

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES (PREVENTION
OF INJURY) BILL.

Second reading.

The MINISTER of AGRICULTURE (Hon. J. Cowan)—This short Bill has been brought down by the Government as the result of representations made to the Minister of Agriculture by the fruit growers and fruit merchants of

the State. These parties complain that a great deal of damage has been done to fruit and vegetables by rough handling in the course of transport, and this damage is particularly serious just now owing to the scarcity and high price of fruit. The requirements of the market demanded that the growers should consign the fruit to the merchants when fairly mature, so that the consumers would obtain fresh fruit, and mature fruit was particularly liable to injury. The Government has acceded to the request of the growers and merchants for a measure of protection, and by the Bill seeks the necessary power to give this protection. The Government's proposal is to avail itself of the services of the inspectors who are already appointed under the Vine, Fruit, and Vegetable Protection Acts in order to prevent damage to fruit and vegetables. By clause 4 of the Bill such inspectors are given power to enter any vehicle, ship, boat, or place where they have reason to suspect that any fruit or vegetables are being stacked or handled, and give reasonable directions in order to prevent injury to such fruit or vegetables. By clause 5 the Governor is empowered to make regulations for the purpose of preventing damage to fruit or vegetables in the course of transit. Under this power the Government, after consulting with the parties concerned, will be enabled to prescribe the precautions which must be taken by persons handling cases of fruit or vegetables, or walking over stacks of such cases on wharves, railway stations, and similar places. As the rules to be observed relating to this matter are of an experimental nature it

is desirable that the matter should be dealt with by regulations, which can be amended without difficulty, rather than by laying down rigid rules in the Bill. Similar legislation is in operation in Tasmania and the other States, and the experience is that it helps to prevent in those States serious damage such as results to fruit in South Australia. A deputation waited upon me consisting of market gardeners and merchants who handle fruit and who have to transport it. They told me that the utmost care was taken of fruit from the time it left the garden until it was put into cases and disposed of. They purposely followed up some consignments to the wharf, and found that fruit was stacked in such a way as to make it convenient for lumpers to walk over cases in order to make their stacks so much higher. One of the lumpers was a man of 15 stone, and he was walking up steps of fruit cases. I asked them whether they remonstrated with that particular lumper, and, in view of his weight, they said, "Certainly not." It is very unfortunate that such serious damage should be done after the careful handling that the fruit receives in the initial stages. I am sure this little measure will be helpful, and I move the second reading.

The Hon. J. JELLEY secured the adjournment of the debate until August 30.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.11 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, August 30, at 2 p.m.