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*Editorial.***STABILISING THE POTATO INDUSTRY.**

The most recent happening in New South Wales towards development of a national scheme for stabilisation of the potato industry has been the submission to the Minister of a petition signed by some 330 growers for potatoes to be declared a commodity under the Marketing of Primary Products Act. Twelve months ago at a conference in Melbourne producers from all States discussed with Commonwealth and State officials a scheme for perpetuating, under grower control, the features of the war-time potato plan which had given to both producers and consumers the protection so necessary in time of emergency. The scheme pre-supposed the setting-up of a potato marketing board in each State and a central co-ordinating committee at the Federal level comprising representation of each State board and the Commonwealth Government. Acting under the provisions of the respective State Marketing Acts (or Acts to be passed), boards would handle the marketing of potatoes within State borders, and would also regulate production through an acreage licensing system—this latter to be made possible by amending existing legislation. Production control, however, was stoutly resisted by certain States—particularly the importing States, New South Wales and Queensland—and if licensing becomes necessary in the chief producing States in order to stabilise production, there is little chance of it being adopted elsewhere. In the matter of the central co-ordinating committee, it was felt that this could most effectively be established as a legally constituted organisation comprised of State and Commonwealth authorities joined by agreement, the committee functioning in (a) advising the Australian Agricultural Council as to annual allocation of the total Australian acreage equitably amongst the States, (b) allocating amongst the States an equitable share of the Australian consumption demand, and (c) determining from time to time the price at which State boards should sell the potatoes vested in them. Having in mind the doubling of potato production in the war years, the perishable nature of the commodity and the fact that little overseas export trade is possible, the implementation of an effective stabilisation scheme is not without attendant difficulties. Yet in the absence of a plan, the industry might well be expected to return to the uncertain position obtaining prior to the war. Existing Commonwealth control expires in October, 1947, so that there is time for the national scheme to be finalised. All States seem to be agreed on the general plan put forward on the marketing aspects, although in South Australia opinion is divided amongst the producers. Amending legislation will be necessary in some States, but the first step is for each State to set up a potato board, if not already established, so that the plan can be put into effect. Action is proceeding in Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia, and the petition from growers in New South Wales will enable a poll to be conducted before the end of the year to decide whether a board shall be constituted in this State.



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