard to discriminate between one section and another, and to judge the merits of the reward that a particular industry should receive at the expense of others and to do so with justice. The Bill provides no indication as to the encouragement of production for export. If a man wishes to grow potatoes for that purpose he cannot do so because he has to sell his product to the board.

Mr. Fox: He can send his potatoes to the Eastern States if he wants to.

Mr. ABBOTT: That is not so. He has to secure a license before he can grow the potatoes. Then again only a favoured few are to be granted licenses, and the position will arise exactly as we have it in connection with whole milk. Very soon a goodwill will attach to the licenses as already attaches to Federal licenses. Not inconsiderable sums have been offered to persons holding licenses to produce potatoes. As soon as these licenses are granted the right to grow potatoes has a monetary value. I put that position to the authorities that be and their answer was "We know it, but can do nothing about it. We admit it is there, but what can we do?" Had this Bill been framed on the basis of giving the growers the right to combine for marketing their products, I should have felt much happier, because there is probably an argument—a good argument at that—to be put forward for those who say, "We want orderly marketing for our product; we want to be in a position to stabilise reasonably the price we shall receive." A Bill of that kind would have found in me a much stronger supporter than I am in the present instance. Here we are saying that a person shall not join in the industry. A person may have a good plot of ground and desire to plant potatoes, but the board may say, "No, you will not be licensed." This is not a question of all the growers combining to market their product in the best possible

manner and on a competitive basis as between themselves. We are eliminating all competition among the potato growers.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: That is done under the Licensing Act in respect of beer.

Mr. ABBOTT: Yes. Does the hon. member approve of that?

Hon. J. C. Willcock: No.

Mr. ABBOTT: I do not. I would rather see a freer system of vending liquors than that which obtains today. I would prefer the French system.

Mr. Needham: The Barristers' Board has created a monopoly.

Mr. ABBOTT: That is not so. Anyone in the world can join the legal profession.

Mr. McDonald: What about the lumpers' union?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. J. C. Willcock: What about potatoes?

Mr. ABBOTT: I see no reason why this Bill should not have been introduced on the basis of the equalisation scheme for butterfat. Butterfat is marketed in an orderly manner; but any dairyman can say, "I am going to milk any number of cows for butterfat." He could not be told that because he had milked 10 cows this year he could only milk 20 cows the following year. What would happen to our returned soldiers who desire to carry on dairy farms if we introduced a Bill of this nature in connection with butterfat? Admittedly it would be impossible. But this will happen in regard to potatoes. In a couple of years a returned soldier who has acquired a dairy farm will find he has a little more time on his hands and will want to grow potatoes. He will be told, "No, you are out of that industry and out of it for all time." Admittedly, at the present moment there is some small provision for a returned soldier who desires to grow potatoes.

Mr. Fox: We should not over-produce.

Mr. ABBOTT: Is that not a question of those who can grow potatoes in the most efficient manner? We are eliminating all competition. Although I feel there is much to be said for the potato-growers, and although I feel that they should have the right to introduce a scheme for the orderly marketing of their product, I am disappointed that the Bill was not introduced on the basis

of the equalisation scheme for the producers of butterfat. This Bill will only create another close corporation, another monopoly, which will create vested interests. It is undoubtedly designed to cut out the small grower near the city, and it will undoubtedly increase the price of potatoes inordinately to the man who can probably least afford to pay, that is, the man on the basic wage.

MR. HILL (Albany) [2.45]: I listened to the member for North Perth with a considerable amount of interest, and I am reminded of an incident which occurred about six years ago. I was at Parliament House in Adelaide, having afternoon tea with the Speaker, Sir Robert Nicholl, Mr. Norman Makin, my cousin and Mrs. L. Hill of Perth. During the course of the conversation, Mr. Stanley Bruce was discussed and Mr. Makin said that a gentleman who had been talking to Mr. Bruce had asked him why he pulled out of politics. "Well," Mr. Bruce replied, "it is this way: I can see the other fellow's standpoint too easily." I shall endeavour to put the potato-growers' standpoint before the member for North Perth and other members of this House. I am not a potato-grower myself, but for 36 years I have lived in a potato-growing environment. In fact, shortly after I took up my property on the Kalgan River, the Department of Agriculture sent down an officer—Mr Chitty Baker—to try to encourage people to take up potato-growing.

I remember on one occasion that Mr. George Wickens, while visiting my orchard, said, "Before you put in a crop of potatoes, you should toss up to see whether you take a ticket in Tatts. or put in a crop of potatoes." Before control was introduced, potato-growing was a gamble. The orchardist and the dairyman and other like producers generally take up their vocation for life; but a potato-grower may be in and out of the business within a period of six months. A big price for potatoes will result in all growers who have a few acres of land rushing in a crop of potatoes, and then down goes the price. These fluctuating prices are no good to anyone. The growers want a reasonable average price and such a price is better both for the producer and the consumer.

I have some figures going back to 1933, and shall quote the figures for January of each year. In 1933 the price in Perth was £4 2s. 6d. per ton; in 1934, £4 7s. 6d. These low prices drove several growers out of production. The following year the price went up to £11 5s. This encouraged production. However, in 1931 the price fell to £3 15s.; in 1937, it rose to £11 2s. 6d., but in 1938 it fell to £4 10s.

Mr. Abbott: But there was no scheme at all then.

Mr. HILL: No, there was no control. In 1939 the price was £11; in February, it was £17. That was an abnormal year. There was a drought in Victoria and the Albany district suffered from disastrous floods which practically destroyed the potato crops in that district. In 1940 the price receded to £5; while in 1941 it rose to £9 15s. It was in December, 1942, that Japan entered the war. A few months later, the then Premier, the member for Geraldton, sent out to all members of Parliament a circular advising them how they could assist in the war effort. I convened a meeting at Albany to see what we could do to assist the Premier. One of the things he asked for was the encouragement of the growing of potatoes and vegetables. There were present at the meeting Mr. H. C. Poole, who is now our representative on the Commonwealth marketing scheme, his son, who is the secretary of the Albany Potato-Growers' Association, Mr. Burvill, and a merchant and potato-grower, Mr. Williamson, of Narrikup. Subsequently we held a meeting and put suggestions to the Government. We pointed out that if potatoes and vegetables were to be grown, the business would have to be made as attractive to those engaged in it as service was in the Forces. We stressed the need for a guaranteed price. Some months afterwards our suggestions were practically adopted by the Commonwealth Government.

I desire to emphasise this fact: Control was introduced during the war not so much for the benefit of the producer as to supply the Fighting Forces and people of Australia with potatoes. Had the Government not stepped in with its control and guaranteed price, the people of Australia and the Fighting Forces would have been starving for potatoes. Since then, not only the producers but the consuming public, have found the

need of a regulated and organised system of growing and marketing potatoes. While this Bill is being discussed there is much talk of control, but I want to stress the fact that we want control so that the potato industry, and distribution, can be regulated and organised. I cannot see that price fixing is in any way possible, but one of the main functions of the board will be to regulate the law of supply and demand.

The member for North Perth referred to export. Now, the export of potatoes is not a regular trade. But the board could cater for export when necessary. The hon. member compared the growing of potatoes with the production of butterfat. There is no comparison. The market for potatoes, in normal circumstances, is limited but we can produce as much butterfat as possible and there is a ready market for it because the butter can be cooled and sent oversea. I give the Bill my wholehearted support and appeal to members to do the same, because I am confident that with a properly organised and regulated scheme of production and distribution of potatoes not only the growers but the consumers too, will be benefited.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [2.52]: I have, in my district, nothing to do with the principal matters contained in the Bill, but I feel that a few words by a city member might be contributed to the subject from the point of view of individuals who are consumers. I have watched the progress of boards for many years, and I notice that the usual course for people to take in regard to them is to object to all boards other than the one which might be of some pressing interest to the individuals concerned. There is a general attack on all boards. It can be said that over the years—in the last few years at any rate—we have been undergoing a gigantic experiment, of which this is a part. It still seems to be an open question as to whether the effect of boards is to produce more commodities, make them cheaper and cause the producers to be more contented or whether, as has been said in this House, it is to reduce the amount of production, lessen the acreage, limit the supplies, cause a rise in prices and leave the producers discontented. These are two utterly different sets of ideas put forward as to their effect by people in the last few years. Although I

live in the city and have the consumers' interests at heart, I believe that we have to support the principle of boards and go right through with it as a huge experiment to see how it will eventually end.

It is easy for those who follow the subject of boards to go back to the Egyptian times of 2,000 years ago and quote certain tablets to show that in those days there were price fixing and other controls that we have now. It is argued, with a shrug of the shoulders, by those who oppose the board system, "They failed then, and will fail again now." The only ray of light that I have seen on this subject came from a statement made by a Federal Minister, dealing with this very matter of potatoes, during the war. He made an outright assertion that the effect of the Potato Board had been a larger acreage of potatoes than ever before in the history of Australia. If that is true, and there are no circumstances which make that a peculiar situation, I think it at least shows something concrete which could encourage members to support the principle of boards. I have heard these arguments in connection with milk and other commodities, and on every occasion it is possible to find people who will go diametrically opposite in their own opinions as to whether these things are a benefit or a curse. I wish the Bill every success and I trust the Minister will achieve the results he expects. If this board is not perfect at first we should persevere with it, as we have done with others so as to bring about improvements in supplies, contentment to the growers and, eventually, better prices for the consumers.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. J. T. Tonkin—North-East Fremantle—in reply) [2.56]: It can be rightly said that the Bill has had a good reception. It is true that some members have addressed themselves to one aspect of the legislation, of which they have been a little fearful, and that is they have referred to the fact that it happens to create a monopoly and to infringe the liberty of the subject. If liberty means the liberty to go bankrupt it might not be very desirable to pass the Bill, and that is what liberty does mean with regard to the production of a number of commodities. Owing to the attraction of a guaranteed price during the war, the acreage under potatoes in Western Aus-

tralia increased from 7,000 to 14,000, and the production of potatoes in Tasmania trebled because there was a market for a large quantity of that produce at a guaranteed price. The people who did so well producing potatoes during the war will naturally want to continue growing them.

If there is no control or restriction and no guaranteed price, then the inevitable will happen; there will be a colossal crash and every grower will sustain severe losses. Having been hit severely in the pocket a number of growers will disappear from the industry and only those who can hang on and stand the strain will continue to produce. If an insufficient number survives then the community will not have enough potatoes to meet its needs and the people will suffer by having a shortage. It is to prevent such things that this sort of legislation is introduced. The war experience has shown that it is sound economics to regulate production and to feed on to the market the quantity of produce which it can absorb.

Under free production and competition a high price encourages the producer to market his produce, and it encourages all producers at the same time with the result that the price falls so that what appeared to be a profitable season becomes a disastrous one. Nor do the consumers benefit very much. They might gain the advantage of surplus potatoes at a cheap price, for a short period, but subsequently they get very few potatoes at a high price. That has been going on for years. The member for Claremont put his finger right on the spot in this connection when he said he had noticed a statement to the effect that, under orderly marketing of potatoes, the quantities had increased very largely. That is perfectly true.

Hon. N. Keenan: That was because of the war.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It was not. It has been said—and this remains to be proved, but the tendencies seem to indicate it—that under orderly marketing Australia would consume the produce of 20,000 acres more of potatoes than it would without such control. Before the institution of control the average weekly consumption of potatoes in Perth was 350 tons. The war is not on at present.

Mr. J. Hegney: It is not off, yet.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: And the consumption of potatoes in Perth today is over 600 tons per week, as compared with 350 tons prior to the system of orderly marketing. That is a distinct economic gain to the general community, apart altogether from the fact that it gives a better opening for the producers to get rid of their product.

Mr. Doney: It eases the need for imports in other directions.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. If we could have a system under which the producers could know how much of their product they ought to attempt to grow, and if there could be some arrangement under which it could be fed on to the market in orderly fashion, there would be no need for hoards or systems of control such as this, but unfortunately we cannot get away from the fact that there is always a limiting factor. We might endeavour to delude ourselves into the belief that we should let returned soldiers, or anybody else who wished to produce potatoes, produce them, and that it would be a good thing for them if they did so. But that would not be so, because, if they simply followed the desire to produce potatoes, without knowledge of the absorptive capacity of the market, then after they got a bumper crop and believed they were going to secure a nice return, it is quite possible they would suffer a severe jolt and that the bumper crop would be a liability instead of an asset, owing to a catastrophic fall in price.

Whilst efficient producers can increase the yield by good farming methods, they cannot guarantee what price they will receive for the product when they sell it, and that is the crux of the question. This Bill is designed to set up an instrumentality that will endeavour to gauge the extent of the market, and then to allocate to those ordinarily engaged in producing this type of commodity a proportion of the market to be supplied. In that way, by ensuring that there will not be a tremendous surplus of the product, the market will be more or less guaranteed, and it can be known that a certain return will be obtained by the producers. The growers know that, even under this Bill, they will not be able to produce as many acres of potatoes as they previously grew, yet they want the legislation because they feel that it guarantees them, for such a quantity of potatoes as they will grow, a reasonable re-

turn on their efforts. I submit that that is far better, even though it does mean control and some taking away of the liberty of the subject—better for the producer generally and for the community than is the other method, which depends on trial and error.

Some people suggest that we should not go ahead with this legislation unless we first of all have a poll of the growers. The Potato-growers' Association assured me in the first instance, before I considered the legislation, that they wanted this measure, so I do not see any need for a poll. Quite apart from that, let me mention the experience in other States. Victoria decided to take a poll of growers and, having done so, the result was that 75 per cent. were in favour of control. Victoria is at present considering legislation to give effect to the growers' request.

Hon. N. Keenan: Was that 75 per cent. of those who voted, or of all who were entitled to vote?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I would say 75 per cent. of those who voted.

Mr. Thorn: Are our conditions similar?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They are. In Tasmania, legislation covering the marketing of all vegetables was passed in 1945 and so the power already exists there and the growers, if they so desire, can take the steps necessary to have a board set up under that legislation. So far as I can ascertain, they have not yet done so, but such production is the lifeblood of Tasmania. That State has gone in extensively for potato-growing. It is to be appreciated that, as they trebled their production in the war years, growers there are certainly in a position to interfere largely in the markets elsewhere.

One aspect of this legislation is that it is designed to enable the marketing board in Western Australia to enter into an arrangement with similar boards in Victoria and Tasmania so that the total product can be fed to the Australian market in an orderly fashion. We have a good deal to gain from that and, as I see it, very little to lose. Whilst I admit that, on a first view, it seems that we are travelling along the road to limiting the production of this or that commodity, I submit that, in the interests of the general economy, it has been demonstrated that that is very necessary. The old system of freedom to go bankrupt was not of much ad-

vantage. When a crop appears to be attractive, it is to be expected that many people will have a shot at it, and will only learn that they have been foolish when they suffer severe financial losses as a result of their experience. That does not do anybody any good. It is far better to prevent such financial losses from occurring. The only way in which we can do that is to gauge the capacity of the market and then to try to regulate production to suit it. Of course, that cannot be done with all products. Some highly perishable products have to be disposed of almost as soon as they are harvested, and they present great difficulty when it comes to a scheme for regulated production and orderly marketing.

Other products, however, are of such a nature that it is possible to store them for a time, and so the necessary quantity can be fed on to the market as required to meet a steady demand. In that way, fluctuations in price are ironed out and a more regular price is obtained. The consumer does not pay any more, in the long run. He pays a more or less regular price throughout the season for his commodity, instead of being called on to pay a high price at one stage and then, for a limited period, being able to get a quantity at a low price in another part of the year. In the long run, that is of no advantage to the consumer, and it is disastrous to the producer. The system of orderly marketing envisaged under this legislation obviates those difficulties and ensures that the return to the grower will be reasonable, as will the cost to the consumer.

Unfortunately, through a misapprehension I misled the member for Murray-Wellington when he dealt with one phase of this legislation the other evening. He asked me, if the board required a producer to hold potatoes on his farm, whether the producer or the board would carry any loss sustained through holding the potatoes. By interjection I told him the loss would be carried by the board, but I was thinking of something different at the time when I gave that reply. Actually, the board would acquire the whole crop and the producers would be expected to hold it on their premises. At each period when the board decided that a quantity of potatoes was to be marketed, perhaps 5 per cent. or 10 per cent. of the crop, all the producers would be told to market that proportion

of their crops at that time, holding the balance.

It is true that there would be some wastage of the quantity they had on their farms. In the long run, under this method, the position would not be any different from that which would obtain if the board were able to take in the whole of the crop and store it, after the manner of a pool, and then divide the proceeds pro rata among the growers after the whole crop had been disposed of, because the board—as a board—cannot carry the loss. It has no funds for that purpose. Any loss that might be sustained because of wastage would be a reduction in the return from the whole crop. So, if each grower is permitted to market the same percentage of his crop at the one time, they all take the same risk, and the final result is the same.

Hon. N. Keenan: That is not so. What if my potatoes are more liable to rot?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If the hon. member has an inferior article—

Hon. N. Keenan: It may not be an inferior article.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It might be at a different period, and even then I submit it would be perfectly fair because, if farmer A has a product that will not deteriorate as rapidly as that of farmer B, why should he have to shoulder part of the loss sustained by farmer B?

Mr. Thorn: Farmer A should hold his produce and allow farmer B to market his, if the scheme is working properly.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think any board worthy of the name would have regard to those factors. The marketing board is to be there primarily for the purpose of safeguarding the industry and those in it, and to get the best possible result for the producers working under it. Secondly, the board is expected to see that when the product is marketed it is not sold at such a price as would be detrimental to the interests of the general consumer. In other words, it is there to see that whatever happens is fair to both producer and consumers. Those are the two interests most vitally concerned. It would be against the interests of consumers and producers if the board did anything to cause a consider-

able loss of potatoes resulting in financial loss to the producers, because this would mean that the consumers would have to pay a higher price for the rest of the product.

Mr. Thorn: If that happened, the scheme would not be a success.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so.

Mr. McLarty: If a grower lost his crop and could not market it, who would bear the loss, the board or the producer?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If a producer lost his potatoes and could not market them, the producer would lose. There are no funds with which the board could carry on in those circumstances. We do not propose to put the producer in a better position from that aspect than he occupies now; nor do we propose to put him in any worse position. If a producer under the free marketing of potatoes has the bad luck to lose his crop through its being infested with fly—

Mr. McLarty: He gets rid of it quickly.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, provided he can sell it and provided it is not badly affected. Doubtless the board would have regard to that factor. The board would realise that there were certain potatoes that ought to be marketed immediately and would make arrangements accordingly. On the board there will be three producers to ensure that that aspect is not overlooked.

Mr. J. Hegney: How will the health of the consumers be protected?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is the responsibility of the Health Department.

Mr. Rodoreda: What about pasteurising the potatoes?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Regarding the point raised by the member for Nedlands, it is not possible under this legislation to give a guaranteed price.

Hon. N. Keenan: It is not possible under the Constitution.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: At present a subsidy is being paid to those who grow potatoes under contract. From time to time growers have said to me, "You are refusing me a license to grow potatoes, and I think it unfair because I used to grow so many acres before the war." I have said, "No, you may grow as

many potatoes as you like, 50 acres if you like." The reply has been, "Yes, but you will not give me a contract for 50 acres." The desire, of course, is to grow 50 acres at a guaranteed price. We cannot do that. The market would not be there to absorb the quantity produced. The contracts given today are based on the quantity required for the Australian market. Those contracts have been distributed through the potato-growing States and we have our share. They have been allocated on a basis suggested by the Potato Growers' Association, taking 1942 as the base year. So we can only say to the growers, "We will give you a contract for three acres, and if you grow three acres and the price is only so and so, there will be a subsidy to make it up." That is highly satisfactory. What growers want is a contract to grow unlimited quantities at a guaranteed price, and I do not know of any system that could stand such an arrangement. It is possible to give a guaranteed price only if it is known that there will not be a greater quantity produced than the market can absorb.

The production of potatoes increased so greatly during the war that it is now a long way ahead of market requirements and so inevitably there had to be some scaling down. The growers are aware of this and are prepared to accept it, believing that it is far sounder to grow a small quantity if they can be assured of selling the lot at a reasonable price rather than to grow as much as they like without knowing what proportion they will be able to sell or the price that they will get for it.

I have several amendments on the notice paper, one of which I believe will meet the desires of the member for Nedlands. I refer to the appointment of selling and distributing agents. The position is not set out as explicitly as in the amendment indicated by the member for Nedlands, but I think it will achieve the same objective. If the board desires so to do, it will have the power to appoint merchants as distributing agents as they are operating today, but this is a matter that I consider should be left entirely to the discretion of the board. If Parliament sets up a board to regulate and control the production and marketing of this commodity, I am of the opinion that the Minister should interfere as little as possible. The board should be

set up clothed with certain powers and, within the limits of those powers, should function without direction from the Minister. We have argued that point over and over again. In the matter of marketing this crop, I do not agree that the Minister should be placed in the position of having to tell the board that he does not approve of a certain system of marketing and that some other system should be tried. The board should decide that matter within the powers conferred upon it by Parliament. That is what I intend the Bill to do.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 to 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Interpretation:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

I move an amendment—

That the definition of "commercial producer" be struck out with a view to inserting another definition.

The reason for this was given by the member for Nelson, who pointed out that growers of less than three acres would have no vote and would not be eligible to sit on the board. One man on two acres might produce more potatoes than another on three or four acres. Many small growers are commercial producers, and it is probably preferable to have a larger number of people growing small lots than a few large producers growing all the potatoes required. To give producers on less than three acres the right to a vote for the producers' representatives and the right to stand for election, I ask members to approve of the new definition. I am stipulating that a grower coming under this definition shall be one qualified to vote at the election of a member of the Legislative Assembly. The reason for that is obvious. It will ensure that unnaturalised persons shall not have the right to determine the conditions of an industry that will control subjects with the full right of citizenship.

Mr. Watts: That is already provided for in Clause 8.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: But I want it to appear in the definition also.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I suggest that instead of stipulating one who is qualified to vote at the election of a member of the Legislative Assembly, we should provide for one who is registered as an elector. The Minister's proposed amendment would create the necessity for providing proof.

The CHAIRMAN: At present we are discussing only the deletion of the definition.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move—

That the following definition be inserted in lieu of the one struck out:—

"Commercial Producer" means a grower by whom or on whose behalf at least half-acre or any areas of land exceeding in the aggregate half-acre have been planted in the last preceding period of 12 months commencing from the 1st day of April in each year and who is qualified to vote at the election of a member of the Legislative Assembly.

I do not think the amendment indicated by the member for Nedlands would meet the position. A number of persons qualified to vote might not be on the roll and they would not be registered.

Hon. N. Keenan: They would be acting illegally if they were not on the roll.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: But names do disappear from the roll.

Mr. Fox: Suppose a grower was 19 years of age and had all the other qualifications, what would happen?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: He would not be eligible to vote.

Mr. Fox: Still, he would be growing a crop.

Mr. Thorn: The Minister is on the right track.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am afraid that the proposal of the member for Nedlands would create other difficulties. It should be sufficient if a person proves that he has the qualification to vote, even though his name may not be on the roll.

Mr. THORN: I agree with the Minister regarding those whose names appear on the Legislative Assembly rolls, because that system has operated favourably in Acts of a similar nature, and those not interested

enough to place their names on the roll do not deserve a vote. This is a very good safeguard; because I am interested in an industry which ran the risk of being controlled by people not legally entitled to be on the roll, and the position was very dangerous. I agree that the stipulation that these three acres of potatoes must have been planted to entitle a man to be a commercial producer is somewhat severe, and something should be done about it. It would be far better to require that a man shall produce one ton or two tons or more, whatever is thought to be fair and reasonable, than to mention half-an-acre or some other figure of that kind. Any man can throw a few potatoes in the ground and yet be producing nothing for most of the time.

Mr. J. Hegney: Suppose a crop failed through no fault of the grower?

Mr. THORN: I agree there is that aspect to be considered; but it is a question of defining a commercial producer, and we might find a backyard grower putting in half-an-acre of potatoes without being commercially interested, and yet having a say in the affairs of the commercial growers and the board. There would be a safeguard in insisting that a certain quantity of potatoes must be produced.

Mr. CROSS: It seems to me that the effect of this definition will be to give an absolute monopoly to those people engaged in growing potatoes at present. Does the definition prevent anybody else from coming into the industry? Suppose a man says, "I will go to Riverton where I can grow five or six acres and beat the country markets by about a month." Would it mean that he would be prevented from doing that? If so, I will not vote for it. It is all very well for these boards to give monopolies to a favoured few and crush everybody else out!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The member for Canning has missed the whole point of the Bill, which is designed to limit the production of potatoes, and to allocate to producers a certain proportion of the quantity to be grown. So any man who wanted to do what the member for Canning suggested—namely, to grow six acres and beat the market—would have to demonstrate that he was entitled to a license to grow. If he did that satisfactorily, he would be given an opportunity to grow the potatoes.

Amendment (to insert new definition) put and passed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That after the definition of "grower" the following new definition be inserted:—
 "'licensed distributor' means any wholesale merchant who, over a period of 12 months preceding his registration as such, has sold a minimum of five tons of potatoes per week."

Subsequently I shall submit amendments concerning licensed distributors, and this definition is consequently necessary.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This amendment requires some explanation, because it is the forerunner of a number of other amendments designed with a certain purpose. Members who are familiar with the present system of marketing of potatoes know that there are certain firms or persons acting at present as receiving agents for the potato committee, and there are certain wholesale merchants who are acting as distributors. That system is functioning quite well, and I have no reason to believe that the board set up under this legislation would want to make any drastic alteration. The Bill does not prevent the board from continuing that arrangement, but it does not specifically state that it shall do so or that it has power to do so. The Bill makes provision for the appointment of registered agents but is silent on the question of distributors or wholesale merchants. The member for Nedlands seeks to make it specific in the Bill that the board will have power to continue the present arrangement and appoint wholesale merchants as licensed distributors so that the present set-up may be maintained if the board desires.

I think the amendment I have on the notice paper, if inserted in the Bill and read in conjunction with the power already there, will be sufficiently explicit to indicate that the board has power to continue the present arrangement. The amendment to which I have referred is to give the board power to appoint representatives and selling agents. If the board has power to appoint representatives and selling agents, then I assume it would have power to appoint these wholesale merchants to do what they are doing now. In those circumstances, I do not think it necessary to go to the extent of adopting the amendments that would be necessary upon agreeing to the definition suggested by

the member for Nedlands. Unless he can show me I am not right in that view, I propose to vote against the amendment.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Clause 21 of the Bill provides for registered agents. They are persons who are entitled to take delivery of potatoes from growers on behalf of the board. They are simply collecting agents, but there is no machinery enabling the board to have distributing agents or selling agents, although that is the practice under the Commonwealth system and is obviously necessary; because unless the board itself sells—which is difficult if not almost impossible—it must employ selling agents working on commission. The definition is inserted to explain the term that will be afterwards used in other amendments I propose to move relating to these licensed distributors. The definition provides that they shall be persons of considerable experience and knowledge of the industry. They must for 12 months preceding the application for registration have sold an average of five tons of potatoes per week.

Mr. THORN: If distributing agents are not to be appointed I would like to ask the Minister who is going to take risks on behalf of the growers. The board has no money and, if there are only to be receiving agents, are they going to do the collecting and take the financial risk?

The Minister for Agriculture: There will be distributing agents.

Mr. THORN: I understood from the member for Nedlands that provision had not been made for distributing agents. I agree that we must have distributing agents of good standing otherwise there will be no-one to take delivery risks and the grower will not be protected.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The point taken by the member for Nedlands is that the Bill makes no specific reference to the appointment of distributing agents, and that there is therefore a doubt whether the Board would appoint such people. Whilst the Bill does not definitely set out that distributing agents may be appointed there is nothing to prevent the board from appointing them. To make the matter more explicit I propose to insert certain words giving the board power to appoint representatives and sell-

ing agents, in addition to other officers who may be appointed. I have no real objection to the amendment except that I believe that with the amendment I propose to move later the measure will contain all the power that is necessary in this respect. Would not the amendment of the member for Nedlands restrict distributing agents to those already operating and shut out for good anyone else? That would be unwise.

Mr. OWEN: The idea is to have on the board one who is a licensed distributor. It is possible that someone with good mercantile experience may be excluded if the amendment is agreed to, someone who has been acting as a merchant under the present control system. Under the definition, which provides that a man must have sold five tons of potatoes a week, the present proposal may exclude desirable people. The Minister should not be restricted in his choice of licensed distributors.

Mr. SEWARD: I, too, think the amendment would exclude from appointment any new man who was just starting in business. Such a man would not be able to sell any potatoes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: My amendment provides that any person who desires to be registered as a distributing agent shall apply in writing to the board for such registration, and shall give the board such information relative to his application as may be required. The board will still have discretion to grant or refuse the application. It will be noticed that this refers to "any" person. The Bill has probably been drafted on the Tasmanian statute, and probably it will be found in that statute that the same position arises and that registered agents are given a separate clause under which the board is authorised to appoint them. The definition I have asked for is necessary for it ensures the persons selected being really and truly experienced men.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not antagonistic to the amendment, but I am afraid it would restrict the appointment of licensed distributors to those who were already doing the work, and would preclude any new man from coming in. If a man had not been selling potatoes at the rate of five tons per week he would not be qualified to register. The man who

had been in business for some years, though not necessarily selling potatoes, should be entitled to apply for a license under this Bill. I look upon the proposed definition as exclusive and I hope it will not be passed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I would not suggest the passing of any exclusive definition, and I am prepared to accept any amendment that would obviate such an interpretation being placed upon my proposal. My object is that the person who applies for registration shall be one who has had business experience. If we do not make such provision we shall endanger the success of the Bill. I fail to see how we can avoid taking the past dealings of the applicant into account if we are to determine what experience he has had. In the case of the word "agent" the person concerned does not require to have any experience. All he does is to take delivery of a certain quantity of potatoes. I ask the Minister to suggest in what way he can ensure that the distributor shall be a man of experience unless we have some reference to his past career.

Mr. THORN: I will make a suggestion to the Minister to indicate how he could get over the difficulty. The proposed definition of a licensed distributor sets out that he shall be a person who can prove to the satisfaction of the board what is set out therein. The Minister appoints the board to conduct the business of potato-growers and, under the Dried Fruits Act, the board deals with those who are to be licensed. If some similar provision were inserted, that would do all that is necessary without making any stipulation as to the quantity to be grown and so on.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not want to be stubborn but I am not satisfied with the amendment. I am not considering the fact that there might arise in the future a man of great capacity who would qualify as a distributor. What I envisage is that the Government has carried out soil surveys in certain parts of the State with a view to placing settlers on the land. With a large increase in settlement in one part of the State, considerably augmented business will accrue to some already well-established town. The need will then arise for a distributing agent, where there is at present none. If the amendment be accepted, the effect would be to restrict the board to

those at present qualified and already engaged in the business.

Hon. N. Keenan: Yes, experienced men.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Western Australia is a young State and will develop. There are many districts today that are not served by experienced men and, as that development expands, the need will arise for experienced men. Under the amendment, the Minister will be definitely limited to men engaged in the industry now. If the amendment were carried to its logical conclusion, we would reach a stage where no distributor could be appointed because those qualified had all died out! I intend to suggest the addition of the words "representative and selling agent" in a later clause that seeks to empower the board to appoint various officers. That would leave the matter at the discretion of the board and enable it to appoint a man of experience best able to render service to the industry.

Mr. THORN: I suggest that if the amendment were altered to provide that the man must prove to the satisfaction of the board that he has experience making him suitable to hold a license, it would get over the difficulty. I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out all the words after "who" in line 3 and inserting the words "proves to the satisfaction of the board that he is an experienced person who is suitable to hold such a license" in lieu.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I endeavoured to explain to the Committee that my whole object was to give a clear meaning to the definition, and there is force in the remarks of both the Minister and the member for Toodyay. I am prepared to accept the amendment suggested by the latter.

Amendment on amendment put and passed; the amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Constitution of board:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That in lines 3 to 4 of paragraph (a) of Subclause (3) the words "possess mercantile experience in the handling of potatoes

but shall not be interested in the commercial production of potatoes" be struck out with a view to inserting the words "be a licensed distributor" in lieu.

The amendment on my amendment to the previous clause requires a person to prove to the satisfaction of the board that his capabilities are satisfactory, whereas the paragraph in the Bill provides merely a guess by the Minister. If my amendment is agreed to, it will mean something in the nature of a decision by the board being arrived at with full knowledge of the individual's capacity. I think that will appeal to the Committee, and particularly to the member for Nelson.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I cannot accept the amendment, which would simply mean that one of the consumers' representatives is to be a wholesale merchant. I intend that the representative of the consumers shall be a proper representative of that section of the community and not one representing other interests.

MR. DONEY: What scope will the Minister have for choosing a man possessing mercantile experience in the handling of potatoes? It may be taken for granted that if a man had not experience in the industry he would not be in the business, but the Minister has intimated that he desires to exclude such a man from his choice.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I did not say I desired to exclude such a man from choice at all. I pointed out that the amendment would restrict and limit the choice of a consumers' representative to a wholesale merchant only. The Minister would therefore have to appoint a wholesale merchant. He would have no option. Many people in the community change their business from time to time. For example, on the Egg Marketing Board today there is a man who is experienced in the marketing of eggs but who does not now carry on the business. He was engaged in it years ago.

MR. SEWARD: Is he a representative of the consumer?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No.

MR. SEWARD: We are dealing with the consumers' representatives.

MR. DONEY: You are not quoting a parallel case.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: A man need not necessarily have been engaged in a business in order to have experience of it. The amendment would restrict the choice of one of the consumers' representatives to a wholesale merchant. Why should the consumers be so restricted? Of course, it is possible that a wholesale merchant might eventually be appointed.

MR. DONEY: Then you have no objection to a wholesale merchant being a consumers' representative?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I want the opportunity to look around to secure a man of experience. If I could get one who was not a wholesale merchant I would naturally prefer him. I shall vote against the amendment.

MR. THORN: Might I suggest to the Minister that the words in question could easily be struck out? I do not see the reason for their insertion. As the Minister said, he desires to select two representatives of the consumers. Why define them? If the words were struck out I think that would meet the case.

MR. WATTS: I strongly support the views of the member for Toodyay. The reference to mercantile experience should be deleted from the measure. If it is struck out, the Minister will not be compelled to find someone possessing that qualification. I hope means can be found whereby the words may be struck out so as to make the paragraph read in the way suggested by the member for Toodyay.

HON. N. KEENAN: The amendment before the Chair is to strike out words, but as the discussion has ranged beyond that, I might venture to do so also. The reason for the inclusion of the words is that the Bill is, as I suggested, a copy of the Tasmanian Act. It was found advantageous to have on the board some person who had mercantile knowledge of the handling of potatoes. None of the others need be persons having any knowledge of the handling of potatoes.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think the hon. member can blame another place for this, not Tasmania.

HON. N. KEENAN: Why the other place?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is what it did on a previous Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Nedlands will address the Chair.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I apologise. I was led astray. Apparently, the Minister objects to the striking out of the words.

The Minister for Agriculture: I did not say I objected. I am opposing what the hon. member wishes to put in.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That is premature. Unless the Minister is prepared to substitute words for those proposed to be struck out, he should at least stand by his Bill.

Mr. THORN: Many of these boards do not have commercial representation on them. The boards handle their side of the business and the registered agents and merchants deal with the commercial side. I do not consider it necessary to have a person of mercantile experience on this board. Oftentimes such persons become a nuisance. Whether the words are retained or not, I know the Minister will, if he can, appoint the right man.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and passed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I know I have a difficult, if not a hopeless, task in asking the Committee to agree to the substitution of the words I now propose to insert. I move—

That the words proposed to be inserted be inserted.

I do not wish to detain the Committee by reiterating my argument; but, if the member for Toodyay is correct, the best board we could get would be a board of escaped lunatics.

Mr. Thorn: Oh, no!

Hon. N. KEENAN: Apparently, knowledge of the business is not being sought for. If that is so, I have no ease whatever.

Mr. Thorn: We will see when the vote comes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I submit it would be a great advantage to the board to have some person on it who could advise the members. The board will now have no-one to advise it on the question of distribution.

Mr. DONEY: The Committee need not fear that dire consequences will result from including the words "a licensed distributor." After all, he will be but one of

six, and I take it the Minister, who still would have the choice, would surely choose one amenable to reason and able to work in with the other members of the board for the general public convenience.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is a new angle when the middleman is to be a representative of the consumer, and that is what the amendment means. It would take a lot to convince me that the middleman is a proper representative of the consumer. I hope the Committee will vote against the amendment.

Amendment (to insert words) put and negatived.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If members will refer to the notice paper, they will see that I had intended to move an amendment to this subclause myself. I proposed to insert in lieu of the word "interested," which is somewhat vague, the words "financially interested or engaged," but upon giving the matter further thought, I came to the conclusion that the word "engaged" would be sufficient. I do not propose to proceed with that amendment now. We now have the paragraph reading—

(a) Two shall be persons nominated by the Minister to represent the consumers, and at least one of such persons shall possess mercantile experience in the handling of potatoes but shall . . .

I propose to strike out the words "but shall" and in place of the word "interested" to insert the word "engaged." The member for Nedlands would not withdraw his amendment—I do not blame him.

Hon. N. Keenan: That was not the point.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Had the member for Nedlands withdrawn his amendment, the Committee could then have passed the amendment which was foreshadowed. I cannot do what I would have liked to do, and so must make the best of a difficult situation. I move an amendment—

That in lines 4 and 5 of paragraph (a) the words "but shall" be struck out.

Mr. DONEY: It is difficult to decide what is best in the time at our disposal, but the method adopted by the Minister does not appeal to me. He expresses a negative intention here and it is still possible for him to appoint some man with mercantile know-

ledge. About ten minutes ago he said it was possible for him to appoint a licensed distributor. I do not think he has such a set against the man with mercantile knowledge as he would have us believe. Although this is an amendment, it does not alter the meaning of the clause. There are a number of amendments that could conveniently be put in.

The Minister for Agriculture: Tell me one.

Mr. DONEY: As I said, the time at our disposal has not been much for this purpose.

Mr. McDONALD: The Minister's ingenuity, exercised at short notice, might well be reviewed because, as the amendment fore-shadows, one of the consumers' representatives shall or may be a grower. That would be even worse than a middleman.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the amendment is accepted then the paragraph will read so that it will have only one meaning; that he is to be commercially interested.

The Minister for Agriculture: You did not argue that way earlier.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If I did not, then I must have been wrong. But it is clear that, under the paragraph, as now proposed the Minister means that one of the consumers' representatives is to be a person commercially interested. That is not desired by the Minister. If the Minister wants to have a free hand with the two representatives of the consumer, he should reconsider the matter.

The Minister for Agriculture: Recommit the Bill.

Mr. Watts: You might make the other one a woman and be done with it.

Mr. DONEY: It seems to me that the commercial producer will not be expressly excluded by this, because the paragraph will provide that at least one shall not be interested. That obviously leaves one to be interested.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I cannot accept that reasoning. I admit that the clause, as amended, if agreed to, would not be satisfactory, and it would be contrary to what was originally intended, and what the Committee desires. But we were forced into this situation because the Committee would not accept the amendment to this subclause moved by the member for Nedlands. I am endeavouring to tidy up the paragraph with a view to dealing with it

later on. I would like to say here, "Two shall be persons nominated by the Minister to represent the consumers, and shall not be engaged in the commercial production of potatoes," so that they would be two straightout representatives of the consumers. I cannot achieve that now, so I suggest we tidy up this paragraph with a view to its recommitment.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I believe the word "engaged" is better than the word "interested" in this paragraph. I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of Subclause (3) the word "interested" be struck out and the word "engaged" inserted in lieu.

Mr. ABBOTT: A better way would be to allow the word "interested" to remain and strike out the words "in the commercial production of" and insert the words "commercially in." We would then be saying that we want at least one who would not be commercially interested in potatoes in any respect.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (b) of Subclause (3) the words "nominated by the Minister" be struck out with a view to inserting the words "elected by the growers."

Members received a circular letter from an organisation dealing with this matter, pointing out that the growers are not satisfied with this method of appointment, but in any case I would be against the procedure of the Minister nominating this representative when the following paragraph provides for the election of the representatives of the commercial producers. Why one section should have the democratic right to elect its representatives and the other section have to abide by the decision of the Minister, I cannot see. This right is given in other legislation that has from time to time been passed by this Chamber. I do not think the Minister, or his advisers, are in a better position to choose a representative of the growers than are the growers themselves. I know of no better way to make a proper appointment and give satisfaction to the growers than to allow them to elect their own representative. I would not like this legislation to commence with a set of discontented growers.

The Minister for Agriculture: There is no danger of that.

Mr. NEEDHAM: That will be the position if their representative is to be nominated and they do not have the opportunity to elect him.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Parliament has already agreed in principle to the construction of this board, in previous legislation. Its construction will give the producers three representatives out of six. They will have the opportunity to elect two, and the third producers' representative will be nominated by the Minister. Where a board is charged with great responsibility to an industry it is essential to ensure that on it there will be a few thoroughly competent men. I am not disparaging the ability of the growers to elect good men as representatives, but it is possible for men to be elected more on the score of popularity than that of efficiency. It would therefore be possible that, if the growers were to elect their three representatives, not one of them might be a sound business man. They might all be good fellows and conscientious growers, but not necessarily sound business men. Therefore power is taken in the Bill for the Minister to nominate one of the growers' representatives.

It is unthinkable that the Minister would appoint a representative who was opposed to the growers' interests. The producers have had plenty of opportunity of going through the Bill, but have intimated no dissatisfaction with its construction. It is true that there is a petition from a section of the growers in the metropolitan area, who regard certain provisions of the Bill as being undemocratic. Those growers have asked for a plebiscite to be taken, but they are greatly in the minority and I think therefore, their view can be disregarded. The majority opinion of growers is in favour of the Bill and is not opposed to the constitution of the board. The member for Nelson said the growers are satisfied with the board. He is in close touch with the executive of the Potato Growers' Association. I repeat that the constitution of this board is in conformity with the principle already endorsed several times by this Chamber, and at least once by another place.

Mr. HILL: I support the remarks of the Minister. Theoretically an election is the

correct method, but persons are often elected on popularity rather than on ability. I feel sure the growers will be content to trust the Minister to elect a representative who will work in with the others on the board.

Mr. DONEY: The member for Albany is entitled to the view he has expressed. Here we have a board of business men. They are no less business men because they are producers of potatoes and I do not think they would pick their chairman merely because he was popular.

The Minister for Agriculture: This is not the chairman.

Mr. Seward: The Minister also nominates the chairman.

Mr. DONEY: I may have been misled by the member for Perth, who I understood was attempting to amend subparagraph (d).

Hon. W. D. Johnson: No sub paragraph (b).

Mr. DONEY: Then I have been mistaken. I apologise to the Committee.

Mr. SEWARD: I support the amendment. If the growers are not fit and proper persons to elect their representatives they must suffer by that failure, but I think they have that right. I am not reflecting on the Minister, but in later years the measure may be administered by a Minister who would want to dominate the board. There are business men in the ranks of the growers and I think the growers should have the right to elect their own representatives. At all events they should have the right to elect two nominees, from whom the Minister should make a choice. A night or so ago we dealt with a Bill which gave the employees in a certain industry the right to choose their own representative, and I think the growers should have that right.

Mr. HOAR: It is true that the Potato Growers' Association offers no objection to the Bill in its present form, or to this clause. I have recently met the growers in the Manjimup area in close consultation on this Bill, and every clause of it was examined. They quite understand the need for this provision but they indicated to me that they would like some say in the ultimate selection of this particular representative. I think the best solution, which would probably meet with the wishes of those supporting the amendment,

would be to defeat the amendment and then by another amendment to insert after the word "Minister" in line 34 the words "and after consultation with the Potato Growers' Association executive." That would give the growers the opportunity of discussing the choice of this representative with the Minister.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: When log-rolling comes into matters such as this the only safe course is to get on to the election. I support the amendment. Let the growers arrange their own affairs and decide what representation they want. I was closely associated with a co-operative organisation on the same lines as this, which had a successful result. It certainly cost the Westralian Farmers a few pounds, but nothing compared with the wonderful result that the growers got from that organisation. It was very difficult to get growers in different areas to see eye to eye with one another, and I want to cement a better understanding between them. If we make a selection we are bound to offend the growers somewhere or other. We can easily get into a position that will make Parliament appear a bit ridiculous, in the first place by recognising the right of the growers to have protection through legislation and then immediately cramping their interests and their say in the administration.

I have previously complained of the Government's conception of how boards should be constituted, because I do not think it takes sufficiently into consideration the claims of both producers and consumers, being inclined to lean to others. I think that on the board there should be one representative of the consumers, one of the producers, and a chairman such as is proposed in the Bill. I can understand the difficulty associated with electing a consumers' representative, because that would require an enormous poll. It would not be confined to one portion of the State. It would have to be a State-wide poll, which is out of the question in a case such as this. There is only one approach and that is by appointment. When we come to the actual grower, however, the Bill is for him. True, we want to guarantee service to the consumer, but the main urge for the Bill comes from the producer. Therefore he should be brought into it; we should not give him a representative in whom he may or may not have

confidence. I disregard the question of popularity and am prepared to trust the ballot-box.

My experience in these matters is that if we trust the ballot, a good result invariably follows. These growers are as competent as any body could be to elect their representatives. I like an election for its educational value. If there is an election, growers are brought directly into it. This is of great value in ensuring an interest that would not be displayed if a representative were nominated by the Government. The member for Perth is quite right in his proposal. We are not asking for anything new. The Minister has recognised the right of election in some quarters, and that right should be extended to growers.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The Minister, in dealing with the amendment, was not in his most effective form. If the Minister is not afraid of popularity influencing an election in one instance, he should not be afraid of it in the other. I fail to understand the Minister's inconsistency when the Bill insists upon the election of one set of representatives and not of the other. One can understand the chairman and the representatives of the consumers being appointed, but the growers have as much right as have the commercial producers to elect their representative.

Mr. WATTS: There appears to be a distinct possibility of a substantial change of mind in this matter. Not long ago, an effort was made from these benches on another Bill to have all the producers' representatives elected by the producers and the member for Guildford-Midland and the member for Perth were strongly against the proposal. On this occasion they are strongly advocating the very thing they then opposed.

Mr. Thorn: A complete somersault.

Mr. WATTS: That was on the 3rd September last. I am not complaining, but merely make that statement of fact, because I would not seek to deprive any man of the right to change his mind. In fact, I feel inclined on this occasion to change my mind. I normally would fight for the right of the producer to elect his representatives, as I did on the occasion to which I have referred, but the representatives of the potato industry with whom I have discussed the matter are quite content with

the Minister's proposal regarding their representation on the board. The Minister has been perfectly consistent. He has adhered to the same system in both measures. The growers are quite happy about the proposal that one member out of the six should be appointed by the Minister.

One might ask members to be a little cautious about deciding to the contrary because, in this industry, there is a large number of persons of foreign extraction. Many of them are naturalised, many are not, and at least for the time being we would be wise to think twice before depriving the Minister of the right to which the Committee has assented on two or three previous occasions to appoint the third producer-member to the board. Because I believe there is some sound reason underlying the decision of the Minister, I propose to adopt an attitude similar to that taken by the member for Guildford-Midland and the member for Perth on the previous occasion.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I did not take any part in that.

Mr. Thorn: You voted.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Oh, voted!

Mr. WATTS: How the hon. member voted is the important matter. I propose to adopt an attitude of caution, and support the Minister.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The Leader of the Opposition is very apt to make statements without giving the actual facts. The constitution of the Barley Board was discussed in comparison with that of the Milk Board, and I merely made an utterance regarding the representation given to certain people on the Barley Board as compared with those on the Milk Board. I did so to direct attention to the inconsistency of the Government regarding the constitution of the two boards. The Leader of the Opposition would lead one to believe that I am opposed to an election by the growers. I have always supported that principle. I believe the proportion of foreigners to total growers is small.

Mr. Doney: Not in this industry.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That was my experience when I was associated with a similar organisation, and no doubt they caused a good deal of trouble because of their inexperience and lack of knowledge of con-

trol. Nevertheless, the bulk of the growers were other than foreigners. In this case, the growers should be consulted. They have shown themselves capable of constructing an organisation and they are capable of voting. There are at least two organisations dealing with the activities of potato and vegetable growing and there will be a certain amount of conflict between them. It will be quite a good thing to knock their heads together and constitute them all growers, and make them appreciate that as growers they need to pull together and not divide their strength.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I support the amendment. During the war, an Agricultural Council was established and the members of that council were nominated. We heard strong criticism that the producers did not have the right to elect their own representatives. Growers agreed that there were excellent men on the council, but they wanted the democratic right to choose for themselves. We are involved today in an industrial dispute and the contention is that the State Executive of the union concerned has too much power and is not consulting the membership. But the member for Nelson suggests that we should consult the executive of the Potato Growers' Association. It is a sound principle that the growers should have the right to elect their representatives. In the next subclause, provision is made for commercial growers to elect their representatives, but the essential producers are not to have the right. Although we may have departed from the principle in the past, it is wise for us in this instance to provide for election by the growers. While one section may not be asking for the right, another section is. I have no doubt that names will be submitted to the Minister and he will make the best selection possible, but even then there will be an under-current of which the Minister will not know and a certain amount of discontent.

Mr. Thorn: There will be an under-current whatever he does.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I know there is an under-current everywhere, but we must try to obviate under-currents and get things on a proper basis. An objection has been raised by some members that there are persons in this industry who are not naturalised and who might obtain control. That could be overcome by inserting a similar proviso to

that which was included in the definition of "commercial growers."

Mr. PERKINS: The Minister has been consistent in this matter. Exactly the same principle was involved in the Barley Bill; and although I did not agree with it and still disagree with the principle, the Minister stuck to his guns. The remarkable thing is that although the principle was extensively debated at that time—I was the mover of the amendment—the members for Middle Swan, Perth, and Guildford-Midland voted against the amendment.

Mr. J. Hegney: And you are going to vote against it now!

Mr. PERKINS: In that instance the principle could have been applied in a proper manner; but this Bill deals with an industry in connection with which a large proportion of the growers may not be in a position properly to organise and exercise control. It is most desirable that members of an industry should control that industry without outside interference; but it is very much open to question whether a large proportion of those engaged in the potato industry have been in this country long enough to assimilate the principles on which our democratic system works.

Mr. Thorn: They would not understand it.

Mr. J. Hegney: That is not the question.

Mr. PERKINS: It is questionable whether they come from countries where democracy has had a sufficiently long history and has been sufficiently successful to give them the necessary background.

Mr. J. Hegney: That is specious reasoning.

Mr. PERKINS: It is equally necessary in the control of producers' affairs as in control of the nation's affairs that the electors who are going to lay down a policy should be fully conversant with the issues involved. In most of our primary industries the producers understand the issues involved, but I am not convinced that that is the case with regard to the potato industry. I am afraid that this is one instance where, if we applied the principle, it would not work out in the way we expect it to work out in other primary industries.

Mr. DONEY: I rise in order that there may not be any misconception with regard to the vote which may shortly be taken. It

is well known that every member of this party and every member on this side of the Chamber has on pretty well all occasions, when the matter of the constitution of boards has cropped up, stood four square alongside the principle of grower representation to the greatest extent on the board. It is well known also that certain circumstances obtain in regard to the matter now under discussion that perhaps change our views temporarily to some extent. That must not be taken as implying any renunciation of the principles we have expressed from time to time. It is well known there are a couple of organisations in control of the potato industry; and one of them is very shrewdly managed indeed and is giving, I have no doubt, much more attention to the question of representation on this board than is generally imagined.

Mr. OWEN: I am in accord with the clause. The success of the board depends in a great measure on the support given by growers generally. If the three growers' representatives were elected, it is conceivable that on a popular vote the whole three would represent one section of the growers. In this particular industry, districts are scattered from Albany to the north of Perth; and if all the members were elected from one particular district, there would perhaps be lack of support from another district. But if two members are elected and the Minister has power to nominate the third he will doubtless, in the interests of the industry, choose a grower who will give balanced representation, and thus provide satisfaction for all sections. It may be argued that it would be possible for the Minister to make a political appointment. I know the Minister well enough not to fear that; but, if the Committee has any doubt on the point, I would support the suggestion of the member for Nelson that the Minister nominate a grower from a panel selected by the growers.

Mr. THORN: I would like to appeal to the Minister, when considering the election of growers' representatives, particularly in the circumstances that are operating regarding the election of this board, to give very serious thought to the taking of a poll by an official as is done in ordinary elections. The position today is an absolute farce. If members could witness in my district elections conducted for the Dried Fruit Board

they would have a good understanding of what I mean. To have one man go around and collect at least 100 ballot papers and fill them in to his own satisfaction is disastrous; yet that is what is happening. We are very concerned indeed about it; and that is what will happen in regard to the appointment of growers' representatives for this board. It is a tragedy the way elections are conducted today for growers' representatives. It is nothing unusual to see a man come to the Midland Junction Post Office with 50 to 100 ballot papers in his pocket every one of which is filled in. We on the Swan cannot get the men that we want on our boards. It is out of our control. We took one precaution by seeing that the names were taken from those appearing on the Legislative Assembly rolls and the Commonwealth rolls as well. However, that was no cure for the trouble, because quite a lot of the growers did not complete their own ballot papers.

Mr. J. Hegney: Do you say that the elective principle has failed regarding that board?

Mr. THORN: No, but the conduct of the elections has failed. I would like to see an election date fixed and a poll taken. It could be done in my district.

Mr. Watts: And in the potato districts, too.

Mr. THORN: If that were done, we would not see a man going around with 50 or 100 ballot papers in his pocket, which he would complete in his own favour. I have intended from time to time to bring this matter before the notice of members, but no favourable opportunity occurred till now. The position is so serious that under present day conditions we cannot get the men elected whom we want to represent us. The whole thing is rigged and that will happen again in my district presently. That is why I see the danger and can understand what the Minister is doing.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that there is now no difference between the "grower" and the "producer" as the two terms are synonymous. The Bill provides that of the three representatives of the growers or producers, two shall be elected and one nominated by the Minister.

Mr. Willmott: From the same body?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. The member for Swan advanced very strong reasons in support of the proposal.

Hon. N. Keenan: There is no grower on under one-quarter of an acre?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No. The point I was about to make is that in an industry that is carried on in various centres, the preponderance of growers may be in one or two localities with the result that almost on every occasion the representatives of the industry to be elected to the board concerned are from the same district and other districts never have a voice on the board. The provision in the Bill enabling the Minister to appoint one of the representatives will provide an opportunity to rectify the lack of balance in representation. We know what happens at elections. If one individual can impress a large number of growers in his own district he has a greater chance of election than another grower operating in a smaller district. Several sound arguments have been advanced in support of the provision in the Bill, and I ask the Committee to give serious consideration to it because it has not been included without much thought.

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

Ayes	5
Noes	35
Majority against				30

AYES.	
Mr. Fox	Mr. Needham
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Seward
Mr. Johnson	(Teller.)
NOES.	
Mr. Abbott	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Brand	Mr. Owen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Pantos
Mr. Cross	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Doney	Mr. Read
Mr. Graham	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Smith
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Slyants
Mr. Hill	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Holman	Mr. Triat
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Watta
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Wise
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Withers
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Wilson
Mr. North	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. HOAR: In view of the discussion that has taken place regarding the method of electing members to the board, I shall

proceed with the amendment I foreshadowed earlier. I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (b) of Subclause (3) after the word "Minister" the words "and after consultation with the Potato Growers' Association Executive" be inserted.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. HILL: I move an amendment—

That after the word "potatoes" in paragraph (d) the words "or is interested in the distribution or sale thereof" be inserted.

This would prevent the appointment of a middleman. I do not think there would be any possibility of the Minister's making such an appointment, but the amendment would provide an additional safeguard.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not object to the limitation, but I am not sure whether the amendment clearly expresses the intention.

Mr. Leslie: Delete the word "is" from the amendment and it will be clear.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the word "is."

Amendment on amendment put and passed; the amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 8 to 17—agreed to.

Clause 18—Officers of the board:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (1) after the word "clerks," the words "representatives, selling agents" be inserted.

This will make specific the power of the board to appoint merchants or others as distributing agents.

Mr. WATTS: I ask the Minister to consider whether the people he now proposes to empower the board to appoint will not, in view of the succeeding words of the subclause, be made officers of the board and on the pay-roll. This interpretation would be possible.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Apart from the objection raised by the Leader of the Opposition, which I intended to point out, receiving agents are dealt with in a subsequent

clause of the Bill. Provision is made for their appointment and the nature of their appointment, together with other precautions. Apart from the Minister's amendment making these people salaried servants of the board, no provision is made for the remuneration, duration or other conditions of their employment, all of which are necessary ingredients. The Minister would be wise to leave the matter open.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I agree that there is force in what has been said about the amendment and, in view of an amendment made earlier and in anticipation that the Committee will agree to a new clause indicated by the member for Nedlands, I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 19—General powers of board:

Mr. McLARTY: This is a very wide clause, empowering the board as it does to refuse or cancel a license, and I see no provision for any right of appeal. Apparently the decision of the board would be final. In most cases a right of appeal is given, whether to the Minister or to a magistrate, but here there is no provision for an appeal at all.

Mr. Watts: Do you propose to move an amendment?

Mr. McLARTY: Yes.

Mr. Watts: I have an amendment dealing with a part of the clause prior to that which you wish to amend.

Mr. DONEY: I draw the Minister's attention to paragraph (d), which gives the board power to delegate any of its functions. There must be many of its functions which it would not be proper for the board to delegate. Did the Minister think of that when he was considering this paragraph?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is necessary for the board to have power to delegate some of its functions.

Mr. Doney: But the paragraph says it may delegate any of them.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If we desire to empower the board to delegate some of its functions, we must leave the position as wide as possible, otherwise we would have to specify the functions

which it could delegate. That would be extremely difficult. One must give the board credit for using some sense. It would have to take full responsibility for whatever was done under the delegation. As it is necessary for the board to have power to delegate some of its functions, I cannot see any other wording that would meet the position.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in paragraph (i) the words "printing and publishing" be struck out.

I agree that it might be necessary and desirable for the board to undertake transport and carrying services, but not that it should undertake printing and publishing. It could easily have its printing requirements met by some firm if the Government Printer could not undertake the work at a reasonable cost.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. McLARTY: I wish to add a proviso to the clause. As I said previously, the board has wide powers: it can grant or cancel a license whenever it thinks fit and its decision is final. I propose to move—

That the following proviso be added to the clause:—

Any person who feels aggrieved by the decision of the board in withholding or refusing, cancelling or suspending a license to him as a grower, or by any decision of the board as to the growing area allotted to him, may appeal therefrom to a stipendiary magistrate within one month after the date of the decision. Such magistrate may decide the appeal on any notes of evidence taken by the board or may deal with the matter by way of rehearing and for that purpose may take evidence on oath or affirmation in the same manner and to the same extent as he is empowered to do in the exercise of his ordinary jurisdiction. The decision of the magistrate shall be final and conclusive.

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest to the hon. member that he move his amendment as a new clause. I cannot see that it has relation to the clause under discussion.

Mr. McLARTY: I will do so.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 20—agreed to.

Clause 21—Registered agent:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I would ask for your ruling, Sir, on the amendment of which I gave you notice. It is an amendment to add a new clause. Is it not the practice

that an amendment of that character is taken at the end of the Bill?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 22—agreed to.

Clause 23—Duty of Board to accept delivery:

Mr. McLARTY: I am not yet satisfied with the explanation the Minister has given of this clause. The Bill gives power to the board to acquire all potatoes and the board can instruct a grower what is to be done with his potatoes. The Minister has lived in a district where potatoes are largely grown and knows from experience that there can be a heavy loss in potatoes in a very short time. A grower may be told by the board that he must hold his potatoes for a certain time. Under present marketing conditions, the grower would market his crop quickly, especially if he felt he might otherwise sustain a heavy loss. Should a grower sustain a heavy loss, it is unfair that he should be expected to bear the loss himself. As the Minister pointed out, the board will have no fund, but it will have power to prevent the sale of potatoes. Some provision should be made to compensate a grower in the circumstances I have mentioned.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The principle of this Bill is similar to that of the Egg Marketing Act. The board instructs the grower to deliver a certain quantity at a certain time. If it is of a merchantable quality, the grower delivers the prescribed quantity to the board and the board is obliged to accept it. But if the exigencies of the market are such that it is necessary for a number of growers to hold the product on their farms and it deteriorates, that cannot be avoided. If the board took delivery of the whole crop immediately it was dug and held that crop—if it were able to store it, which would be difficult and costly—then, when the board disposed of the product and certain losses were sustained, it would be necessary to spread the losses over the whole crop, so the growers would still lose. In the marketing of the product, the board will endeavour to see that losses are kept to a minimum, but there will always be deterioration, and it will be the grower's responsibility to take precautions to store his

potatoes properly. If we included a provision that the board was to be responsible, some growers would not worry in the slightest, knowing that, if they lost a quarter or half the crop, the board would pay. The only way we can keep losses to a minimum and ensure efficiency is by the method provided in the Bill, which is exactly the same as that provided in connection with the marketing of onions.

Hon. N. KEENAN: In the preceding paragraphs it is provided that there shall be appointed a date to be named by the board and on that date the whole right of the grower to dispose of his potatoes shall cease, and he is to hold his potatoes as the property of the board. But the board need not take delivery. The first words in the next clause are that the board shall not refuse to accept delivery from any grower, with the proviso that the potatoes must be in good order and condition. But that does not authorise the board to say, "We name and appoint a day and will then take no action for six months, and at the end of that time we will send an agent to pick up as many of your potatoes as are still marketable."

The Minister for Agriculture: The job of the board is to sell potatoes, and not leave them there.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes, but the board may sell potatoes from some other area and not a particular man's area.

The Minister for Agriculture: They do not do that.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The argument of the Minister that it is all the same in the end is not quite correct. In one case it would be a loss spread over all the growers, but if I lost my crop because it was not acquired, that loss would be a loss entirely borne by me, and not by all the growers.

The Minister for Agriculture: Would not every grower be in the same position?

Hon. N. KEENAN: No. It was distinctly pointed out that there are great variations in the character of potatoes. Swamp potatoes, for instance, do not store very well.

The Minister for Agriculture: They are produced at a different time of the year.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not know enough about the industry to be aware of that, but

I do know that the keeping quality of potatoes varies considerably. Is the man who grows potatoes to be penalised because the market is not suitable for more than a certain quantity at a particular time? I ask the Minister seriously to consider whether there should not be an attempt to form a fund.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is not possible to form a pool of potatoes, as it is with barley or wheat.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That could not be done?

The Minister for Agriculture: No.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Why not?

The Minister for Agriculture: For several reasons. For instance, there is the nature of the product.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I confess that my ignorance is considerable. I cannot see any reason why there should not be a pooling of prices. I suppose, after all, that when potatoes come to be dealt with by the board, it will not single out Mr. Smith's area or Mr. Jones's area, but will put them all in the market together.

The Minister for Agriculture: It markets the same proportion from each man.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Those proportions will be mixed?

The Minister for Agriculture: No.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am afraid I have a poor conception of the matter.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2 p.m. tomorrow.

House adjourned at 6.5 p.m.