

Christchurch, as to his definition about it. The part to which I refer is subclause (3) of clause 6, and it reads—

“(3.) Notice by the Board of its intention to assume control of any fruit may be given either by service on the owner of any such fruit or on any person having possession thereof, or by publication in any newspaper or newspapers in accordance with such conditions as may be prescribed. Every such notice shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, have effect according to its tenor.”

Mr. Harper is of the opinion that it is the owner of the fruit who should determine whether his fruit is for export or not, and not the Board. Mr. Harper is of opinion that a clause should be inserted in the Bill to make it more definite, and he suggests a clause something to the following effect. He says—

“If there should be any doubt about the position, a clause as follows might be inserted (say, after clause 10), namely—‘Nothing in clauses six, seven, eight, nine, and ten contained shall prevent the owner or possessor of any fruit, of which notice to assume control has been given by the Export Control Board, from selling and disposing of the same or any part thereof which may not be intended by such owner for export, for local consumption in New Zealand or in any provincial district in which the provisions of Part II of this Act are not for the time being in force.’”

That is the alteration Mr. Harper suggests should be made in the event of the Bill becoming law; and, furthermore, it would make it more distinct. We also object to the packing and grading being performed in central sheds where the conditions will be of a severe nature. It would inevitably mean that you would have to pack the fruit in central sheds with a view to getting uniform grading. The grading would be severe, and all such defects as oversize and undersize would be eliminated. At the present time we sell that class of fruit to hawkers in Christchurch, and it does not go on to the market, and the charges are reduced to a minimum—that is, as regards cost for cases, cartage, and so on. There is no cost involved for packing, and no commission to pay, and consequently the fruit is sold by the hawkers at a very cheap rate. By this means the people earning only limited incomes are in a position to buy fruit. The Bill would not be asked for if it was not for the purpose of increasing the price of fruit, because if the present condition of things continues, the Nelson growers would be in the same position as they are in to-day—that is to say, they cannot live. Mr. Allen came to me and asked me to withdraw my opposition to the Bill, and I said that I would not. He said that he would flood us with Nelson fruit, and I told him they could not do that and pay all the charges that would be incurred, and keep on doing it, because they would not get any return from the fruit after paying all the necessary charges involved. Why should the general public—that is, the people who are earning only from £3 to £4 per week—be barred from obtaining cheap fruit? Because the Nelson growers want us to put up the price of fruit to a ridiculous figure, I do not see why the people should not be allowed to buy cheap fruit. There is no other way to dispose of the inferior fruit at a profitable price, and consequently it would all be wasted. At the present time, in the event of a wet day, a man, his wife and children, do all the sorting and packing of the fruit, and in this way they eliminate a lot of the expenses. Then, in connection with the question of inferior fruit, do you mean to tell me that if a shopkeeper once gets “bitten” with inferior fruit that he will get “bitten” the second time? I submit that you do not want experts from the Government to tell you how to buy your fruit, because the man buying the fruit knows that he has to buy it and sell it again in order to make a profit, and I submit that they will soon become experts if they have to make a profit on the fruit they buy. Then again, in Christchurch a large quantity of fruit is sold by private treaty, and in this way a large number of growers have been working up profitable businesses after many years’ hard labour. If this Bill becomes law it means that that method will be wiped out, and all their pains and hard work, as well as years of experience, will all have been in vain. Another matter that has to be taken into consideration if these packing-sheds are established is that there is nothing to prevent the head man in the packing-sheds from receiving a little bribe from certain people in connection with the packing and grading of their fruit. Of course, we all have suspicions that corrupt practices will creep in, and this would have to be very thoroughly considered. There is another point that I would like to bring under the notice of the Committee, and it is that Mr. Brash, Mr. Allen, and Colonel Gray seem to be running around New Zealand in connection with this matter, and I want to know who is paying for that. If that money is coming out of the federation taxes, why should I, along with others, have to pay that tax in order to allow these men to go around New Zealand to fight this matter?

4. The Committee has no knowledge as to that: you are going away from the Bill?—Well, sir, if this pooling system were in operation it would mean that our land-values would depreciate tremendously. So far as the Nelson land is concerned it is not worth 5s. per acre, although they say it is worth £20 per acre. As I say, if the system of pooling were introduced, it would bring our land-values down tremendously, and as a matter of fact we would lose thousands and thousands of pounds in that respect alone. Those, sir, are the main objections that I have to the Bill. I could go on longer, but it would only be a question of repeating myself. I have letters from people, some of them from people in America, in regard to the question of overproduction, and one place that was mentioned particularly was Rogue River Valley. A Board was set up, and it discussed the whole matter, and it came to the conclusion that if an orchard did not produce four hundred cases of export apples to the acre the trees should be pulled up and burnt. If the production is anything like it has been during the last year then somebody will have to go to the wall. It is well recognized that if you overproduce then somebody has to lose. If it were anything like butter and meat, where we are dependent on the export and base our prices in New Zealand on that export, then it would be different. Some years we lose 2s. and 3s. per case on apples that are exported, and, in consequence, the Government has to pay out from £10,000 to £15,000, and, of course, it does not like it. Why should one area of growers in favoured districts be asked to help the growers in Nelson out of their unfortunate position? We did not ask them to go there. I may say that I was there when the first 100 acres were planted with fruit-trees, and I said that