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Secondly, the history of international commodity controls seems to show, too, that it is a highly-difficult task to reach agreement on prices which are satisfactory to both producing and consuming countries.

Thirdly, there is already the grave practical hurdle that both the United Kingdom and the United States have since disavowed the F.A.O. plan, though for different reasons. Yet there is no doubt that both are still equally keen that some practical proposal should be worked out to achieve the end towards which the F.A.O. plan is aiming.

Consequently, the recent announcement by Mr. Bruce that the proposals were too impracticable, and that the objective might have to be achieved by a slightly-different route, cannot have come altogether as a surprise. This "slightly-different route" is, of course, now being explored, and as a matter of urgency, for as Sir John Boyd Orr pointed out at Copenhagen: "Science has made the world so small and brought the nations into such close relation with each other, that it is now a question of one world or no world."

R. B. McMILLAN.

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### **TASMANIAN POTATO MARKETING ORGANISATION.**

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(*Marketing Branch.*)

The potato industry in Australia is facing the difficult problem of bringing production back into line with normal demand.

During the war years, the Commonwealth Government operated a system of contract production and marketing, under powers derived from National Security Regulations, and it has approved of the continuation of the system to cover the 1946-47 crop.

Steps are being taken shortly in New South Wales, by way of ballot, to obtain an expression of opinion from potato growers whether they favour the constitution of a Marketing Board (under the Marketing of Primary Products Act), as the first step towards the development of a national plan designed to make for post-war stability within the industry. Potato growers in Victoria recently decided a similar question in the affirmative.

The Tasmanian Parliament towards the end of 1945, passed an Act which provides for the constitution of Boards for the marketing of certain classes of primary products, including potatoes. A comparison of the provisions of this Act with those of the New South Wales Marketing of Primary Products Act was made in an article which appeared in the August issue of this Review.

Tasmanian potato growers are shortly to be given an opportunity to record their votes under this new legislation on the matter of establishing a statutory Potato Marketing Board. In the event of an affirmative vote, the new Board would then presumably supplant the existing marketing organisation which has been operating since 1927. As potato growing in Tasmania and the export of

potatoes to the mainland constitutes one of the principal primary industries of that State, it is instructive, at this stage, to review the events which led to the setting up of the original marketing Board in 1927. This journal is indebted to Mr. H. C. Smith, Secretary for Agriculture, Hobart, and to the 1941 Annual Report of the Potato Marketing Board of Tasmania for much of the following matter.

During 1926, Tasmanian potato growers found themselves in a most difficult financial position. Average yields for sixteen years had been a little over 2 tons per acre and in only three years of that period had prices in Sydney averaged over £10 per ton.

Tasmania harvested 67,000 tons of potatoes from 33,000 acres in 1925-26 and a renewed threat of competition from New Zealand, where yields averaged more than twice the Tasmanian yield, added to the worries of the Tasmanian potato growers. Something had to be done to organise the industry on the marketing side to ensure the presentation of a higher-quality product for export, as the basis on which the grower could expect to secure higher financial returns for his efforts.

Arising out of a series of conferences in 1926, a small committee was set up to report upon certain proposals having for their objective the creation of a marketing organisation to handle the many problems associated with the disposal of the exportable surplus.

By the month of May, 1927, events had moved so far forward that a postal ballot of financial members of the Agricultural Bureau, interested in potato growing, was taken and a Board of five members was elected to take office—in the first instance for two years from 1st June, 1927. At the following election, the franchise was extended to include all potato growers contributing to the funds of the Board. This is the history of the genesis of the Tasmanian Potato Marketing Board—a board without statutory authority and operating under its own constitution. Subsequent boards have held office continuously since that date and the present Regulations still provide for a Board of five members to be elected by growers from five specified divisions of the State.

For the purpose of the present Board's operations, turnips, carrots, parsnips, or, in fact, any vegetable in respect of which inspection fees are collected under the Plant Diseases Act, 1930, are comprehended in the word "potato." It is provided under that Act that the Minister for Agriculture, at the beginning of each financial year, may make grants of money to the Potato Marketing Board from moneys standing to the credit of an account in the Treasury called "Potato Diseases Fund Account."

All inspection fees collected by the Department of Agriculture in respect of potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, parsnips, and turnips, must be paid into this account and the aggregate sum which the Minister may grant to the Marketing Board is fixed at  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bag or 3-bushel case for all potatoes of the respective classes and an amount calculated at the prescribed rate or rates per bag or 3-bushel case for tomatoes, carrots, parsnips and turnips, in respect of which an inspection fee had been received by the Department of Agriculture in the preceding year.

It is further provided that all moneys received by the Board, under this section of the Act, shall be applied for the purpose of dealing with the problem of marketing potatoes and any other vegetable produced in Tasmania, and in furtherance of the objects for which the Board was elected.

The objects of the Board have been briefly stated as follows:—

- (a) To confer periodically with merchants and distributors, firstly, with a view to finding new markets; secondly, to improve transport facilities; thirdly, to assure a regular supply of potatoes for the Sydney market and, fourthly, to stabilise the market as nearly as possible.
- (b) To obtain crop reports throughout the Commonwealth, and
- (c) to do anything that may benefit the potato industry of Tasmania.

Certain features of the present Tasmania Board's constitution and rules are distinctive as compared with those of Marketing Boards set up in this State under statutory authority, or with those which will apply to Boards set up in the future under the Tasmanian legislation recently enacted. The present Tasmanian Board, for instance, is comprised of five elected producer representatives, whereas the New South Wales Marketing Boards, appointed under this State's legislation, consist of the persons elected by the producers, plus one or two other members appointed by the Minister according to whether the persons elected by the producers number respectively two, or three or five persons. Elections of Tasmanian Board members are conducted every twenty-four months, as compared with the triennial period provided for in this State's Act. There is provision in the Tasmanian rules for the retirement of the five members on a biennial basis. Thus two members are scheduled to retire in 1941, three in 1943, with retirements in subsequent years following a similar rotation.

No person is eligible for election to the Board unless he be the owner or lessee of 2 acres of land and over the age of 21 years. Neither directors nor proprietors of trading companies or businesses, engaged in the buying, selling or shipping of potatoes, nor employees of the same, are eligible to be elected to hold office. A director of a Co-operative Company, however, whose principal object is the packing of potatoes for shareholders, shall not be disqualified for membership of the Potato Board by reason of the fact that such Company buys, sells or ships potatoes in the interests of its shareholders.

Almost twenty years have elapsed since the creation of the present Tasmanian Board. Circumstances have changed in that period and the present emphasis is upon control of production and the orderly marketing of agricultural products. New marketing techniques have been developed under the stress of war conditions and the potato industry in the major exporting States of Victoria and Tasmania is faced with the difficult task of bringing production into line with normal demands. It will be for the Tasmanian potato growers to decide shortly whether they

will avail themselves of the facilities provided by Tasmanian legislation to set up a marketing Board vested with statutory powers, amongst other things, to licence production as a factor in marketing control.

In the event of an affirmative vote, the Act provides for the winding up of the present Board and the repeal of the Plant Diseases Act, 1930, so far as it relates to the functioning of that body.

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## GENERAL NOTES AND NEWS.

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Since the preliminary estimate by this Division of the total yield of wheat to be harvested in this State for the current season, very adverse weather conditions were experienced. The position, already serious, showed further deterioration, particularly in the south-eastern section of the wheat belt where a reasonable harvest was expected. Based on conditions and prospects existent at 22nd November, 1946, a yield of 14,500,000 bushels of wheat grain and 127,000 tons of wheaten hay was forecast. This estimate is the lowest since the 1919-1920 season, when 4,387,000 bushels were obtained. The yield last season (1945-6) was 62,500,000 bushels of grain and 500,000 tons of wheaten hay.

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A survey is to be conducted by the Division to ascertain soybean production costs in the New England district.

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The Division has accumulated evidence in connection with its Markets Advisory Service that action is needed regarding the poor grading which obtains in the case of certain lines of vegetables. The whole subject is being investigated, having regard to the National Mark Scheme which has operated in connection with marketing of fruits and vegetables in the United Kingdom for several years.

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The Division is arranging, for the first time, an exhibit at the forthcoming R.A.S. Show, depicting the services available from the Department in respect of marketing and agricultural economics.

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At the invitation of the Lismore Municipal Council, the Chief of the Division conferred with the Town Clerk and members of committee in regard to the possibilities of decentralised marketing of fruits and vegetables insofar as the Lismore district is concerned.