

THE WINE BOUNTY.

ARGUMENTS FOR CONTINUANCE.

ENCOURAGEMENT OF TRADE WITH LONDON.

Arguments were advanced by a number of grape-growers in favor of the continuance of the wine bounty for at least five years, and the view was generally expressed that the prices at present paid by the winemakers were unsatisfactory.

The Tariff Board, comprising Messrs. G. E. Hudson (chairman), H. Brookes, and W. Leitch, met in the Holy Trinity Church school room, North-terrace, on Wednesday, when the enquiry was resumed into the question of the continuance of the wine bounty. There was a large attendance, including about 400 growers from the Barossa district.

No Political Purpose.

Mr. H. Crosby, M.P., said the presence of such a large number of grape-growers was an indication that they were behind the request for a continuance of the bounty for a given number of years. That was the force of the application, and representatives of the growers would give evidence in support of it. There was no political purpose to be served.

The chairman said this was not to be regarded as in any sense a political gathering. The board were there only to receive evidence, and to obtain solid, concrete facts on which to determine their recommendation to the Government. He thought it would be advisable to select representatives to speak on their behalf. One of the principal matters to be discussed was the cost of production, and what they were receiving for their products. They would understand that the board were not awed by the

that the board were not awed by the numbers of the delegation. They regarded the gathering not as a deputation to the board, but as showing their interest in the question of the continuance of the bounty. On those lines he extended them a hearty welcome. The board hoped to have satisfactory arguments in favor of the bounty to enable them, if possible, to make a satisfactory recommendation to the Government.

Effect of the Bounty.

Mr. R. C. H. Walker, grape-grower and winemaker, Morphett Vale, said that to his knowledge one effect of the bounty had been to save many growers and inspired many to keep on their blocks, which would otherwise have been abandoned. If the bounty were not renewed it would be the beginning of the end in the Murray River settlements, where they could not be expected to compete in dried fruit with Greece and Smyrna when those places produced normal crops again. Should the bounty not be continued the dried fruit growers would be the first to suffer. It would also mean an immediate falling-off in the London trade, and that the banks might refuse to finance the growers, with the result that they would have the crops left on their hands. "We are not asking for charitable assistance," he said, "but for a return of part of the money paid in Excise duty."

The Chairman—Are you satisfied with the prices paid for Doradilla grapes?—Yes. Most growers were paid £5 5/, against £3 before the bounty. The high prices would be conditional on the bounty being renewed.

Mr. Brookes—The bounty was initiated to assist Doradilla growers?—Yes.

Now you say it has not only helped them, but the dried fruit industry?—Yes.

The bounty was started with one object and something far greater was achieved?—Yes.

Is there a big demand for wine in London?—I have been able to sell all I produce.

Do you think the bounty should be a permanent institution, or do you hope subsequently to be thoroughly established in London?—With the assistance of further preference I think ultimately we shall be able to establish ourselves in London and

able to establish ourselves in London and do with an ordinary drawback. London merchants will not take business seriously unless they are assured of continuous supplies for from five to seven years.

Prices Not Satisfactory.

Mr. F. W. Gursansky, president of the Barossa Vinegrowers' Association, said the average yield for his district had been two tons per acre during the last four years. The average price paid for the grapes of all classes was £6 18/ per ton. The prices, which were fixed by agreement, could not be regarded as satisfactory.

The Chairman—What do you consider you should receive?—Our association would be satisfied with £6 as a minimum for Doradillas and leave the rest of the prices for negotiation between the makers and the growers. A profit could be made if a man did the work himself.

The witness spoke of the vital importance of the continuance of the bounty. There was a disposition to restrict planting during the next five years to avoid a crash in the event of the bounty being discontinued.

Mr. A. A. Ash, orchardist and vinegrower, Cockatoo Valley, submitted that it was impossible to make a living wage out of vine-growing on last season's grape prices. He made a loss of 4/8 a ton last year, and it would have meant another 10/ if he had sprayed. He said it was in the interests of the growers that the bounty should be continued.

Mr. M. W. Ellis, vinegrower, Tanunda, also spoke in favor of the continuance of the bounty. He said he was not satisfied with the prices paid at present. He got £5 5/ for Doradillas last year, and considered he should have received £6.

For the Returned Soldiers.

Mr. Arnold Berg, vinegrower, Greenock, spoke on behalf of the returned soldier settlers in favor of the bounty. The district was a very dry one. There were 12 soldiers there in 1922, and only three remained, the others having to leave owing to low prices and inability to make a living. He had been in the district five years, and found he must work 100 acres in order to make a living. If the bounty were not continued every soldier would have to give up. They could carry

would have to give up. They could carry on with the bounty. The land he occupied was selected for him by the Repatriation Department. He would have to work the land himself in order to make it pay. He would be a poor man who could not work 30 acres.

Mr. J. A. Craig, grapegrower, Nurilloapa, spoke in support of the request on behalf of the growers outside the fringe of the drier country. He said that if the bounty were continued it would give a stimulus to the industry, especially as far as the exports were concerned. He thought, also,

that another £1 per ton should be passed on to the growers by the winemakers. If the bounty were taken off it might mean a drop back to the old basis of £7 10/. It might be outside the ambit of the board, but he thought it was a matter for the Federal Government to act as intermediary, and see that both parties got consideration.

Mr. H. W. Moss, grapegrower, Clare, spoke on behalf of the Clare Fruitgrowers' Association in favor of the continuance of the bounty. He was asked to submit that—"We, as growers, would like the bounty to be given until such time as the export trade is put on a good footing. The growers would like to receive a fair price for all crops, and that the winemakers shall issue their price-list before January 31, 1927."

Mr. Brookes—You are not getting a fair price from the big winemakers?—No.

You think they can and should pay you more?—Yes.

Mr. P. H. Quirk, gardener and mixed farmer, Clare, said he desired to correct what Mr. Salter had stated, that the prices were fixed by conference, as the public would take it that such conferences were between the growers and the winemakers to fix the prices.

The Chairman—Is there any conference to fix the prices?—No. The prices are fixed by the issue of a list on the eve of the commencement of the picking, and if the grower thinks they are not satisfactory he has to approach the winemaker and endeavor to get an alteration. The prices received at present do not cover the costs of production, and the growers should receive a greater measure of payment in proportion to their costs.

ment in proportion to their costs.

Would Mean Larger Market.

Mr. P. N. Burge, vinegrower, Lyndoch, said if the bounty were extended for another five years it would mean a much larger market. Instead of exporting one million gallons of wine they would send two millions. At the end of five years the market might be able to hold its own. The wine industry was the third largest in Australia, and brought considerable revenue from overseas.

Mr. Norman Reid, grower, Watervale, said on behalf of the growers of his district he desired to ask that a larger portion of the bounty should be passed on to them.

Mr. G. E. G. Gill, grapegrower, Clare, in supporting the continuance, did not think the growers were getting prices on which they could live. He said 75 per cent. of the growers in his district were doing outside work, and the majority of them could not keep on their blocks at the present prices.

The Chairman—Could you not get into conference with the winemakers in connection with the prices?—We have thought of it, but we think that the Government, having fixed the price for one grape, should fix the prices for others.

Mr. Albert L. Benden, who appeared on behalf of his son, a fruitgrower at Nuriootpa, said he was of the opinion that the growers only got 7 per cent. of the bounty of 4/ for fortifying sweet wines.

Mr. Charles W. Wakefield, vigneron, of Morphett Vale, said a meeting of vinegrowers of the district was held on October 8, and a motion was carried that the meeting was perfectly satisfied with the benefits of the bounty, and strongly supported its extension for another five years. He was satisfied with the prices he was at present receiving for his grapes.

Mr. Phillip H. Knappstein, manager of the Stanley Wine Company, Clare, contradicted certain evidence given in the

morning. He said the company paid £3 18/ a ton for muscatel grapes, and not £2 8/ as stated. They purchased the grapes on a density basis, as Clare was 1,000 feet above sea level, which gave the fruit a low density. They paid £8 a ton

feet above sea level, which gave the fruit a low density. They paid £8 a ton for chiraz, with a shilling increase per decimal above fourteen beaume, and £2 bonus a ton.

Mr. John B. McMahon, vinegrower, of Reynella, said the growers expected an increase of 10/ to £1 a ton because of greater competition. Nothing definite, however, had been offered.

The board will take evidence at Remark to-day.