

lines: after paying the cost of manufacture, the farmer receives back every fraction of a penny the butter has realised. In connection with our factory, it turned over £34,000 last year, and after paying the working-expenses of the factory and all necessary charges the farmer gets back every penny of it on his butter, and any extra charge for wages would come out of the pocket of the farmer. Our wages amount this year to £1,350, and I do not see that we are sweating the employés.

40. A lot of your butter is sold in the colony, is it not?—Well, we get a very much better market in London.

41. If you were brought under the provisions of this Act you would not be in the position of being able to increase the cost to the consumer in the colony?—Butter is fetching to-day 9½d. to 10d. in London. If we sell any in the local market we expect the local people to pay the same price here.

42. Supposing you were brought under the operations of this Act, and the cost of production was increased, could you get 1s. a pound for what you sell in the colony?—Undoubtedly not. Instead of paying £1,350 for wages, we should have to pay £2,200, by working two staffs; and I question whether we should manufacture so good an article as we are doing if brought under the provisions of this Act.

43. What rates of wages do you pay your men?—As secretary and manager of the whole concern, I get £240 a year. The butter-man gets £3 10s. to £3 15s., the next assistant £2 2s., and the creamery-hands about £2 5s., £2 10s., and £2 a week. I would like the Committee to recognise this fact: that in years gone by when a factory has ceased to work it has been the practice of co-operative concerns, and also proprietary ones, to discharge their hands. It is manifestly unfair that that should be done. I have set my face strongly against it, and kept the hands on all the season, though I have been opposed by the managing directors and the shareholders. I recognise that if a man works here in one season he should be kept on in the other. The feeling is growing that these men ought to be retained and not discharged.

44. Do you know anything about the feelings of the employés in connection with this Act?—I also am a member of the Factory-managers and Assistants' Association which we have in this Island, and which is a very extensive one. We have no desire whatever to be brought under the Factories Act as it is here. We bring the lads into the factories, and they work their way up until they become butter-makers and factory-managers, and they seem very well satisfied with their positions.

45. *Mr. Hutcheson.*] You told the Committee that your work is intermittent throughout the year, and you have also told us that you have endeavoured to retain the employés during the slack times: do you retain them on their usual pay throughout the year—do all have the same wages as in busy times?—Exactly. In connection with my own factory, during the winter season we have been running the main factory and three creameries, and the men in the creameries, I may say, are paid according to results. The men receive the same in the months of June, July, and August as for the other months in the year. We give them a little labour, such as painting, in the slack time. For one day in the week they are perfectly at liberty to go away, and they are paid for it.

46. *Mr. Ell.*] You admit the hours are rather long during the busy season: what are the hours during the remainder of the season?—I work fifteen hours myself, and intend to do so notwithstanding legislation. The butter-men start in the summer season about 5 o'clock. They have to light up the fires. The practical work of the factory does not begin probably until 6 or 6.30 o'clock, and it is usually done about 3.30 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It is necessary for one of the hands to watch the refrigerator during the cooling. There are six or seven hands in the factory, and they take it in turns.

47. What are the hours they work during the slack season—at this period of the year?—For four hours a day. Only four hours in the one day are worked in June, July, and August; and there is very little indeed to be done, for the simple reason that it is quite an exception in the industry that the men should be dairying. It is only by a great effort that we can get some of our people to go and milk during these months, and the question is to get fresh-made articles daily during these months of the year for our local customers.

48. *The Chairman.*] Do you find the present Factory Act working oppressively in regard to the dairies?—I have no objection to it.

49. Are you aware that the new Act and the old Act are comparatively identical?—Yes. At the same time I do not agree with the proposed Act.

50. You have no reason to anticipate that there will be any alteration in existing conditions, seeing that it has been going on for several years. Do all the dairy factories work exactly the same?—I do not agree with that definition of the word "factory."

51. You admit that it is necessary that the boys should be taken cognizance of: how are boys or girls under fifteen years of age worked?—In connection with our business there is nothing of the kind.

52. That is to say you do not work your boys over eight hours?—No.

53. Then, it will leave you in exactly the same position?—Yes.

54. You said you had a better market in London than there is in New Zealand?—Yes.

55. Does that apply all over the colony?—I think so.

56. Do you know the Taieri-Peninsula Milk-supply Company?—Yes.

57. Are you aware that the greater part of their output is sold at 1s., and whatever is left at 9d. in the London market?—That is hardly correct, I think.

58. That is absolutely correct?—I understand the output of the Taieri-Peninsula Milk-supply Factory sold at 10½d. f.o.b., London, for this year. I know nothing at all about what they may do locally.