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POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA RESEARCH ESSAY

The Decline of Orchardring in the Metropolitan Area of Melbourne,  
1920-1939.

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## I INTRODUCTION

The metropolitan area east of Melbourne was the first district in Victoria to support extensive orcharding. The soil was considered poor, but the clay subsoil was effective in retaining moisture, making it suitable for fruit-growing.(1) The main fruits grown were apples, pears, peaches and plums, for which Melbourne provided a ready market.

Many of those who were prominent in the affairs of the metropolitan area in the inter-war period were descendants of those early orchardists, including John Tully, a Doncaster grower who was often at the head of deputations from the district. Also of note in this respect were a large number of German family names - Thiele, Zerbe, Fankhauser and Pump. Although the orchard holdings of such families were often considerable, few orchards exceeded 30 acres in size; nor were many below 20 acres, considered the minimum required for a family to make a "decent living".(2)

Orcharding reached a peak in the area in 1922 when 14,595 acres were recorded within the County of Bourke (which includes a number of orchards further east than Ringwood, otherwise treated in this study as the approximate boundary of the metropolitan area).(3) This supported about 1300 growers and their families. From this year, however, there is a sudden decline in acreage until 1928 when 11,652 acres were recorded. It remained relatively stable around this level until another sharp drop from 1938. This trend is shown in figure (i).

Although the decline in acreage occurred throughout Victoria, the decline in Bourke in 1924 and 1925 actually outpaced that of the State, which led the Argus to comment in 1925 that few orchards had been abandoned as uneconomic; rather, it was evidence that the "subdivisional experts" had encroached upon orchards in the metropolitan area "so situated as to be convenient for the extension of home sites".(4)

This is a factor in explaining the decline of metropolitan orcharding, but growers throughout the state were facing a similar difficulty in the early 1920s; that of inadequate returns for their fruit in relation to high costs of production. It was compounded by the increased number of orchards that were planted through both closer and soldier settlement schemes, particularly in the irrigated districts of the Goulburn Valley and Mildura.(5)

These areas grew fruit mainly for canning purposes and, owing to sudden difficulties by the canneries in selling their output, the government was obliged to create a purchasing pool for canned fruit in 1920. This initiated financial support for the canning industry by the government for several years,(6) which was not paralleled in the fresh fruit industry, upon which metropolitan growers were generally dependent. It was, however, similarly affected by these problems, including the increasing output of fruit.

Nor did the decline in acreage alleviate over-production. The ratio of bearing to non-bearing trees increased after 1922, so that apple production in Victoria did not peak until 1934 (although seasonal factors could reduce output drastically). Peach production lapsed from the mid-1920s, but increased again through planting after 1935, whereas pear production, encouraged by prices on the overseas market, increased throughout the thirties.(7)

Indeed, it was upon the export trade that hope was placed by both growers and the government that the surpluses of canned and fresh fruit could be absorbed, particularly after a number of advertising campaigns, undertaken in the early 1920s to increase local consumption, revealed the limitations of the home market.(8)

The fresh fruit export trade was, however, an unreliable source of returns, which arose in part through an acute lack of organisation amongst exporting growers. The government's attempt to impose order by means of an export control board - which the canned fruit trade was subject to from 1926 - was rebuffed by exporting growers. To some extent the difficulties experienced were the outcome of this refusal to accept control, but other factors outside grower control played a greater role. These included the high costs of production relative to other primary

exporting countries, as well as the difficulties attendant on shipping fruit by sea to a market as distant as Europe.

This study will begin with an analysis of the various markets available for metropolitan fruit in this period. One important advantage the area possessed was its proximity to outlets in Melbourne, accessible by dray or motor truck, and also to railway stations where fruit was boarded for transport to the docks or interstate. The costs of distribution (then considered by many to be unconscionably high) were in this way reduced for metropolitan growers.(9)

The second chapter will describe the general costs of fruit production, particularly in terms of those costs imposed on the industry indirectly, such as through the tariff and arbitration. The metropolitan area also contended with the expenses associated with suburbanisation during the twenties, although the effects of this were localised. It was the failure to reduce these costs, or compensate for them through higher returns, that explains the decline of orcharding in this period.

These problems, moreover, were experienced in kind by most primary producers in this period. The government sought to give assistance by promoting better organisation, particularly of the export trade,(10) although the attempt was rejected by fresh fruit exporters. The history of grower attempts to organise their



industry, and the failed attempt of the federal government, will comprise chapter three. Also noted will be the improvements in the export trade after 1933, and its effect upon the industry as a whole.

The conclusion to this study will summarise the experience of metropolitan growers, whose own position within the industry is reflected by their opposition to the principle of government-imposed "control". This arose both out of practical concerns as to the effects on the market of attempts to regulate the quantity of fruit released upon it, and probably was also a consequence of their longer involvement in the industry, sometimes dating back several generations, which made them more determined to retain independence in their business dealings.

The sources used in this study are diverse, which is largely a consequence of the absence of much secondary literature about orcharding in this period. The chapter on the fruit industry in S.M. Wadham's Land Utilisation in Australia(11) offers the best introduction. Also useful in an introductory role are the social and economic histories of the era, the standard one remaining that of Gordon Greenwood.(12)

Local histories within the metropolitan area vary widely in quality, although enthusiasm for their subject remains equal. Many relegate the position of orcharding to one of anecdotal

interest, without considering its importance in the historical development of the municipality. However, this may itself reflect the lack of general works about orcharding in the period before World War Two.

There are also large gaps in the primary data available. Few, if any, orchardists retained letters or diaries. I was only able to locate one ledger book of a metropolitan orchardist, that of William MacKinley. It is a rich source, however, and data derived from it is discussed separately at the end of chapter two.

There are other, disparate, records available, including a cool store accounts book, municipal rate books, and the Minutes of the Orchardists and Fruit Cool Stores Association. A search of archival holdings failed to yield records, either of the quantities of fruit processed by any of the Melbourne factories, or of fruit embarked at suburban railway stations;(13) either would have allowed me to make more confident estimates of the (changing) proportions of fruit sent from the metropolitan area to the various markets available during this period.

Despite the existence of two authoritative periodicals, The Journal of Agriculture, and The Fruit World of Australasia, the best sources were the newspapers, particularly the Argus. This gives a comprehensive account of events within the Victorian

fruit industry over the entire period, as well as regular coverage of meetings by the metropolitan growers associations.

Also of use were a number of government sources, including the Victorian Year Books, Parliamentary Debates, and reports on the canning and sugar industries, and soldier settlement. The most valuable source in this category was the evidence collected in the course of two Royal Commissions held into the fruit industry before 1920. The first was held at a federal level between 1912 and 1914, the second by the Victorian government in 1915, with each seeking a comprehensive understanding of the industry in order to locate aspects of fruit production or marketing that were hindering its perceived potential.(14)

The industry warranted such attention, largely because of the encouragement and finance given by the State governments to settlement on "fruit blocks". Although the metropolitan growers who gave evidence at both commissions generally expressed contentment with the current returns for their fruit, reference was sometimes made to the "baneful effect" the increase in grower numbers would have on the local market, which was considered limited.(15) The government, suggested one orchardist, should do more to find markets for the crop in view of their involvement in increasing the numbers of producers.(16) This view was reiterated in the mid-1920s, but with the added note that it was not the government's role to manage fruitgrowers' business for them.(17)

NOTES

- 1: Royal Commission on the Fruit Industry, Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, Vol 4, 1913, p.501 (John Tully)
- 2: Op cit, p.501
- 3: Statistics from the Victorian Year Book, 1920-1939
- 4: Argus, February 6-5, 1925
- 5: Closer settlement irrigation in Victoria had increased from 89,000 acres in 1909-10, to 344,000 acres by the late 1920s. T. Dingle, Settling, (Syme, Fairfax & Weldon 1984) p.186
- 6: The type and financial cost of this assistance is listed in the introduction to the Report of the Development and Migration Commission relating to the Canned Fruits Industry of Australia, March 1929. C.Pp., 2, 1929, p.1602
- 7: F.M. Read, "Trends in the Victorian Fruit Industry" in the Journal of Agriculture, Victoria Vol. 49, December 1951, p.570
- 8: These campaigns were undertaken by a number of organisations, including the Metropolitan Fruitgrowers Association, the Australian Fruit Cannery Association, and the Victorian Railways.
- 9: The profits of the "middlemen" were often targeted as a factor in reducing grower returns, and increasing fruit prices; eg Box Hill Reporter, 11 February 1921; Victorian Parliamentary Debates, Vol 162, 1922, pp.2298,2325,2333
- 10: See W.H. Richmond, "S.M. Bruce and Australian Economic Policy, 1923-9", Australian Economic History Review, No. 23, 2, 1983
- 11: S.M. Wadham, Land Utilisation in Australia. Melbourne University Press, (4th ed) 1964, ch.XI
- 12: G. Greenwood (ed), Australia. A Social and Political History. (Angus & Robertson, 1974), ch.VII
- 13: This includes the State Archives of Victoria, and Melbourne University Archives.
- 14: Royal Commission on the Fruit Industry. C.Pp. 4, 1913 (Minutes of Evidence); Vol 2, 1913 (final Report). Royal Commission on Fruit, Vegetables and Jam. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 2, 1915
- 15: Royal Commission on the Fruit Industry, C.Pp. Vol 4, 1913, p.398 (James Hume Cook)
- 16: loc cit
- 17: BHR, 18 June 1926. The speaker was actually a State Member of Parliament.

## II SELLING THE CROP

In 1921 Victorian fruit crop was distributed amongst the following outlets:(1)

Local consumption (fresh fruit):	55.73%
Processed into jam, canned fruit:	23.07%
Export to other states:	13.65%
Overseas export:	4.97%
Converted to dried fruit:	2.21%

The metropolitan area supplied the greater part of the 55% of fruit consumed locally, mainly through the Victoria Market, where it sold to fruit retailers. The Western Market, until transferred in 1930, was primarily for agents, who redistributed fruit shipped from country districts to other centres.(2)

The other outlets used by metropolitan growers in order of importance were: interstate export, factory processing, and the overseas trade. These, as well as the smaller outlets of kerb markets and fruit barrows, will be briefly discussed in the first section of this chapter, in terms of changes during the twenties which affected their usage by metropolitan growers.

The second section will describe the export trade, both in terms of its actual practice, and the variety of problems which were associated with it. Because the greater part of both government

and newspaper attention was directed at the export trade, its importance may easily be overstated, especially as the metropolitan area did not depend greatly upon the trade. However, it is apparent that quantities exported by both metropolitan and Victorian growers increased during this period, and a description of the trade is also instrumental in revealing both the wider outlook and organisation of the industry.

A. Outlets within Australia

It is remarkable that, despite both the near glut of the market and the reduced distribution costs of metropolitan growers, fruit sold in retail outlets throughout Melbourne in the 1920s was considered expensive. Retailers charged from 3d to 6d per pound of apples or pears, whereas at market growers received only about 1d for the same quantity. This arose through high distribution costs for fruit within Victoria generally; fruiterers in Melbourne simply increased their prices to match those charged elsewhere.(3)

This had the effect of diminishing sales locally, although fruit may not yet have been a large part of the Australian diet. In 1923 it was estimated that annual consumption of fresh fruit within Australia was one quarter that of the United States (104 lbs compared to 400 lbs).(4) Canned fruit, which was also priced high, was consumed by Australians at the negligible per capita rate of one tin per

year, although a government advertising campaign in 1923 succeeded in increasing this number to three.(5)

Advertising campaigns were also undertaken by growers organisations, with some financial help from the State government. The most remarkable campaign was that run by the Victorian Railways from 1922 under its dynamic chairman of directors, Harold Clapp. Indeed, his reasons for adopting the cause of fruitgrowers are not apparent. The campaign involved posters and fruit-stands at most railway stations, as well as a large banner stretched across the entrance to Flinders Street Station with the instructions to "Eat Fruit", which later became "Eat More Fruit".(6)

(a) The Victoria Market

The importance of this market in the early 1920s is indicated by the continued attendance of growers with up to 20 years experience on each of the three mornings per week (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays) it was open. To reach the market before the 4.a.m. opening, growers in the metropolitan area loaded their drays and left some time during the previous evening. The journey from Ringwood took about five hours, that from Doncaster about three, but motor trucks reduced the maximum journey time to around one hour.(7) The railway line was never used, mainly because of the added expense involved in handling.(8)

Many growers retained permanent stands at the market, for which £1 per quarter was paid to the market authorities. Fruit was transported to the market and sold mainly in "open-top" cases, which displayed the fruit and also entailed an extra quantity for the buyer. Each morning the price of fruit was determined "by the quantity of fruit presented and the demand there is likely to be", (9) which in the twenties varied between 6/- to 10/- per case. As the fruit was sold in cases only, buyers were generally fruit retailers.

The methods of trade at the Victoria Market were both long-established and greatly relied upon by metropolitan growers, who were able to keep overhead costs low. This was achieved in part through the repeated use of secondhand cases, (10) which were neither branded nor used with lids. There was therefore some objection to the State government's attempt to make branding compulsory from 1923. As a deputation of metropolitan growers informed the Superintendent of Horticulture, J.M. Ward, who was responsible for marketing, it was an unnecessary and time-consuming procedure in a trade where fruit was purchased on its merits. Should growers place fruit of different sizes and quality within the one case, "they would suffer from their own acts". (11) The trade at the market was subsequently exempted from the new regulations.



There were two other developments during this period that had ambiguous effects on the trade. The first was the greater use by orchardists of motor trucks to bring fruit to the market, to the extent that by 1930 there were moves to ban horses entirely.(12) Among their other advantages, they allowed growers in the metropolitan area more reasonable hours of sleep. However, growers within a 50 mile radius of the market also now had access,(13) which may have exacerbated its over-crowding.

This had long been a problem at the market, but it became acute during the twenties as a policy of giving returned servicemen priority to permanent stands lengthened the waiting period for several hundred others, some of whom by 1925 had been on the list for 18 years.(14) The market authorities eventually chose to open the market on six days each week from the beginning of January 1928 to redress the problem, as well as accommodate the record fruit crop pending for that season.(15)

The second development was the widespread use of cool storage to prolong the period before fruit needed to be placed on the market. Depending on variety, apples could last up to twelve months in cool storage, pears up to three months. Cool stores had proliferated in the

metropolitan area since the first one was constructed in 1905 by the government, which subsequently provided loans for the establishment of co-operative stores. There were around thirteen stores in the area by 1921, with five in Doncaster alone.(16)

It was expected that cool storage would allow growers to take individual advantage of improvements in market prices, particularly after the harvest season of January to May. In this fashion, gluts generally would be avoided. However, the quantity of fruit being produced was such that the positive effects of cool storage were not realised; instead, it may have acted as a "continuous depressant" on the market price.(17)

(b) Kerb Markets and Fruit Barrows

Kerb markets were located in residential suburbs such as Richmond and Caulfield. Within nominated streets, growers were allowed to set up stands and sell their own fruit, at about "half the usual cost" of the produce in the shops.(18) They were initiated by the Metropolitan Fruitgrowers Association in 1920, with the aim of increasing local consumption as well as alleviating over-crowding of the market. By 1924 there were ten markets, disposing of about 1000 caseloads of fruit per week.(19)

Their obvious popularity with both growers and consumers was not sufficient to impress a number of suburban councils which continued to oppose kerb markets.

Caulfield Council actually discontinued three within its municipality in 1924. It is possible that these councils simply considered them unsightly or, as was alleged, it was swayed by representations from ratepaying local fruiterers alarmed at the threat to their business.(20)

Barrows had been a feature of Melbourne streets before WWI, although their role was enhanced afterwards by the employment they offered for returned soldiers. There were at least thirty by 1920, each licensed by the Melbourne City Council at weekly rates varying from 6/- to 30/-, depending on the barrow's location. The greatest concentration was around Flinders Street Station, with their trade aimed at commuters.(21)

In 1927 the Council learnt that the price of fruit on the barrows was equal to that in the shops, notwithstanding much lower overhead costs. Evidence was tendered that these prices were fixed by informal agreement, and those who undersold were subject to violence. The barrowmen denied the allegations, but prices fell again soon afterwards.(22)

(c) Factory Processing

There were about six factories in Melbourne purchasing fruit, either for canning or for jam-making. Among them were Rosella, Swallow and Ariel, and the Henry Jones Co-operative Ltd. Their importance in relation to the metropolitan area undoubtedly increased following the establishment of three very large co-operative factories in the Goulburn Valley by 1922, whose eventual output considerably exceeded that of all the proprietary canneries.(23)

The prices offered by the Melbourne factories were not lucrative - pears were purchased at 1d to 1½d per pound - but entailed regular returns for growers who secured contracts. These were arranged yearly, about one month before the harvest. Previous business dealings with such factories were almost certainly an advantage. John Tully told the 1915 Royal Commission that the jam-making factories had purchased a portion of his pear and plum crop for several years; and were moreover "very particular" as to its quality. Although a large number of growers in the metropolitan area sold some type of fruit - pears, peaches, apricots or plums - to the factories, Tully himself thought the quantity contracted "compared with the total is not very large".(24)

The State statistics of the quantity of fruit processed by the factories show a close correspondence with yearly changes in the quantity of fruit harvested. This indicates the size and importance of the co-operative factories in the Goulburn Valley in relation to the northern fruit crop; proprietary canneries were under no obligation to purchase more in times of glut. All factories were nevertheless subject to an elaborate system of government assistance, designed to maintain an adequate income for growers.

Once the canned fruit pool ended in 1923, assistance took the form of a bounty on production and on export for one year, and then for export only from 1925. This continued to be paid into the thirties, but it was conditional upon the factories paying a minimum price to growers for their fruit. This amounted to £10 a ton for pears and apricots until 1926, and £12 thereafter. (25)

Both the export bounty, and a subsidy on the price of sugar (discussed in the next chapter), were largely compensatory measures required to overcome high, government-imposed, costs of production. Hence, given the choice, the proprietary canneries would have preferred a total absence of government involvement in the industry.

The State governments, noted Sir Henry Jones in 1922, had "absolutely ruined the fruit industry by persuading too many people to engage in it".(26) He cited as evidence of the ruin the necessity to sell canned fruit at 2/- per dozen cans below cost to dispose of it. Further complaints centred upon the unfair advantage given to the co-operative canneries through government-backed bank guarantees,(27) and also the canned fruit export control board itself, which was "crippling trade" through its maintenance of a fixed price.(28)

It was nevertheless the improvement in the export trade that was fundamental in restoring prosperity to the canneries after 1931.(29) Whereas the amount of fruit canned in 1938 (a peak year) was more than double that of 1928, the quantity exported over the same period had quadrupled.

(d) Interstate Export

This was practised by metropolitan growers before WWI, and probably ranked second in importance in terms of aggregate quantities of fruit sent from the district. Neither apples nor pears were grown in sufficient number in New South Wales or Queensland to meet the demand in the capital cities,(30) and prices were correspondingly higher than in Melbourne at 6/- to 11/- per case.

The fruit was placed in louvered vans at suburban railway stations, from where it was carried as far as Albury, on the border with New South Wales. Here the fruit was transferred to other vans to accommodate the change of railway gauge. Agents were contracted interstate to sell the fruit and return the sums received, less commission.

State regulations regarding such matters as the grading and packaging of fruit for interstate export were made progressively stricter from around 1915. Up to this year, branding of fruit cases by exporting growers was a voluntary affair, although most marked on the case the name of their agent, and the type and grade of the fruit.(31) From 1915 the name of the exporting grower was also required, to facilitate the return of fruit if it failed to meet necessary standards.

Inevitably, it was the added cost imposed through such regulations that were complained of. Only new cases (at 1/- each) were allowed for export purposes, and traces of arsenic on fruit (a residue of the spray used to combat insects) above 1/100 part of a gram were sufficient to have the fruit returned. This rarely happened - there was consternation when Queensland authorities returned a shipment of pears to Melbourne in 1932(32) - but cases were not inspected before

leaving Victoria, and only a few in each shipment were checked by officials on arrival.(33) A ½d inspection charge was nevertheless made on all cases, which also entailed complaints. "We believe" stated John Tully "that the inspection charges should be borne by the States that demand the inspection".(34)

The greatest difficulty in this trade occurred at Albury, where the break of gauge was described as a "calamity";(35) sometimes fruit was stranded for several days, entailing severe losses for the grower. Although this did not occur sufficiently often in the twenties to warrant repeated complaint, the railways faced a considerable loss of trade on the interstate run to the shipping companies from about 1930. The cause of this was an economic one - the shipping lines substantially undercut the freight charges of the railways, as will be described in the following chapter.

#### B. Overseas Export

The first overseas shipment of apples from Victoria on a commercial basis took place in 1901, that of pears in 1911.(36) The growth in the trade was largely dependent upon technical improvements in cool storage aboard ships, which was sufficiently advanced by the twenties to entail 40% of



Victoria's apple crop to be regularly exported.(37) Pears were more susceptible to disease en route, but research by the CSIR and the Department of Agriculture encouraged their increased export from the early 1930s.(38)

Among other circumstantial evidence, this indicates that the metropolitan area, which was not considered an exporting district in 1920, became increasingly involved in the trade during this period. About half of Victoria's pears came from the metropolitan area, especially Doncaster.

As well as being handicapped with high costs of production, the fresh fruit export trade was acutely disorganised, which made securing adequate returns on overseas markets almost a matter of luck. But of its own volition, it was not subject to effective control until 1934. The problems of the trade, and the extent to which they were grower-imposed, will be discussed in the second part of this section, following a description of the mechanics of the export trade.

(a) The Export Trade

Fruit was shipped from February to May, which coincided with a natural "gap" in fruit availability in Britain, which purchased by far the largest part of the Australian crop.(39) Germany, once the second largest buyer of Australian fruit, did not regain its pre-war

status again until briefly in the late twenties.

Growers were reliant upon export agents to superintend the shipping and disposal of their fruit overseas. There were about 30 agents in Melbourne during the twenties, who fulfilled an indispensable, if never entirely reputable, role in the trade.

There were two methods by which agents were employed. The first, considered the standard method, was to ship fruit "on consignment". This entailed the agent, for a standard commission fee of 3d per case, organising the storage of the fruit on the ship, and its eventual sale through an overseas distributing firm. The price received was then remitted to the grower, less all the charges associated with shipping - freight, handling costs, and commission.

There was some concern expressed at the federal Royal Commission that a small number of agents monopolised the greater part of the shipping space available each season. One agent, Samuel Perry, was singled out by the Commission as the villain of this piece.(40) However, this practically ignored the necessity for agents to arrange in advance of the season a certain amount of cargo space, which it was the agent's worrisome

responsibility to fill; otherwise he risked paying for "dead space". It was because of "past engagements faithfully kept" that a number of agents had first call upon such space.(41)

A more warranted concern surrounded the second method of shipping fruit, termed f.o.b. selling (free-on-board). The agent in this case bought the fruit from the grower outright, before it was shipped, so that the overseas distributing firm the agent represented was responsible for the costs and inherent uncertainties of shipment. The attractions of this system to the grower are obvious, and it was estimated by 1927 that some 70% of Victorian fruit was sold f.o.b., compared to 50% in other states.(42)

It was also beset by contradictions, however. The prices growers received from the agents were inevitably lower than what growers might have earned had the fruit been consigned. As one frank letter sent to the Argus from "Export Agents" stated, the "true market value of any commodity is fixed at the point at which it is consumed, and not where it is produced".(43) It may have even reduced the prices competitively received for fruit that was consigned, since a large number of overseas distributors, having already obtained their requirements, did not attend the sales.(44) Finally,

there was a potential conflict of interest involved when an agent shipped fruit for the same grower on both consignment and f.o.b. Certainly, his interest in the latter as a principal was greater.(45)

Allegations of misdemeanours by agents nevertheless pale into insignificance beside other problems experienced in the trade, which will be discussed in the next section. In 1932 the Superintendent of Horticulture, J.M. Ward, made an estimate of the prices received on the British market for the previous five years.(46) Of apples, Granny Smith had brought the highest average, at 13/6 per case. Jonathans, the variety most widely grown and exported, averaged 10/3 per case, which Ward considered the ideal apple "as little wastage occurred". Pears earned from 15/- to 17/- a case, although there were a number of varieties of both apples and pears which averaged less than 8/- per case. It was for this reason that, amidst other efforts to improve the industry, the variety of apples and pears allowed for export were progressively reduced.(47)

(b) Problems in the Export Trade

The problems experienced in the twenties arose both through external factors, and from disorganisation within the industry. They were not unrelated, however,

as adverse developments occurring overseas could have been mitigated through tighter control of both the quality and quantity exported, whereas later improvements in the trade, which arose largely through unforeseen events such as exchange depreciation and an improvement in consumer demand in Britain occurred concurrently with improved organisation.

The twenties began with the export industry in difficulty, as a world-wide economic boom had increased freight rates to an impracticable 8/- per case to Europe. The collapse of the boom halved this rate, and for a time the trade was on a "very satisfactory basis", with prices in London from 12/- to 14/- per case.(48)

The year 1926 began on an ominous note, when a scare on the British market about arsenic deposits on American apples reduced sales, just as Australian fruit was coming onto the market.(49) Then, before fruit sales had regained momentum, the British general strike occurred in early May. This held up disembarkation of about 750,000 cases in London, and 250,000 cases in other ports. The Australian High Commissioner in London reported that the fruit "suffered much damage owing, in many instances, to unloading having been begun when

the strike occurred, this fruit had to be put back on the ships again."(50) The coal lock-out which continued after the strike's collapse reduced sales further, as financial stringency was now imposed on the British community as a whole.(51)

Then, with almost Biblical timing, a thrip plague descended upon Victorian orchards late in 1926 and decimated the following year's fruit crop. The thrip was also held responsible for greatly worsening the annual alternation between light and heavy bearings of apples, which continued for several years afterwards,(52) making forecasting of both income and some type of expenditure difficult for growers. This trend is shown in figure (ii), which details the quantities of apples and pears harvested in Victoria between 1921 and 1939. The export figures also reflect this trend. Whereas in 1928 a record 900,000 cases of apples were exported from Victoria, in 1929 less than 15,000 cases were sent.

The problems that ensued from a lack of organisation covered all facets of the export trade - packing, shipping and marketing. Probably only a tightly monitored system of licenses for exporters, as occurred under an export control board, would have prevented a

number of growers in the twenties from continually shipping poorly packed and graded fruit, often in unattractive cases. Inspection at the wharves by State officials covered only about a quarter of exports, (53) and exhortations to growers to follow guidelines regarding export fruit were never entirely effective. As late as 1933 the Superintendent of Horticulture complained that "there are still many growers who appear to have little or no knowledge of the requirements of the trade or the export regulations".(54)

The advantage of a controlling organisation would have been especially apparent in regard to shipping. As shipping times were not co-ordinated, consignments of Australian fruit often arrived in London simultaneously, glutting the market.(55) This was particularly true in January, as growers strove to take advantage of high prices associated with the beginning of the season. Fruit was sometimes picked at an immature stage for this reason.

Also, without a common organisation to represent them, growers were at a disadvantage in bargaining with shipping companies with regard to freight costs and other matters. One recurring complaint was that some ships blithely took on more fruit at other ports en

route, entailing a loss of temperature and possible damage to fruit already within the hold.

Finally, marketing of Australian fruit overseas was often inefficient, with a multiplicity of brand names and an ineffectual system of grading, causing some confusion among buyers.(56) It was precisely such "senseless and destructive competition"(57) among exporters that the government sought to end through an export control board. Although not implemented in name until 1939, an effective measure of control was introduced after 1933, following a disastrous year when growers, attempting to take advantage of preferential access to the British market, shipped in aggregate six million cases of fruit - two million more than the market required.



NOTES

- 1: The Journal of Agriculture, Victoria, 11, January 1912, p.2
- 2: C. Cole (ed), Melbourne Markets 1841-1979, (Wilke & Co. 1980) pp.27-32
- 3: The difference in local prices was stated by a deputation of metropolitan fruitgrowers to the Minister of Agriculture, Argus, February 17-5, 1921. The 1915 Royal commission found that distribution costs within Victoria, including freight, middlemen's charges, and retailers profits, "may be said to equal about half of that which the consumer pays". The Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 2, 1915. Report.
- 4: Argus, October 13-20, 1923 (Dr. Earle Page)
- 5: The price of a tin of canned fruit (2½ lb) sold locally was 1/1; it was thought that 8d or 9d "would lead to a much greater consumption". Victorian Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 161, 25 October 1922, p.2109 (Mr. Everard). The success of the government advertising campaign is noted in the Report... relating to the Canned Fruits Industry (March 1929) Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 2, 1929, p.1605
- 6: P. Adam-Smith, "Harold Clapp's Railways". The Victorian Historical Magazine, 44, 1973, pp.117-124. A picture of the "Eat Fruit" banner above the entrance to Flinders Street Station appears in the Argus, December 15-11, 1922
- 7: H. Anderson, Ringwood. Place of Many Eagles (Red Rooster Press 1988) p.85; G. Keogh, The History of Doncaster and Templestowe (Dominion Press 1975), p.32
- 8: Royal Commission on the Fruit Industry. C.Pp. 4, 1913, p.497 (John Tully)
- 9: Royal commission on Fruit, Vegetables and Jam. Victorian Parliamentary Papers. 2, 1915, p.1021 (John Tully)
- 10: Ibid, p.1017 (John Tully)
- 11: Argus, October 31-7, 1924
- 12: Horses comprised only 30 per cent of all conveyances used at the market by 1929. The metropolitan section of fruitgrowers opposed their banning, terming it a "great hardship on those who did not own motor trucks". Box Hill Reporter, 12 July, 1929
- 13: This was stated at a quarterly meeting of the Victorian Fruitgrowers Central Association, Box Hill Reporter, 24 August 1923, which discussed the need to extend kerb markets.

- 14: Referred to at a monthly meeting of the metropolitan section of fruitgrowers, BHR, 13 February 1925.
- 15: Ibid: C. Cole, op cit, pp.100-102
- 16: BHR, 11 February 1921
- 17: S.M. Wadham, Land Utilisation in Australia (Melbourne University Press 1964), p.185
- 18: Deputation of Metropolitan Fruitgrowers to Minister of Agriculture, Argus, February 17-5, 1921
- 19: "Kerb Markets and the Distribution of Fruit", Fruit World of Australasia, June 1927, p.240; see also annual meeting of metropolitan section of fruitgrowers, BHR, July 13, 1928
- 20: This was alleged by the Argus in reporting Caulfield Council decision, april 23-14, 1924
- 21: Argus, June 14-15, 1927
- 22: Argus, June 29-18, 1927: July 1-15, 1927
- 23: The three co-operative canneries were the Shepparton Fruit Preserving Company (est 1918), Ardmona Fruit Products Ltd. (est 1921), Kyabram Fruit Preserving Company (est 1922). The output of these factories, and one other co-operative in NSW, equalled 62% of the 1925-26 total. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates., 114, 13 July 1926 (Representatives) p.4041
- 24: Royal Commission on Fruit, Vegetables and Jam. V.Pp., 2, 1915, pp.1019-1020 (John Tully). See also evidence of Jephtha Nicholson, pp.1254-1255
- 25: Argus, October 13-20, 1923; November 20-38, 1926
- 26: Argus, October 27-11, 1922
- 27: Argus, November 19-4, 1929
- 28: Argus, February 11-11, 1931
- 29: The chairman of directors of the Henry Jones Co-operative Company, A.W. Palfreyman, stated in November 1932 that conditions "in this industry, for ourselves and for fruitgrowers were almost without hope two years ago. Exchange, the British preferential tariff, and the Ottawa Agreements have helped to improve matters considerably". FWA, December 1932, p.650
- 30: This is noted in the New South Wales Official Yearbook, 1929-30, p.573. Records of interstate trade only begin in this year.

- 31: Royal Commission on Fruit, Vegetables and Jam, V.Pp., 2, 1915, p.1017 (John Tully); p.1024 (Tom Petty)
- 32: Sydney Morning Herald, July 27-10g, 1932; August 3-8g, 1932
- 33: It was not until the Fruit and Vegetables Act of 1936 that State officials had the authority to check fruit for excess traces of arsenic before shipment.
- 34: Royal Commission on the Fruit Industry, C.Pp., 4, 1913, p.500
- 35: Ibid, p.496
- 36: Address by S.J. Perry to the Southern Fruitgrowers, July 1931. repr. in FWA, August 1931, p.458
- 37: Argus, January 5-9, 1933
- 38: Journal of Agriculture, 36, January 1938, pp.34-52
- 39: Argus, January 5-9, 1933
- 40: Perry was twice subject to hostile questioning from the Commission, C.Pp., 4, 1913, pp.413-420, pp.442-54
- 41: Ibid, p.402
- 42: FWA, February 1927, p.55
- 43: Argus, September 5-3, 1933
- 44: Argus, February 10-16, 1930
- 45: Journal of Agriculture, January 1932, p.6; Argus, September 8-3, 1933
- 46: Argus, August 20-26, 1932
- 47: In 1933, Victoria shipped 86 varieties of apples and 48 varieties of pears, the majority being shipped in very small number. Argus, September 8-3, 1933. These were progressively prohibited from export, until in 1938 only 46 varieties of apples were sent. Argus, October 13-19, 1938
- 48: Argus, 30-6, 1933 (S.M. Wadham)
- 49: Argus February 24-4, 1926
- 50: Argus, December 15-7, 1926
- 51: loc cit
- 52: Argus, August 30-6, 1933 (S.M. Wadham)
- 53: Argus, July 26-15, 1930

- 54: Journal of Agriculture, August 1933, p.376
- 55: Argus, December 15-7, 1926; August 21-13, 1931
- 56: Argus, October 5-12, 1931
- 57: Argus, December 31-11, 1930 (Acting Minister of Markets)

### III COSTS OF PRODUCTION

Metropolitan growers, unlike those in the northern districts, relied upon a diversity of outlets for their fruit, which continued to provide regular returns during the twenties despite some adverse developments. It was not until the depression of the 1930s, when prices slumped locally, that metropolitan growers appeared to alter their use of these markets and placed greater reliance on both factories and overseas export.

Although returns were regular, it is clear that they barely covered the costs of fruit production during this period which, in turn, were rendered high through a number of extraneous factors. The two most often identified were the tariff and arbitration; in the metropolitan area, suburbanisation as an additional, but less obvious, factor entailing additional expense for orchardists. These will be discussed in the second part of this chapter, following a description of the costs typically involved in orcharding.

In addition to a number of contemporary estimates made regarding the costs of production, other sources drawn on in this chapter include the Victorian Year book, evidence given at both Royal Commissions, and the ledger book of William MacKinley. The data from this latter source will be summarised at the end of this chapter in an effort to match the actual experience of a metropolitan orchardist with the conclusions made in this chapter.

Suburbanisation was not sufficiently pronounced in the twenties to attract much comment, and the conclusions made are accordingly more interpretative. Council rate books, and advertisements for housing "estates", offer the best available evidence of the effects and extent of its encroachment on orcharding areas, which had adverse but as yet isolated effects.

A. Costs of Production and Distribution

This section will list only the more pronounced costs, in approximate order of growth, harvest and distribution. One initial expense which is already assumed is that of capital equipment such as tractors and ploughs, which was termed "too severe on the man with the smallholding".(1) Some hiring of such equipment was carried out, however, entailing extra income for a number of growers.

An accepted estimate in the late twenties of the cost of production of one bushel case of apples was 3/6, "at the tree",(2) excluding the cost of the case, labour for packing, and transportation to market. The effects of distribution costs locally have already been noted, but the costs of sending fruit overseas were similarly problematic. "In no primary industry", said the federal Minister for Markets in 1927, "are the exporting charges so heavy in proportion to the value of the product as in the apple industry."(3)

Freight charges, and their effects upon the industry generally, will be discussed at the end of this section.

(a) Labour

The inability to obtain "reliable labour at a reasonable price" was an oft-repeated grievance by growers during this period.(4) It was clearly the greatest expense involved in the production of fruit, with the continued increase in its price during the twenties, as will be noted later, largely blamed on the arbitration court.

An orchard of 20 acres typically employed one full-time worker. The working day in an orchard was about ten hours long, which would begin before dawn in the harvest season, a period when casual labour might also be required.(5) Outside this season tasks included pruning, ploughing, and general maintenance.

In 1915 an orchard worker received on average £1 a week, but as one orchardist told the Royal Commission of that year, the actual amount paid depended "a good deal on the man";(6) some received up to £3, with board. Soon after the war, however, this last wage was practically standard, and it increased to £4 by the late twenties.(7)

This placed orchard workers in the same category as unskilled workers during this period, who also largely benefited from arbitration. Real wages were undoubtedly higher in 1929 than in 1920.(8) This inevitably entailed some difficulty for orchardists, however, whose own returns varied through seasonal factors. Generally, wage costs were about 60% of total expenditure.(9)

(b) Irrigation and Spraying

Two standard, but costly, requirements of orcharding were irrigation and spraying. As with labour, each were subject to external factors which raised their aggregate cost.

Although the metropolitan area possessed adequate rainfall on average, most orchards either possessed small dams, or laid down pipes to water mains once constructed in the area. This became particularly necessary following several years of poor rainfall in the twenties, so that "practically all" Doncaster growers, and many others elsewhere, drew on mains water by 1930.(10)

The Board of Works did not differentiate between domestic and orchard use of water, however. A maximum rate of 1/3 was charged in the pound on municipal



valuations of the property. This entitled the occupant to one thousand gallons of water for each 1/- charged on the property, which also became the excess water charge. A State member who raised the issue in Parliament in 1937 noted that the "average rate for water under a country irrigation scheme is  $\frac{1}{4}$ d to  $1\frac{1}{4}$ d per 1000 gallons, as against 1/- in the metropolitan area". It is apparent that the returns which accrued through effective irrigation were thought to warrant the cost, however.(11)

Spraying was usually undertaken several times during the growing season. The chemicals required were imported from overseas, however, making them subject to the tariff. On larger orchards, this necessary practice could entail from £80 to £100 expenditure each year.(12) A residual expense was in the labour or machinery necessary to clean the fruit of its white arsenical coating for interstate or overseas export; fruit sold locally actually retained it.

(c) Cool Storage

Fruit, picked ideally in the early morning or late evening, was then sent to packing houses, from where the greater part was delivered to cool stores. A small number of these were owned privately by orchardists, but most were either government or co-operative owned.

Their number in the metropolitan area was such that country growers often sent their fruit there for storage.

The government stores charged 1½d per case during January and May, and 1d for the rest of the year. This made them slightly more expensive than co-operatives, which charged approximately 1d year round. Although the government did not see itself in competition with the co-operatives, it was believed that their presence had kept "rather a check on the private-owned stores in regard to the rates paid".(13)

Although the rates appear nominal, several thousand cases were usually stored each year by the larger growers, which entailed several hundred pounds expenditure. F.W.Fankhauser, with 30 acres of apples and pears, told the 1915 Royal Commission that he stored from 1500 to 2000 cases each year, and placed 60 to 120 cases on the market each week.(14) Others, such as William MacKinley, stored up to 4000 cases.

Growers held space in the co-operative stores throughout the year on the basis of the number of shares they had purchased in the company. It was the responsibility of such growers to store and maintain records of their own fruit, which made important

savings on labour costs.(15) Other expenses - the salary of the engineer, fuel, and rate payments - were high, and rendered such stores greatly dependent on government loans. Blackburn Cool Store, for instance, which had progressively reduced its interest debt from £640 in 1920 to £358 in 1927, took out another loan from the State Treasurer soon afterwards to send its yearly interest bill soaring to £866 in 1928.(16) Not surprisingly, deputations representing such stores approached the State government repeatedly during this period seeking relief on interest payments and concessions on such matters as electricity accounts.(17)

(d) Cases and Freight Costs

These two sources of expense are not unrelated; whereas secondhand cases used at the Victoria Market cost only ½d each, those used for export cost substantially more.

For overseas export, two types of case were in use. One was the locally made hardwood "dump" case (also used in the interstate trade), which cost from 7d to 9d each. The other was the softwood "Canadian" case, which was superior in all respects - it was lighter, more attractive, and less likely to splinter or warp.(18) But softwood was imported, which made it subject to the tariff. This increased the price per case to about 1/,

so that even a moderate export consignment of 100 cases entailed the expenditure of £5 on such cases alone.

Unlike the overseas trade, freight costs to Sydney or Brisbane were not a serious impediment to adequate returns, and it is probably for this reason that metropolitan growers sent much greater quantities interstate than overseas. This appeared to change in the 1930s, when there was a progressive decline in fruit imports by the northern states.(19)

During the twenties it cost about 1/6 to ship a case of fruit from Ringwood to Sydney. A number of concessions were introduced by the Victorian Railways from 1930, in response both to depressed prices generally and competition from the shipping lines. Fruit shipped from stations within twenty miles of Melbourne, for example, was charged the same freight as though the starting point were Spencer Street Station; that is metropolitan fruit was carried into the city free. Freight charges generally were also reduced, and a border charge on fruit withdrawn.(20) Thus, in 1930, it cost only 1/4d per case to Sydney from the metropolitan area.(21)

This was not sufficient to undercut the rates offered by the shipping lines. In 1930 the Associated Steamship Owners began a weekly service of "fast passenger vessels" which could deliver fruit stowed before noon on Saturday in Sydney by 6.a.m. on the following Monday. The rate was 7½d which, with wharf charges and handling, amounted to about 1/- per case to Sydney, and not much more to Brisbane.(22)

The change in allegiance by growers to the shipping lines was swift; the "attitude of the New South Wales Railways" in refusing to offer concessions similar to those made in Victoria being held largely responsible.(23)

Freight rates to Britain rarely fell below 4/- during the twenties. The costs generally associated with export were well documented, with 8/- a case unanimously viewed as the necessary minimum.(24) In 1933, S.M. Wadham made a detailed listing of the costs involved,(25) which warrants reprinting in full:

In Australia:	Case 11½d, nailing and wiring 1d. paper, 2d, labels 1d	1/3½d.
	Labour for packing	3d.
	Labour in shed, and transport to station	2½d.
		<u>1/9d.</u>
Transport:	Steamer freight	4/1½d.
	Agency Fee	3d.
	Rail freight, stevedoring, insurance, cooperage, advertising	6d.
		<u>4/10½d.</u>
In England:	Porterage, dues, selling, etc.	1/-
	Sundry items, cables, etc.	½d.
	Brokerage 5%	4d.
	Exchange for Aust. currency	4d.
		<u>1/8½d.</u>
	Total: 8/4d.	

This total, admitted Wardham, was probably "too low". Assuming the figure of 3/6d given earlier was the basic cost of growing the equivalent of one case of apples, it is clear that at least 11/- per case on the overseas market was necessary - the same price which J.M. Ward, the Superintendent of Horticulture, estimated to be the average received by apples during the 1920s. (26)

B. Imposed Costs of Production

Of the three sources of imposed cost in the fruit industry, the tariff arbitration, and the embargo on imported sugar, only the tariff was a direct outcome of national government policy, which fended off repeated requests to abolish one or all of them. But, as would become clear later in the decade, no government could attempt to act on the wishes of primary producers, without electoral disfavour by some parts of the community with an economic stake in their continuance. In this sense they each represented a contemporary trend as real and implacable as suburbanisation itself, which is also discussed here. The one source of cost not exogenous to the industry, state regulation of fruitgrowing, was nevertheless criticised by growers as unnecessarily costly, and is thus included in this section.

(a) The Tariff

A high tariff was imposed from 1921 as a measure to protect Australian industry, but duty was extended to almost every item imported from overseas. This had serious consequences for the costs of primary producers generally, who had to sell their product on a competitive overseas market.

Fruitgrowers were directly affected by the tariff through imported orchard requisites such as spraying

chemicals and machinery, fertilisers, and softwood, which were levied on an ad valorem duty varying from 10 to 20 percent. Arsenate of lead, which had been about 9d per pound, increased to 1/- per pound.(27) As noted, softwood cases also increased in price from 9d to 1/- each, although a rebate was allowed on duty once such cases were re-exported with fruit. Whether every grower took advantage of this is not clear; a number of "stringent and harassing" regulations were involved, and one exporter claimed in 1926 that he had to fill in 18 separate forms to claim the rebate.(28)

Despite repeated requests, the rate of duty on such requisites was not reduced during the 1920s and the National Party's displacement from office by Labour in 1929 meant only an upward revision of the tariff schedule.

(b) Arbitration

Because the cost of labour was such a large component of overall expenditure on an orchard, the tendency of the arbitration court to increase award payments naturally attracted grower enmity towards it. Growers, moreover, were opposed to the principle of the minimum wage which, by 1920, with tariff protection, was a central tenet in maintaining the standard of living.(29) In an orchard, "one man was worth three times as much as the other", (30) and it was thought



that wages should be tailored accordingly.

This stance against arbitration was perhaps as much a traditional as an economic one. Growers were clearly dependent upon a close working relationship with their workers, and one initial concern expressed was that repeated wage claims would destroy the "mutual relationship" which prevailed in the industry.(31) It is possibly this outlook that marked the difference between growers and their workers in the 1920s - and made "reliable labour" in consequence difficult to find.

Because of its jurisdictional overlap into industries already covered by State wage boards, the arbitration court was resorted to primarily as a means of bypassing existing wage agreements, which the government believed engendered "distrust and suspicion" in industrial relations.(32) Its attempt to improve this climate and thereby economic efficiency through the court's abolition resulted in the government losing office when an election was held on the issue in 1929.

(c) The "Sugar Burden"

An Ardmona grower in 1923 complained that the federal government, which had preached economic self-reliance, was instead "managing three quarters of the

fruitgrowers business" through the imposition of the tariff, arbitration, and "preventing them from buying sugar at a lower price".(33)

Sugar was essential for both canning and jam-making, but in an arrangement dating back to Federation, Queensland cane growers were protected from much cheaper sugar from overseas. Hence, sugar cost manufacturers and consumers in this period about £40 a ton, whereas embargoed Javanese sugar cost only £20 a ton.(34) It was the effect of the price of sugar on local prices, and hence consumption, that had largely entailed the "crisis" and government intervention in the industry in 1920. In a subsequent arrangement, a rebate of £14 per ton was allowed on the local price of sugar, but only for export purposes.(35)

It affected growers more directly through reductions in fruit bought by consumers for jam-making at home; manufactured jam was itself considered a luxury because of its price.

(d) State Regulation

The Victorian Department of Agriculture performed a number of functions in regard to the fruit industry. As well as conducting research and providing horticultural information to orchardists,(36) it also

possessed inspectors to ensure that legislated standards of production and marketing within the industry were maintained. For this purpose, it employed a Chief Inspector of Orchards and a Superintendent of Exports, with the Chief Horticulturalist concerned with the marketing of fruit.

Few growers would have argued against the need to superintend standards, but the cost that ensued from such regulation and occasional penalties for breaching it, was complained of. It was estimated in 1915 that it cost growers "indirectly if not directly" about £10 a week through inspection by State officials.(37) The costs associated with interstate regulation have already been noted.

The main purpose of orchard inspection was to prevent trees from harbouring insects or disease which could threaten surrounding orchards. In 1927 a number of orchardists from Doncaster appeared in Box Hill Court charged with failing to keep their orchards free of "red scale", but specific objections were made in court to the need for fumigation as stipulated by the Agricultural Department. One grower claimed that it was opposed by "all the orchardists in the Doncaster District" as both expensive and ineffective compared to spraying.(38)

(e) Suburbanisation

One measure of the increase in the residential population of the metropolitan area in the 1920s is that, during this period, owners of house allotments were also proceeded against for failing to tend fruit trees. One magistrate, who fined an allotment owner named Caroline Brown for this reason in 1926, commented that it was a pity that "the law cannot be amended so that orchardists subdividing old orchards would be compelled to cut down fruit trees before selling the land."(39)

Suburbanisation in the 1920s occurred relatively slowly, and in the proximity of the railway line, which had been electrified as far as Ringwood by 1923. For a few orchardists it offered the opportunity to leave the industry altogether at a profit; others, particularly the larger growers, often abandoned some orchards but retained others in areas where the effects of suburbanisation were as yet muted.

There were a number of costs imposed on orcharding through the growth in the residential population. One such expense was the water charge by the Board of Works. Another genuine problem was the increase in the rate of theft from orchards by passers-by, particularly on weekends and public holidays. Sometimes cars would

stop to collect several sackfuls. In 1926 a Doncaster grower named George Prowse appeared in court charged with shooting a bicyclist whom he had assumed was a thief. The president of Doncaster Shire gave testimony on Prowse's behalf, and claimed that theft was particularly troublesome in the district. He himself had lost £50 worth of fruit in one week, "and found it necessary to pay others to guard his orchards".(40)

The greatest expense associated with suburbanisation were municipal rates. These were levied at a fixed rate in the pound, the number of pounds being the market valuation of the property. Such valuations were inevitably higher in areas where a strong residential demand for housing existed, and the rate itself increased with the number of amenities that existed, such as sealed roads and street lighting.

It was in Box Hill that rates were the highest. Between 1921 and 1925 the number of houses there grew by 50%, and rates increased concurrently from 26p in the pound to 36p in the pound. In 1925, a 20 acre orchard and weatherboard house in Box Hill, belonging to Harrington J. Bunbury, was valued at £135 which entailed a rate of £20.(41)

This is to be contrasted with Doncaster which, distant from the railway line, remained unaffected by demand for residential housing. The rate charged was only 18p in the pound in 1920, and increased marginally to 21p in the pound by 1927. John Tully's property in Doncaster, also with twenty acres and a house, had a market value of £85 in 1925 and a yearly rate payment of less than £8.(42)

The history of Tully's own orchards in Box Hill is illustrative of a common trend of "rationalising" orchard holdings. He retained two orchards in Box Hill of 10 and 20 acres, on which he probably grew apples, which were more suited to "flats".(43) These were part of an 1897 subdivision called Milne Estate and, importantly, each backed onto a creek. Even in the mid-1920s, subdivisions such as "Arlington Estate" in Blackburn usually reserved such land for sale as a working orchard.(44)

By 1930 the Tully orchards, with a combined market value of about £70, had been sold, as had that of another orchardist on the estate, Edward Gallus. It is probable that, with the "push" factor of high rates, and the "pull" factor of the opportunity to sell the orchard on a remunerative basis, Tully made the inevitable choice and thereafter applied his time and finances to his three Doncaster orchards.

WILLIAM MACKINLEY

The ledger book belonging to this orchardist, which covers the period 1917-1933, details most of the income and expenditure relating to his two orchards in Ringwood. Each was about 20 acres in size, on which he grew apples, pears and plums.(45) He was, in terms of his origins, use of markets, and close involvement in the affairs of the district, very much a typical metropolitan orchardist.

He had inherited both orchards from his father, Henry MacKinley, in around 1915, and in consequence he was well-capitalised. In estimating the value of his "plant for orcharding business" in 1924, he listed a motor truck (£150), sulky and harness (£30), tip dray and harness (£10), irrigation equipment (£50), a grader (£25), and fruit cases (£120). The total value of his equipment amounted to £619. Five years later, he had added a tractor (£125) and motor spray pump (£144) to his assets.

Most of his fruit was sold at the Victoria Market, to which he made at least one trip per week. The remainder of his crop was usually shipped to Sydney, where he used the large agency company of S&M Greenberg to remit the price received. The returns were grouped in his ledger book with those from "other sources", which were minor but doubtless useful. These included a committee fee from the Orchardists and Fruit Cool Stores Association, and the hiring out of cases and a plough.

As is probably true of most orchardists in the metropolitan area during the 1920s, he sent comparatively little either to the factories or overseas. It is interesting to note that only in 1933 did he partly alter his usual outlets and sold over £200 worth of fruit to Rosella. This indicates the possible importance the factories, as well as overseas export, came to have for metropolitan growers in consequence of the decline in the interstate trade during the thirties.

The graph shown in figure (iii) indicates the returns from the fruit sent yearly to the Victoria Market, and those from Sydney and "other sources". Some years returns may not indicate simply the size of the crop, but rather his ability to take advantage of market prices when a shortage of fruit was current, such as in 1929 when he sold over £1500 worth of fruit at the Victoria Market alone. This represented a "good" year; in a bad one, such as 1928, he might earn little more than £500 from the sale of fruit.

MacKinley's costs were much more constant than his income. Two of the most pronounced expenses were for spraying, which ranged from £75 to £100 during the twenties (this last amount spent during the 1926-7 thrip plague) and for cool storage. He appeared to take a personal interest in this last matter. As well as being on the committee of the Cool Stores Association, he was involved in the establishment of the co-operative cool store in Ringwood. He subsequently used this store each year, in addition to a



number of others elsewhere in the metropolitan area. In years of glut, such as 1929, he stored up to 4000 cases, which entailed an expenditure of £339. This heavy expenditure reduces the aggregate return of that year of £2729 to proportion.

Yet it was wage payments that were his greatest expense. This is shown in figure (iv), which places total income from the sale of fruit against wages paid for that year. He employed three full-time workers, one of whom was his son, William Rainey, who received wages slightly below those of Arthur Horner. This was his oldest employee who, in 1921, received a total wage of £152. From this year his wages were increased at two yearly intervals and by 1926 he was in receipt of £191, with board.

His third employee was named John Acheson. He commenced work in 1923 at the initial rate of 15/- per week, which was increased to £1 a month later. By 1926 he was earning 27/6 per week, which amounted to an annual wage of £60. MacKinley, in contrast to the contemporary picture of growers having to contend with high and intractable wage costs, appeared to possess some flexibility in their determination. Thus, in 1926-7, with the thrip eating into future returns, the wages of both his son and John Acheson were reduced. Arthur Horner left MacKinley's employ at the end of 1926 -perhaps out of a disagreement about wages, or perhaps he simply came to view the position of an orchard gardener in the metropolitan area as an anachronistic one by the mid-1920s.

NOTES

- 1: Argus, August 30-15, 1930 (Wadham)
- 2: This estimate was used by the Minister for Markets, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 115, (Representatives), 22 March, 1927, p.880; and again quoted at a meeting of local fruitgrowers, Argus, August 9-14, 1928
- 3: Ibid, p.880
- 4: Argus, May 22-17, 1924 (J. Petty)
- 5: A number of metropolitan growers gave evidence regarding the hours, rates of pay, and number of employees to the Royal Commission on Fruit, Vegetables and Jam, Victorian Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 2, 1915, pp.932,933,942
- 6: Ibid, p.942 (A. Thiele)
- 7: The Victorian Year Books list the range of wages paid to "orchard gardeners", and their prevailing rate. As women were paid substantially less than men, however, the highest figure in the range appears to be more accurate.
- 8: S. Macintyre, The Oxford History of Australia, Vol.4 (Oxford University Press 1986) pp.104,221
- 9: An Ardmona grower, at a meeting of the Northern Fruitgrowers Association, stated that 60 to 75 percent of expenditure by orchardists was on labour. Argus, August 23-11, 1923
- 10: Fruit World of Australasia, September 1930, p.358; a number of Mount Waverley Orchardists also drew on mains water, Argus, February 16-24, 1927
- 11: Victorian Parliamentary Debates, vol. 203, 14 December 1937, pp.1449-1451; Argus, February 16-24, 1927
- 12: This was the range of William MacKinley's expenditure on sprays between 1924-31. Ledger Book
- 13: Royal Commission on the Fruit Industry, Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 4, 1913, p.507 (William French)
- 14: Op cit, p.932
- 15: Royal Commission on the Fruit Industry, C.Pp., 4, 1913, p.501 (J. Tully)

- 16: Accounts of Blackburn Cool Stores Pty. Ltd. - in possession of Nunawading Historical Society.
- 17: Argus, December 15-12, 1926; Orchardist and Fruit Cool Stores Association Minutes, quarterly meeting, November 28, 1928; quarterly meeting, February 18, 1932
- 18: The advantages of softwood cases were listed by F.R. Mellor in a letter to the Argus, July 30-17, 1926
- 19: The import of fruit by New South Wales declined from 2,139,200 cases in the year ending mid-1930, to 1,800,000 by 1937. The data contained in the New South Wales Year Books for the 1930s are incomplete, however.
- 20: FWA, September 1930, p.,357
- 21: Freight costs per case to Sydney are derived from William MacKinley's Ledger Book
- 22: FWA, June 1931, p.342
- 23: FWA, September 1931, p.544. The change in the mode of transporting fruit from rail to sea is reflected in interstate export statistics, Victorian Year book, 1928-39
- 24: Argus, May 12-13, 1932 (J.M. Ward)
- 25: Argus, August 29-6, 1933
- 26: Journal of Agriculture, Victoria, 26, July 1928, p.424
- 27: The pre-tariff price of arsenate of lead was quoted as 9d per pound by an MLC in Victorian Parliamentary Debates, vol. 155, 13 July 1920, p.178
- 28: Argus, July 30-17, 1026 (F.R. Mellor)
- 29: Macintyre, op cit, p.104
- 30: Royal Commission on Fruit, Vegetables and Jam, V.Pp., 2, 1915, p.942 (A. Thiele)
- 31: Royal Commission on the Fruit Industry, C.Pp., 4, 1913, p.499 (J. Tully)
- 32: W.H. Richmond, "S.M. Bruce and Australian Economic Policy, 1923-9", Australian Economic History Review, 23, 2, 1983, p.253ff
- 33: Argus, August 23-11, 1923 (A. Lenne)
- 34: Argus, May 3-13, 1923 (quoted at a Conference of Victorian Fruitgrowers)

- 35: Argus, November 1-11, 1922
- 36: There were repeated complaints that the entomological section was understaffed. Argus, February 5-18, 1930; January 15-10, 1932.  
Another type of assistance given by the Department was in organising fruit-packing classes for senior school children in orcharding districts, including the metropolitan area. BHR, 23 January 1925
- 37: Royal Commission on Fruit, Vegetables and Jam, V.Pp., 2, 1915, p.1020 (J. Tully)
- 38: BHR, 27 May 1927; Argus, July 29-6, 1927
- 39: Argus, June 18-18, 1926
- 40: BHR, 19 November 1926. a similar complaint by a Frankston orchardist is made in the Argus, May 19-9, 1921
- 41: Rates derived from Box Hill Rate Books (Box Hill/East Ward); housing statistic in A. Lemon, Box Hill (Lothian Publishing Co. 1978), p.152. By 1929 the population of Box Hill was 14,000.
- 42: Doncaster Rate Books (Doncaster Riding)
- 43: Box Hill Rate Books (Surrey Hills Riding). Tom Petty, another Doncaster orchardist, told the 1915 Royal Commission that he held 20 acres at Box Hill, and 20 at Doncaster, and grew apples only in Box Hill. V.Pp., 2, 1915, p.1021
- 44: Arlington Estate Advertising Poster held by Nunawading Historical Society.
- 45: The description of MacKinley's affairs is derived entirely from his ledger book. Henry MacKinley, however, gave evidence at the 1915 Royal Commission, which revealed the interesting fact that he exported fruit to Britain (and at one time, Germany) - his son appeared to export very little overseas. V.Pp., 2, 1915, pp.935-936

#### IV ORGANISING THE INDUSTRY

The production within the orchard is in every way up to date, in practice and in science. We possess already the knowledge to secure the markets at home and abroad. All that remains is for growers to become more highly organised and to extend their operations overseas.(1)

Organisation was in fact synonymous in this period with an export control board, but growers resisted the imposition of the latter. This arose, both out of particular concerns regarding the board, and a prevailing dislike among growers of the principle of "control".

This dislike stemmed largely from a strong sectional outlook by the different fruitgrowing areas, which made growers unwilling to accept (or fund) more broadly constituted organisations. The metropolitan area itself had distinct interests, which were often at variance with those of growers elsewhere. Its opposition to a control board was especially pronounced, notwithstanding the limited (although increasing) quantities shipped from there.

This chapter will begin by discussing the efforts of both federal and State governments at assisting the industry during the 1920s, with that of the federal government put in context of its policy towards the primary industries generally. The second section will note the history of various metropolitan associations, and the outlook they expressed during this period. Of equal importance

in terms of organisation were a number of business associations which arose in the metropolitan area in the absence of wider efforts at improving the industry. The final section will discuss the improvement in the export trade of the 1930s, which occurred both through better organisation and external factors, and its effect upon the industry as a whole.

(a) Government Assistance in the 1920s

During the early 1920s, the federal government was approached by deputations "from just about every rural industry than wool and wheat", with the essential problem confronting them being low prices, especially on overseas markets, in relation to high costs of production. (2) As in the fruit industry, the tariff and arbitration were the subject of particular criticism.

The National/Country party coalition was not yet prepared to discard either of these important, if cumbersome, instruments in maintaining national prosperity, and chose instead to extend the concept of protection to assisting primary producers on the overseas market. This initially included export bounties, but two long-term means of achieving this were envisaged. One was to secure better access to the British market, the other was to render production and marketing of Australian produce more

efficient. It is through this policy that such stress was placed on the need for organisation of the fruit export industry.

Export control boards were an obvious means by which this could be achieved, since they effectively reduced the number of agencies used to distribute Australian produce overseas to one. Hence, in 1924 and 1926, legislation was passed creating boards for the dried and canned fruit industries respectively.

The power of these boards could be considerable; the Canned Fruits Export Control Board, for example, licensed all exporters of canned fruit, thereby giving the board control of both the quality and quantity of the product shipped. The board also set a minimum price for sale, so that the bulk of Australian canned fruit was sold f.o.b. in the thirties.(3)

The board proposed for fresh fruit had comparatively reduced powers. It was introduced into Parliament in March 1927 under the Fresh Fruits Overseas Marketing Bill, and was partly a consequence of the difficulties experienced on the British market in 1926. In fact, its introduction was probably delayed until this time because of disfavour amongst growers, whose concerns the Minister of Markets addressed in his speech accompanying the Bill.

The proposed board would co-ordinate shipments from the various states, and possess the authority to negotiate freight and insurance on an industry basis, thereby reducing aggregate costs. The Minister was careful to stress the elective character of the board:

The function of the board will be to lay down the general marketing policy rather than actually to export, and it will be able to issue licenses upon conditions which shall ensure that the exporting firms shall conform to the general policy. Thus the present channels of trade will hardly be disturbed at all.(4)

Notwithstanding its apparent benefits, in a poll of exporting growers held under the Act later that year, the board was decisively rejected; only in Western Australia were the majority of growers in favour.(5)

The board's failure to be accepted by growers was ostensibly through the belief that it would adversely affect the current methods of export. In particular, it was feared that f.o.b. selling would come to an end, although the government stressed that this would not happen. It was later alleged that agents had "terrified growers by the threat of a refusal to come into their districts to buy f.o.b. if the board came into existence."(6)

There was also some scepticism whether fresh fruit supply was susceptible to regulation. Most growers preferred to ship immediately to reduce the likelihood of spoiling. There was, finally, a dislike of the element of compulsion;(7)



growers naturally preferred to retain some autonomy in their business dealings. It is probably for this reason that metropolitan growers, some with a long involvement in the export trade, were in the forefront of opposition to the board.

The dislike of control generally also retarded the development of other organisations which might advance State fruitgrowers' interests locally. Although the advantages of such an organisation were conceded, sectional interests defined its acceptable structure too narrowly. No grower organisation, in consequence, succeeded in uniting those interests, so that almost by default the Orchardists and Fruit Cool Stores Association could claim to be the sole representative of State growers.(8)

The issue of an orchard tax is illustrative of the problem of sectionalism. It was mooted from within the industry sometime before 1920 as a means of financing an organisation which could advance growers' interests on a broad front. Its other perceived benefit would be to compel growers to "recognise their obligations"(9) to their associations, and to the industry itself. It is of interest that metropolitan associations supported the tax, but a large number of growers elsewhere opposed it. As the Argus noted in a 1924 editorial on the issue, many believed that "a large organisation, representative of all interests, would be too unwieldy."(10)

Nor was the tax, which required legislative sanction, ever introduced. In 1921 the government rejected it on the grounds that it was synonymous with "compulsory unionism".(11) In general, however, the various State governments were sympathetic to requests from metropolitan growers. In the early 1920s, it actively assisted in the attempt to bring the grower "in closer touch" with the consumer - a popular theme owing to the controversy surrounding fruit prices and freight charges. It implemented a scheme whereby fruit could be delivered by rail from the country and distributed by post to suburban homes for a fixed charge. It also gave financial assistance towards the establishment of kerb markets.(12)

Other assistance was either functional, including a number of Fruit Acts which regulated such matters as the handling of fruit during transportation, or else financial. After the 1926 thrip plague, for example, advances of up to £2000 were granted to growers who were experiencing difficulties as a result.(13)

Occasionally there were signs of government exasperation at the financial and administrative disorganisation amongst growers. In 1922 the Treasurer remarked in Parliament that a government offer to provide £150 to a metropolitan association if it was matched by growers themselves had, several months later, not been taken up owing to difficulties in raising the sum. "What is the use of trying to help people of that kind?" he asked.(14)

(b) Metropolitan Associations

The association to which the Treasurer referred was the Metropolitan Fruitgrowers Association, the first to specifically represent the area. It was created around 1919, ostensibly to oppose the imposition of an orchard tax. But, as a deputation informed the Premier in 1921, such difficulty had been experienced in gaining membership that the association now supported the tax.(15) Its other achievement was in establishing kerb markets.

By 1926 it was largely redundant and was reconstituted as the metropolitan section of the Victorian Fruitgrowers Association.(16) In 1929, to put the section "in a better financial position", its scope was extended to include the fruitgrowing areas of the Mornington Peninsula, Harcourt and Portland. It was simultaneously re-named the Southern Fruitgrowers Association which, for an annual membership fee of 10/- per grower, resolved to advance their interests by:

(a) Watching over and attending to the interests of growers in the metropolitan markets and suburban factories; (b) developing interstate and overseas marketing, organising present kerb markets and opening markets in suburban and country centres; (c) considering the effect of any proposed legislation on the fruitgrowing industry.(17)

Although the Southern Fruitgrowers lasted longer than its immediate predecessors, it suffered from problems which were experienced by other organisations, particularly broadly-based ones, in this period. One was the lack of financial support by growers, which became a recurrent complaint at the Association's annual meetings.(18)

Another problem was that the Association remained largely metropolitan in outlook. It continued to hold its meetings in Box Hill, and supported the need for an orchard tax, whilst simultaneously opposing an export control board. This was by this period a better reflection of metropolitan preferences than those of country growers, whom the Association claimed to represent.

This latent difference in outlook became manifest when about 300 growers attended a lively meeting in Box Hill in October 1933, convened by the President of the Fruitgrowers' Cool Stores Association, E.H. Hatfield.(19) The meeting was called with the aim of discussing the need for a controlling authority for fruit sold, both locally and overseas.

Both the past and present Presidents of the Cool Stores Association spoke, criticising the haphazard manner in which fruit was disposed of on the local markets. Growers, it was claimed, preferred "to throw their fruit on the market and receive any old price". A packing shed at the Victoria Market was suggested where the fruit could be uniformly graded and the supply regulated.

A Doncaster grower, W.A. Thiele, objected strongly to the proposal and moved that growers within a 25 mile radius of Melbourne be exempted from any type of control. He cited the difficulty in withholding soft fruits from the market, and objected to the "overhead charges" of a controlling

authority. He was supported in his objection by other growers, and the attempt to establish control of locally sold fruit was apparently abandoned. The meeting ended, however, by passing a vote in favour of the need for an export control board.

Both Thiele and Hatfield subsequently referred to the meeting in letters sent to the Argus. Thiele claimed that the final resolution was declared agreed to amid disorder, "when growers were moving freely around the hall and others were leaving the building". Hatfield, in contrast, felt that the meeting was representative and that the desire for an export control board clearly existed; "in fact, in Victoria, throughout the country districts, whence the export fruit comes, opinion is almost unanimous in this demand."(20)

(c) Other Types of Organisation

In the absence of any effective regulation of the industry during the 1920s, either at a federal or state level, a number of small organisations were formed by metropolitan growers on business lines. Each attempted to establish a brand name for fruit which, it was hoped, would secure better returns through supervised grading, packing and marketing.

It had long been a common practice among larger growers in the metropolitan area to use their own brands. One example of this was "Lawford's Fruit Exchange" which, during the

1920s shipped apples and pears to country and interstate centres. Orchard requisites, such as sprays, were also sold. A privately-owned packing shed and cool store permitted close supervision of packing and grading, with the fruit drawn mostly from the orchards of E. Lawford and H. Zerbe. (21)

Reflecting the increase in pear exports from the metropolitan area from 1930, the Southern Victorian Pear Packing Company was formed at a meeting of Doncaster and Blackburn growers in 1931, to establish a label for pear export. John Tully was chairman. Through share issues (the number held by each grower determining the number of cases that could be shipped under the brand), as well as a levy on each case sent, the company paid for a representative in London to take delivery and sell the company's pears. (22) In later years, this organisation would alter its function considerably and sold fruit and orchard requisites locally under the name of the Blue Moon Co-operative Company.

Also of note was the Victoria Mark Fruit Company, formed in 1934 with W.A. Thiele on the board of directors. This initially attempted to establish a label (the Victoria Mark) for apples and pears sold locally, but with other functions envisaged, including an advertising campaign to increase consumption within Victoria. The company did not appear to survive very long, however; (23) possibly it had already been superseded by improvements in the industry from the early 1930s.

(d) The Nineteen Thirties

The Bruce government's strategy was actually realised after 1933, as preferential access and closer attention to export control entailed a steady increase in the quantities of both canned and fresh fruit shipped overseas. This is shown in figures (v) and (vi). It is apparent also that the prosperity of metropolitan growers was now more dependent on the export trade, directly as well as indirectly in terms of the reduction in quantities to be sold on the local market.

The initial advance in effective organisation was made in July 1928, when a large number of growers and agents met to establish the Victorian Fruit Marketing Association (VFMA). (24) It was mainly concerned with apple and pear export, but also sought to improve "local conditions of marketing", such as the creation of an arbitration panel to settle labour claims. (25)

The strength of the organisation derived from its recognition by the government as an advisory body, which also financed the organisation through a levy of ½d on all apples and pears exported from the State, charged on growers and agents alike. This was found an effective means of raising revenue and, as noted, was adopted by business companies. In 1937, an executive meeting of the Orchardists and Fruit Cool Stores Association considered amalgamating with the VFMA which, because of its official recognition,

was conceded as "the more powerful organisation". Also noted was the variance by which each organisation financed itself.(26)

Notwithstanding attempts to improve local conditions of production, other problems remained, such as the unknown quantities shipped from other states, which prevented any co-ordination of ship departure times. In 1934, the vice-president of the VFMA conceded the need for federal control so as "to obtain for the apple and pear industry what was due to it." It had been treated as the Cinderella of all the industries".(27) This claim was curiously out-of-date however, for, among other reasons, such a federal organisation had already been created four years earlier by the VFMA itself.

In 1930 the VFMA drafted a constitution for a federal export council which other state marketing authorities agreed to at a meeting held in Melbourne in December of that year.(28) The Australian Apple and Pear Export Council, as it was named, consisted of elected representatives by growers and exporters from each state, and levied 3/8d on all cases shipped overseas. In 1932 this raised £7800, which was divided into £1150 for the Council's expenses, another £1150 was placed in a trust fund, and £5500 sent to the "director of trade publicity in London."(29)

Without statutory authority, however, the Council had little impact on the export trade until 1933. In that year,



encouraged by preferential access to the British market, growers shipped a record quantity of fruit, and received correspondingly poor returns. Some actually received accounts to be paid from their agents.(30)

This experience encouraged a renewed effort at regulating the quantity exported. Thus, at the end of 1933, quotas were formulated for each State in accordance with crop forecasts.(31) State marketing authorities were entrusted with matching quantities sent with their quotas, which nevertheless remained "voluntary" until the end of the decade.

Also contributing to the improvement from this year in the trade, and the industry generally, was the policy of the federal government. That which took office in January 1932, with Joseph Lyons as Prime Minister, embarked on a number of assistance schemes for primary producers.(32) It was greatly assisted by the Ottawa Agreement of 1932, which subsequently gave Australian fruit free and reserved access to the British market between April and July, inclusive. A further fundamental concession was made by the government in 1933 in lowering the tariff.

It proved remarkably tolerant of grower folly too when, following the debacle in the export trade of that year, it passed the Fruitgrowers Relief Act which allocated a total of £125,000 amongst the States. Of this, Victoria received £36,321, which was distributed as a freight rebated for

those growers who had suffered a loss on export.(33) This was paid in subsequent years as an export bounty on all fruit shipped, whether on consignment or f.o.b. In 1934 this amounted to 5½d per case of apples or pears; in 1937, the final year in which it was paid, it was 2½d per case.(34)

The importance to the metropolitan area of the improvement in the export trade is indicated by the increase in orchard acreage over the same period. Acreage was higher in 1937 than in 1934, notwithstanding continuing low prices and a slight fall in the interstate trade during the 1930s. But the decline, which had practically ceased after 1928, resumed dramatically in 1938, at the same time as quotas for export were reduced and the export bounty was abolished. It is probable that recent arrivals to the industry, attracted by the returns on the export market, left with equal alacrity when the market again contracted. The sudden worsening of the British market also brought about the long-deferred export control board for fresh fruit. This held its inaugural meeting in June 1939(35) only a few months before the outbreak of the Second World War.

NOTES

- 1: Box Hill Reporter, 11 March 1921
- 2: W.H. Richmond, "S.M. Bruce and Australian Economic Policy, 1923-9", Australian Economic History Review, 23, 2, 1983, p.241. Much of the account given in this chapter of federal government policy is derived from this article.
- 3: Fruit World of Australasia, June 1932, p.297
- 4: Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, vol. 115, (Representatives) 22 March 1927, p.881
- 5: S.M. Wadham, Land Utilisation in Australia (Melbourne University Press 1964), p.188
- 6: Letter from Fred Thomas, Argus, September 5-3, 1933
- 7: Concern about the perishability of fruit was expressed in Fruit World of Australasia, February 1927, p.55. Compulsion was the specific objection raised to a board, made during a rowdy meeting of the Victorian Apple and Pear Growers Association, Argus, September 23-12, 1926
- 8: This claim was made by a member of the association itself in a quarterly meeting, 27 August 1935, OFCSA Minutes. This organisation had been known as the Fruitgrowers Cool Stores Association, but added the prefix "Orchardists" sometime after 1930, presumably out of recognition of its wider role.  
  
Other state-wide organisations, and the years they were active, include (a) The Victorian Fruitgrowers Central Association, 1893-1926 (b) The Victorian Fruit Council, 1926-? It fell into abeyance soon after its creation, but was reactivated in 1931. The Victorian Apple and Pear Growers Association led a shadowy existence and was unpopular with growers, in part for supporting the need for an export control board.
- 9: J.H. Cain (Asst. Minister for Agriculture) at an annual meeting of the metropolitan section of the Fruitgrowers Association, BHR, July 13, 1928; reiterated by Lieut.-Col. Knox, Victorian Parliamentary Debates, (Assembly) Vol. 177, 2 October 1928
- 10: Argus, August 20-10, 1924
- 11: Argus, October 20-10, 1921. The orchard tax nevertheless remained an important issue during the 1920s, although never introduced.
- 12: Delivery scheme referred to by the Director of Agriculture, Argus, February 22-8, 1921; financial assistance, Argus, July 19-9, 1922

- 13: Fruit Acts were passed (amending earlier ones) in 1915, 1917, 1923 and 1925
- 14: VPD, Vol. 162, (Assembly), 31 October 1922, p.2310. another MLA stated several years later that growers "should be saved from themselves", VPD, Vol. 199, 8 October 1936, p.1971
- 15: Argus, October 20-10, 1921 (deputation); Argus, July 19-9, 1922 (kerb market)
- 16: BHR, 2 July 1926
- 17: Annual meeting of the metropolitan section of the Fruitgrowers Association, BHR, 12 July 1929
- 18: BHR, 12 July 1929, 12 July 1935
- 19: Argus, October 6-3, 1922
- 20: (Thiele) October 9-3, 1922; (Hatfield) December 19-3, 1933. It is of interest that two organisations with state-wide representation, the Orchardists and Fruit Cool Stores Association, and the Victorian Apple and Pear Growers Association, supported the need for an export control board.
- 21: FWA, September 1930, p.370; the Thiele family used its own brand for export purposes, FWA, December 1931, p.677
- 22: Argus, January 12-12, 1931
- 23: Argus, July 21-25, 1934; August 11-24, 1934
- 24: Argus, July 14-30, 1928
- 25: Argus, August 9-14, 1928
- 26: OFCSA Minutes, 4 February 1937
- 27: Argus, June 30-24, 1934
- 28: FWA, November 1930, p.420; January 1931, p.25
- 29: Argus, Jan 7-10, 1933
- 30: Argus, August 29-6, 1933 (Wadham)
- 31: Argus, December 28-3, 1933
- 32: S. Macintyre, The Oxford History of Australia Vol. 4 (Oxford 1986), p.299
- 33: Argus, November 17-3, 1933; VPD Vol. 193, 21 December 1933, p.4134ff
- 34: Victorian Year Book 1934-1937
- 35: Argus, June 10, 1939

V CONCLUSION

Apparently, it was the deterioration of the British market that led to the imposition of a control board in 1939, with little demurrance from growers. The experience of "control" had been found less irksome than expected, although there were continued criticisms directed at the marketing strategies of both the Canned Fruits Export Control Board, and the Apple and Pear Export Council.

In 1937 the Council moved to reduce Victoria's quota for export, which entailed concern about the "increase of quantities being thrown on the home market".(1) In response, a Market Committee was created with the participation of several organisations, including the Cool Stores Association and the Southern Victorian Pear Packing Company. The committee conducted a publicity campaign to increase local consumption, mostly through the press; posters and recipe books were also printed for distribution.(2)

Essentially, it was upon this local market that metropolitan growers remained dependent. Moreover, their close access to a number of different outlets for their fruit - the Victoria Market, canning factories, and the docks - gave them an unenviable advantage in surmounting the difficulties experienced in the inter-war period.

The decline in acreage which took place in the twenties must largely be attributed to suburbanisation, the effects of which were felt in a substantially different manner to its juggernaut

progress after WWII. It increased rates in certain areas, and made orcharding there more expensive than areas further from the railway line, such as Doncaster. It is not apparent that suburbanisation was looked on with concern with growers at this stage, probably because so many were able to benefit financially. However, the increase in residential population had residual effects - the increase in theft being one, and perhaps difficulty in obtaining reliable labour another. Orchardng in the metropolitan area was, even in this period, becoming anachronistic.

The cessation of the decline after 1928 can be attributed both to a slowing in the growth in demand for housing, and eventual improvements in the export market which metropolitan orchardists, particularly pear growers, took advantage of.

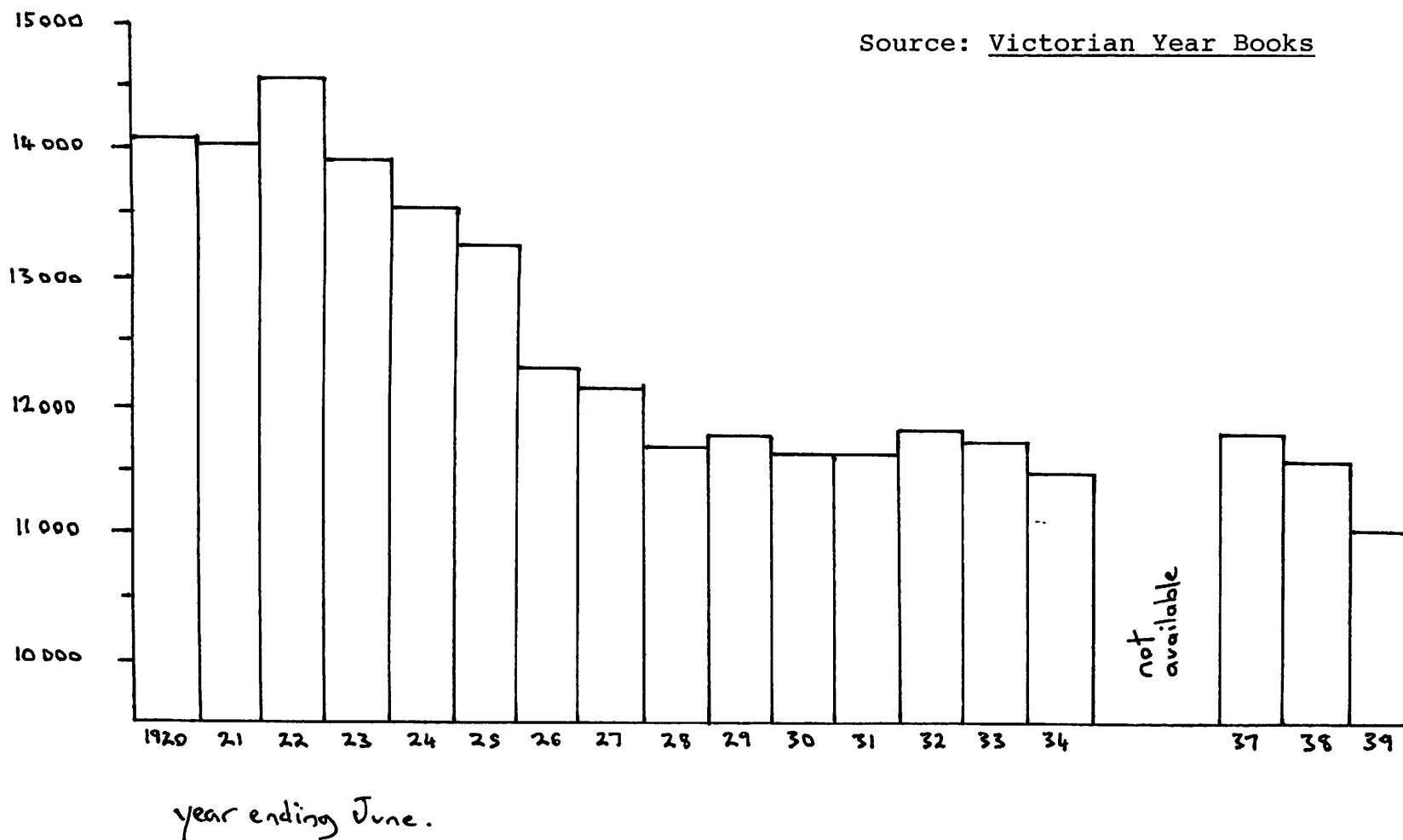
The relation of the area to the export trade is interesting, due to the apparent discrepancy between the comparatively small quantity of fruit shipped overseas, and its considerable hostility to the imposition of an export control board. Fundamentally, growers in the metropolitan area resented "having their livelihoods controlled by the board." (3) The State and federal governments had largely created the difficulties in the industry, both through encouraging fruitgrowing in the northern districts, and in rendering the costs of production high; that it should attempt to compensate for this by further controlling growers' business affairs was felt to be iniquitous, particularly by growers in a district with as long and distinct a contribution to the industry as the metropolitan area.

NOTES

- 1: Orchardists and Fruit Cool Stores Minutes, General Meeting, 28 January, 1937
- 2: OFCSA Minutes quarterly meeting, 24 August 1932
- 3: Argus, October 6-3, 1933

Figure i: Orchard acreage in the County of Bourke, 1920-1939.

Source: Victorian Year Books





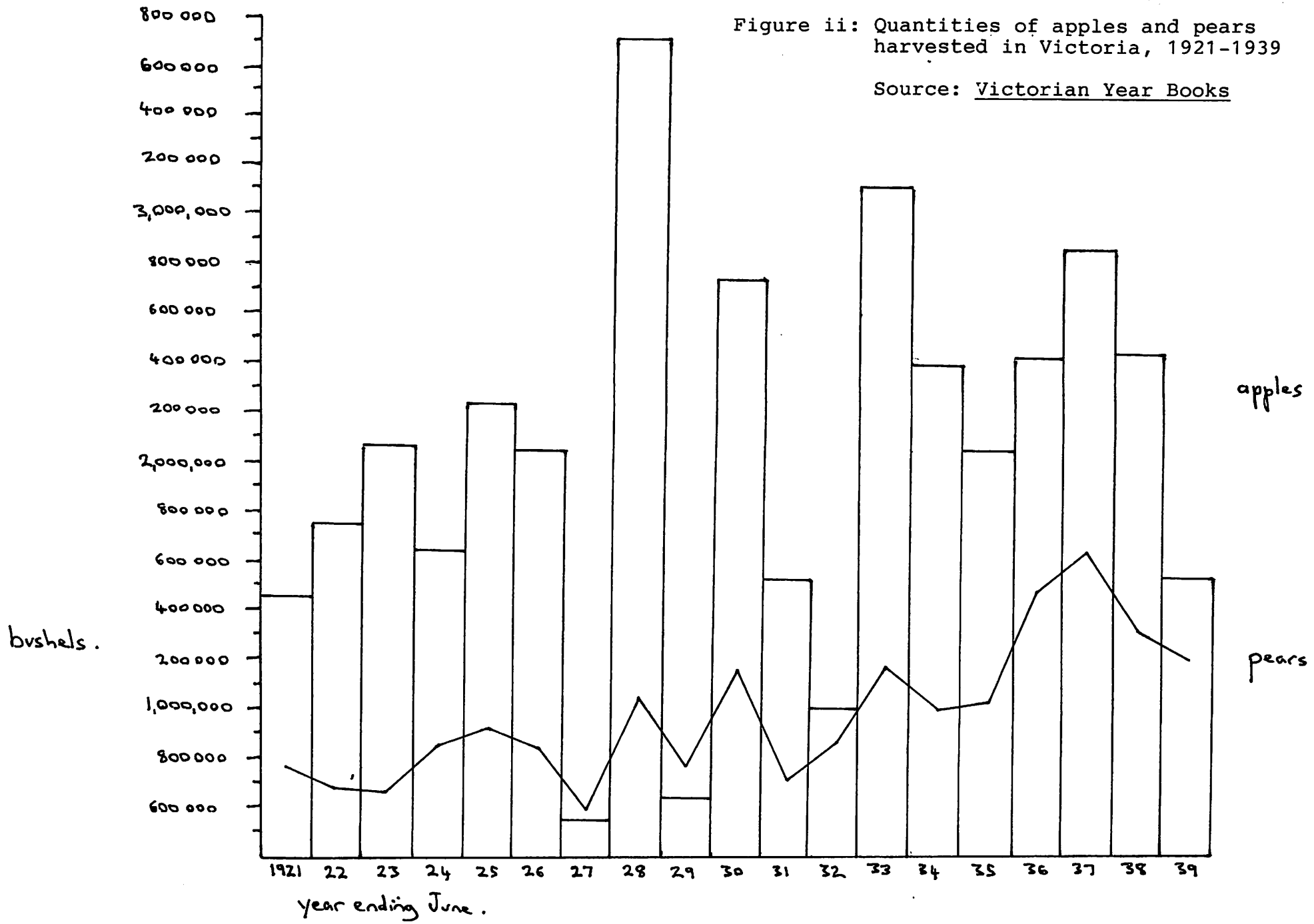


Figure iii: Returns of William MacKinley from the sale of fruit, 1921-1933

Source: Ledger Book

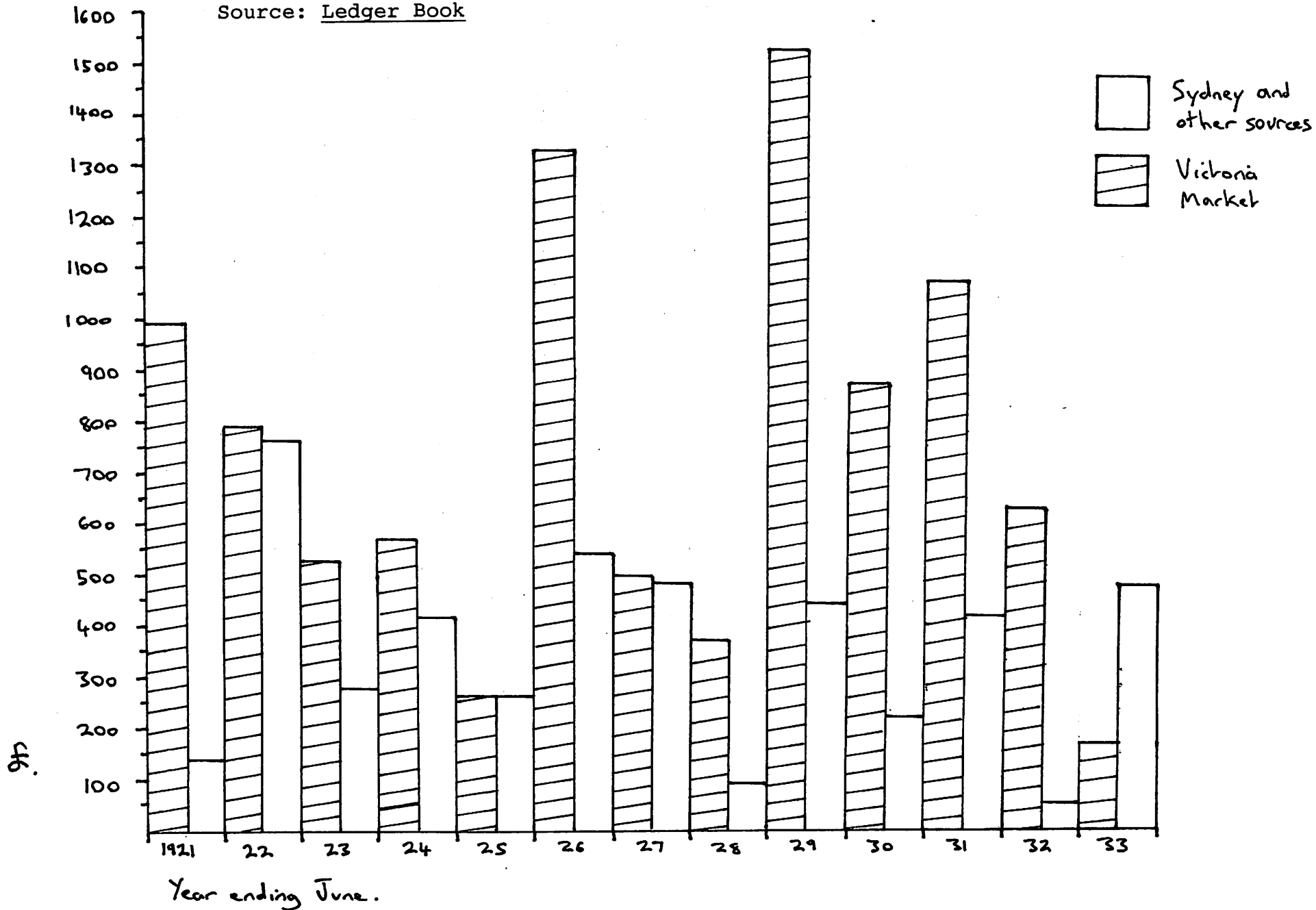


Figure iv: Wage payments of William MacKinley, compared with income from the sale of fruit, 1921-1930

Source: Ledger Book

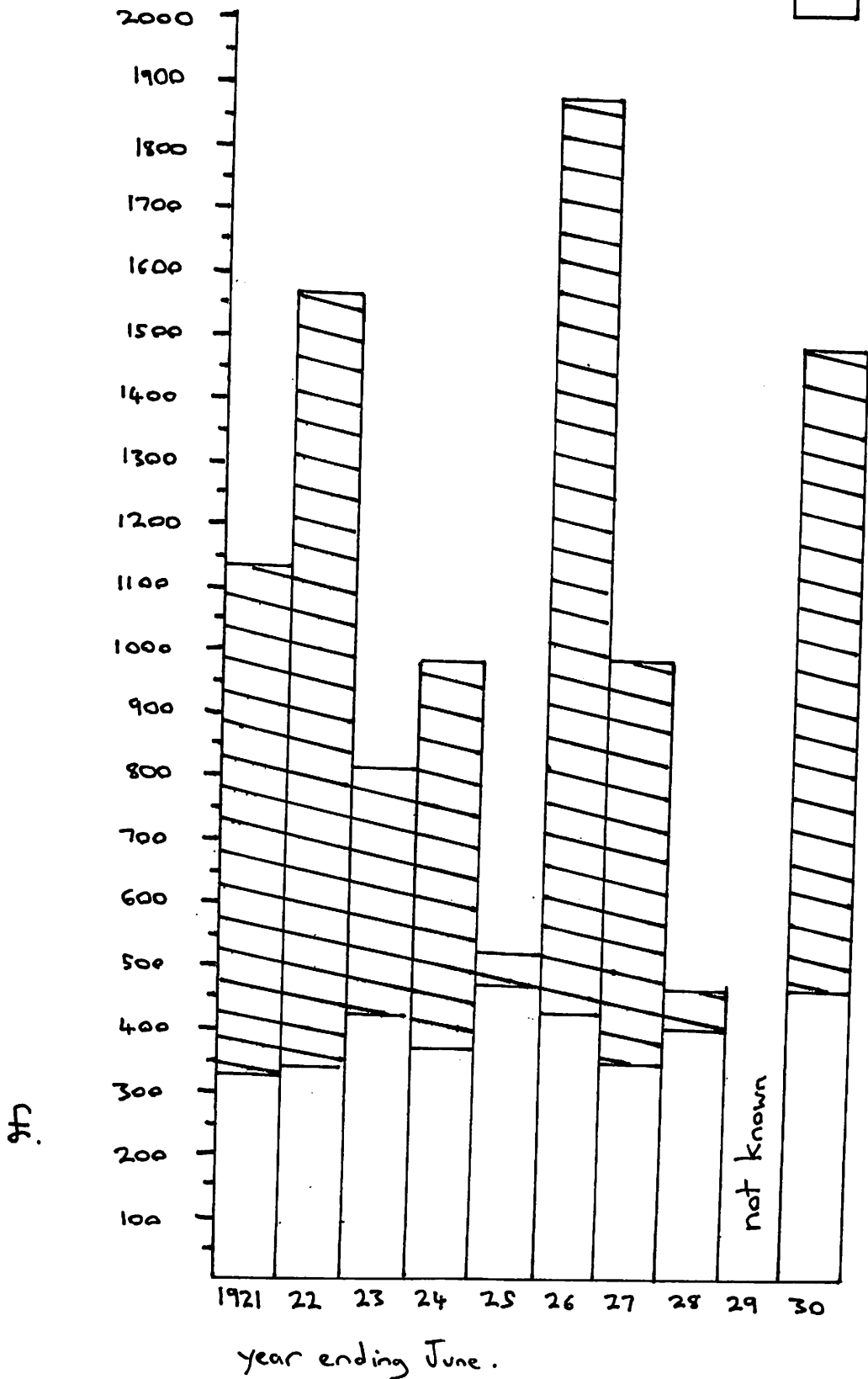
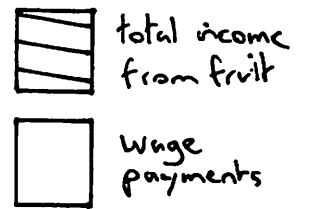


Figure v: Value of fresh fruit exported overseas from Victoria, 1922-1939

Source: Victorian Year Books

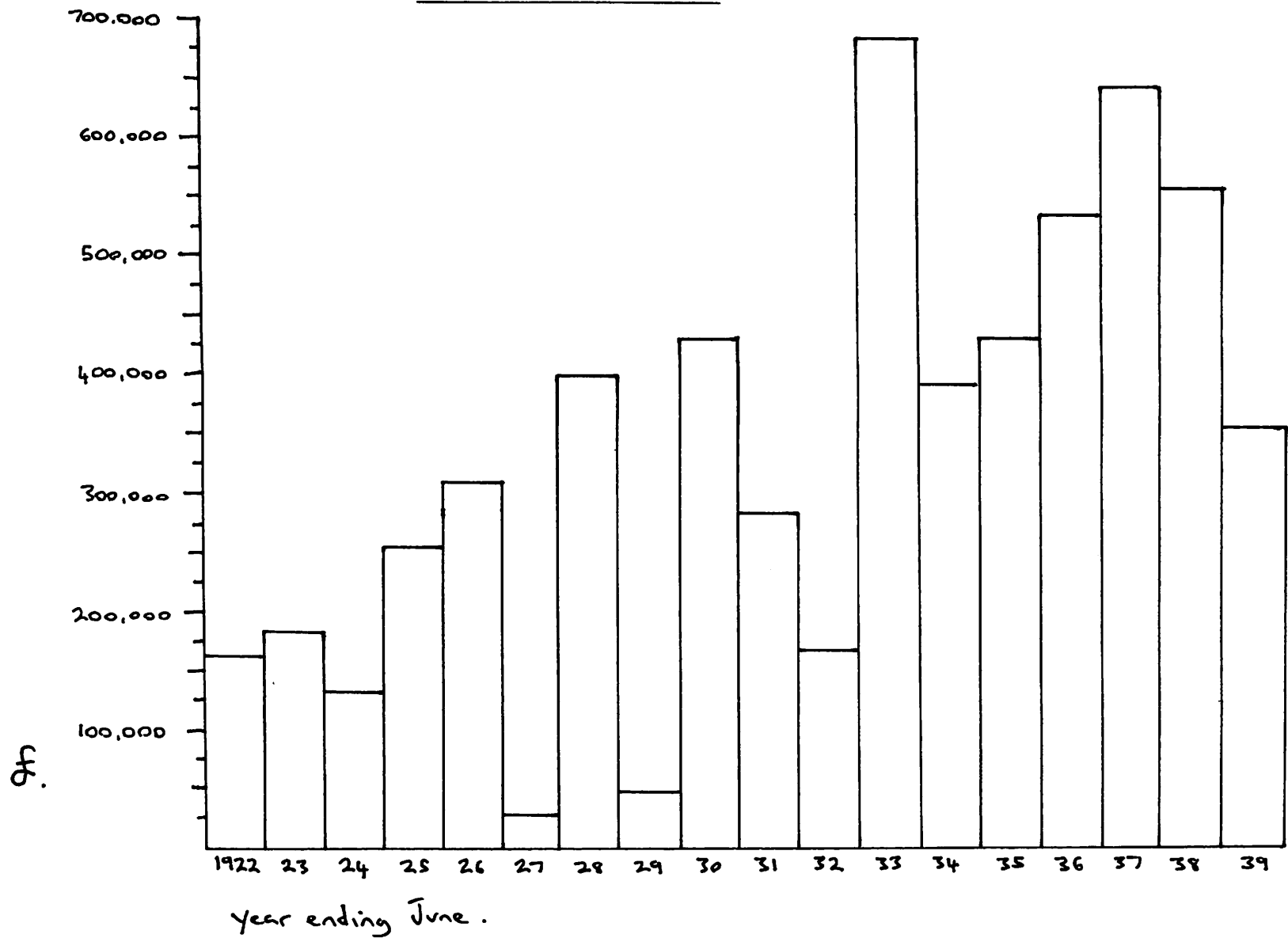
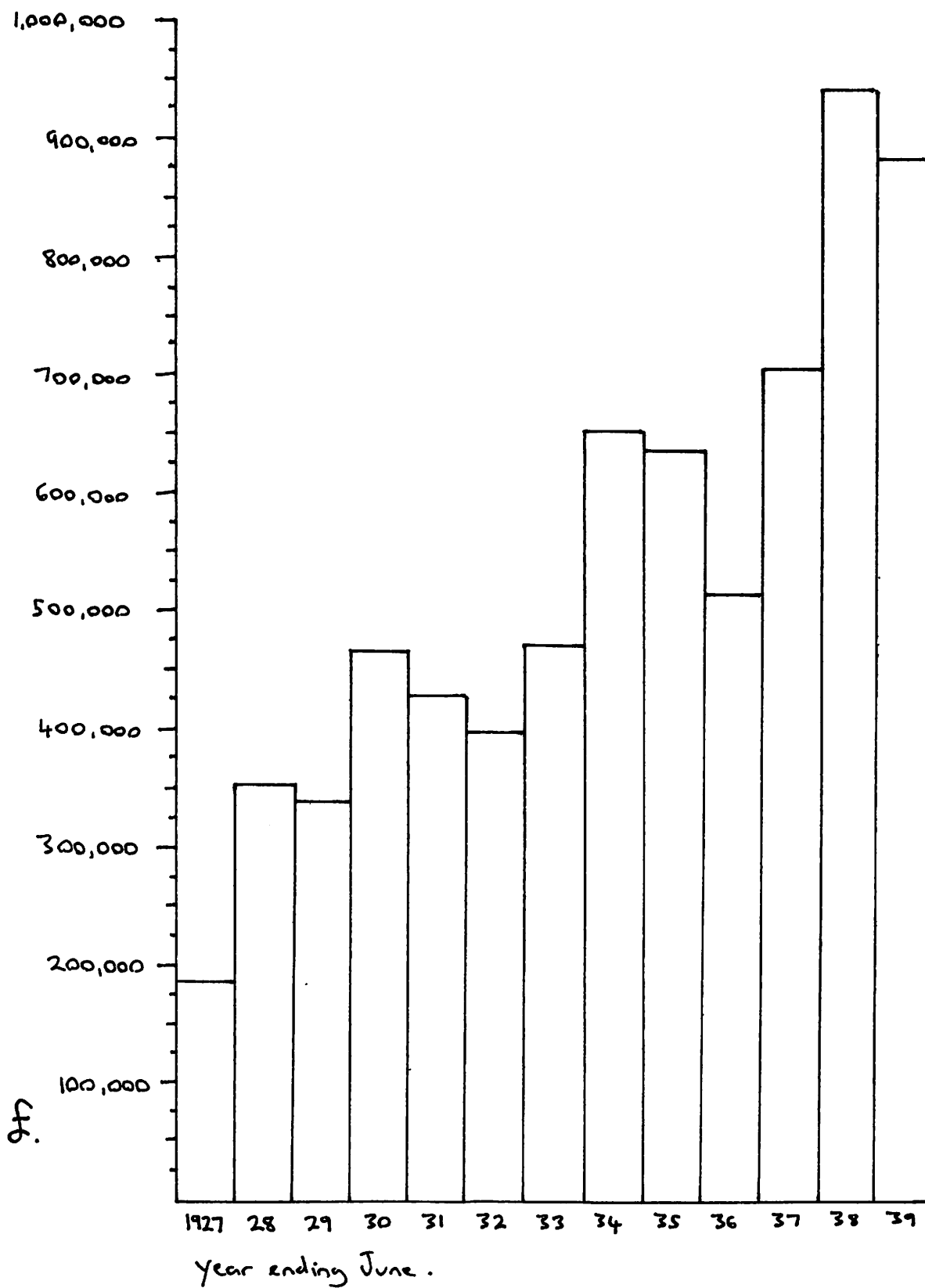


Figure vi: Value of canned fruit exports from Victoria, 1927-1939

Source: Victorian Year Books



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