

28. I am conceding that you are entitled to have a Board in which you would have full confidence?—Yes, and we would give them a sufficient authorization, and no factory would hesitate to do so—to make them practically their authorized agents.

29. Who would give your Board the necessary authority?—The factories.

30. If any factory chose to stand out of the shipping arrangements, what would be the position? Would the Board have power to compel it to come within the arrangements?—Candidly, I have endeavoured to get all the information I could from other branches of the trade, and, among others, from the shipping; and I feel satisfied, as a result of inquiries and investigations, that there would be no trouble whatever. Should there be a few cantankerous factories that did not give the power, it would not affect the arrangements in the least. But I cannot conceive that any factory would withhold the power. Mind you, that is my personal view as to the power: I cannot speak for others.

31. You would not need to come to Parliament to constitute such a Board, then?—Yes.

32. Why?—To give the power to set up the Board.

33. *Mr. Burnett.*] It strikes me that your chief objection to a Control Board would be its unrestricted right to control the market for your produce?—Yes.

34. You mentioned in your evidence that the meat industry was at its last gasp. Will you not concede that that state of affairs was brought about by the manipulations of interested speculators and such people?—I do not know enough of the meat industry. I really am not fitted to judge. I do know that it was in a serious position.

35. In the outline you have given of your proposed Board you say that you would give it a tenure of office of only three years. How would you get continuity of policy with a Board having such a short life, instead of providing for a rotation of resignations?—I say at once that a County Council or any other local body is in exactly the same position. I have been a member of a County Council for a great many years—though I am not now—and there are many gentlemen present who are members of such bodies. They know that they all go out “neck and crop” if the electors do not like them, but their contracts and everything else go on just the same. The railways do not stop running because the Minister goes out. Their continuity is in their permanent officers, and the Board would need to have permanent officers.

36. *Mr. Langstone.*] Is not the Dairy Association an elective body?—Not to my idea. It has some vicious principles, to my mind, approaching the American nominative system—a sort of nominating the elector. We have a case where the Chairman is casting a vote in the name of the factory, not only against the suppliers but against the directors of the factory. That cannot be considered a Board elected by the producers. But the main objection is that it is cumbersome. You elect a dairy directorate to manage your factory, and their chief concern is to manage the factory. Then the industry has gone in for a whole lot of subsidiary things, like box companies and bacon companies and innumerable other failures, and year after year no vote is cast by the factories.

37. I believe you have made very favourable financial arrangements with the buyers of your produce, as individual factories?—Most excellent. We have no trouble.

38. Do you think they could be improved?—I do not. I cannot conceive of anything better. We have the local agent, who saves us an immense amount of work. He gives us all the information it is possible to get from his principals at Home. I am satisfied we get genuine and complete information. We deal with our produce then on our combined information and own judgment. If we sell we get the best market price. If we consign we can get 100 per cent. on the net value. As a dairy-factory secretary I have on my files sheaves of account sales where there would be a few pounds debit and a few pounds credit. We generally keep it so that there will be a little credit on the lot. The obvious thing is that if you have a permanent credit you have 100 per cent. on the net value, and you get the money immediately. You can either put the documents into your bank, or you can go to the agents and get a cheque. We know where we are and we have no trouble.

39. There never has been any “jockeying” or manipulating with your produce or the prices after it has reached London, to the detriment of the farmers of New Zealand?—It is impossible for me to say. The merchants at Home are human beings. I presume that among them, as in other classes, there may be a certain percentage that are not entirely honourable men, and I am not going to make any suggestions.

40. *The Chairman.*] You have said you cannot answer the question?—I give my opinion.

41. *Mr. Forbes.*—Where did the dissatisfaction come from—because there must be a very strong body of public opinion or dairy-factory opinion behind this Bill? Did they all get the same treatment from the merchants?—I am satisfied they did. I cannot conceive otherwise. There is a large number of firms competing against each other in their endeavour to get our business and giving us the best price they can, and that gives us a fair deal. Their system of competition ensures us the highest market price that is going.

42. What is at the bottom of it? How did the dissatisfaction arise to cause this Bill to be promoted?—A crowd of agitators.

43. They would not agitate without having some reason?—I assure you I know of factory after factory that has been deluded into this by wild statements as to how we are being robbed by Tooley Street. Not one of those statements has ever been proved, and those factories are now opposing the Bill.

44. Is there any means of getting a correct expression of opinion from the factories? Would a vote of all the suppliers give you a better indication whether the suppliers as a whole require the measure or not?—It is the only full and complete way of knowing the mind of the producer.

45. You think that that ought to be taken?—I say it is the only satisfactory way in which you can get at the mind of the producer.