

its present form. I would like to say, however, that in dealing with this Bill we are in a more difficult position than in other places—that is, the position in Otago presents more difficulties than is the case with respect to the bulk of the people in the north, particularly as regards handling—in this way: that in Nelson the issue is practically confined to pip-fruit (namely, apples and pears), whereas in Otago the fruitgrowers include a large percentage who confine their attention to a very large area of stone-fruit. I would like to mention that the quantity of fruit produced in Otago during the seasons 1922–23 and 1923–24 was something in the vicinity of three-quarters of a million cases. I am not quite sure as to the exact quantity, but it was somewhere in that region. However, I think that over 60 per cent. of the total quantity of fruit at present grown in Otago represents stone-fruit, so that the question of representation from Otago with respect to the export section of the Bill must be carefully watched; and I say, speaking for the Otago Fruitgrowers' Council, which practically represents the total exportable quantities of fruit, that it may be taken as a unanimous wish of the Otago Fruitgrowers who are interested in the export section of the Bill that Otago should have one representative of its own. In conclusion, may I say that, in the opinion of the fruitgrowers of Otago, at the present moment there is no necessity for such drastic measures in regard to the export of fruit as is proposed by the Export Control Bill. It may be that the people who are interested in the industry in the north desire this, but I submit that their conditions are different from those existing in the Otago District. We have no desire to prevent them getting either export control or local-market control. Provision is made in the Bill for local control, and a province may say if it wants to come in or stop out, and we claim that it is reasonable for us to ask for the same provision in regard to the export control. I may say that the outstanding factor in regard to the success of overseas shipments is the condition in which the goods arrive in London. That depends upon the grading in New Zealand, and also the manner in which the fruit is carried by the shipping companies. The grading and packing in New Zealand is under the direct supervision of the Government's officials, and they have the last word with respect to the quality of the fruit that is exported, and there can be no doubt that the shipping companies are doing everything in their power to see that the fruit is landed in good condition. I submit that the trade is not sufficiently strong in the meantime to warrant us in committing ourselves to a Dominion-wide Export Control Board. The Bill has led to a good deal of confusion, and has been the means of certain sections endeavouring to sway the opinions of other sections in regard to the Bill. We have a number of instances where districts that have never exported any fruit, and never will do so, are totally opposed to the local-markets section, while they heartily approve of the export section of the Bill. If this sort of thing is going to carry weight in certain directions it means they are going to benefit at somebody else's expense if we are going to encourage export, because the more fruit that goes out of the country the more it will benefit those people. We ask that we be allowed to come in or stop out, as a province, in regard to any Control Bill that may be brought forward.

3. *Mr. Forbes.*] You said that you wanted to have the right to come in or stop out of this local control?—The Export Control Board. As the matter stands, once the Bill is brought into operation we automatically come under the Dominion control scheme, but we are not granted the right to vote, as was the case with the Dairy Control Export Bill. The Bill does not provide that we should have a vote in that respect.

4. How much did you export from Otago to England last year?—We put it down at about forty-two thousand cases.

5. You said that the shipping companies were carrying the fruit satisfactorily?—Yes.

6. Were there no complaints as to the condition of the fruit on arrival?—We received no complaints in that respect. Our shipments to London were in very good condition, and the reports were very good.

7. Did you have a Government guarantee behind you?—Yes, that is so.

8. Are you aware as to whether or not it cost the Government anything?—No.

9. You have an association in your district?—Yes. There are eight associations in the Otago District.

10. Do they control the local market?—No, in the meantime we are interested only in the export trade. We have a very strong Fruitgrowers' Co-operative Association in Dunedin which handles the large bulk of the fruit for the local market. We have our own council, which is a very excellent organization, for the disposal of the whole of the fruit for overseas markets.

11. You are apparently satisfied with what you have got—that is, you do not want this Bill at all?—That is so; but if a clause were embodied in the Bill so that we have the right to vote ourselves in or out of the export control, the same as is granted for the local market, we would prefer that, and it would mean that those who did wish to have the Control Board for the export of their fruit would not be deprived of it; and it may happen that as a result of their experience we may be induced later on to come in under the Dominion scheme.

12. *Mr. Langstone.*] Do you sell your fruit Home on consignment or sell it straight out?—The whole of our fruit went to London this year on consignment.

13. What was the average price you obtained for your fruit?—We have not yet received our returns for the last shipment; but I think the first shipment would realize, on the average, 15s. c.i.f., the second realized about 18s. to 18s. 6d., and the last shipment—although we have not yet the returns available—would average nearly 20s.

14. Do you regard that as a satisfactory price?—Yes, it would have been had it not been for the fact that we lost very heavily on a shipment of fruit which we sent to South America on a c.i.f. sale under control regulations with condition guaranteed at the other end.

15. What does freight work out at per case?—4s. per case.