

exported. Well, we put our fruit through them, but what was the result? Colonel Gray said he thought the charges would come to about 3d. per case, but when our returns came in we found that their charges were approximately 40 per cent., as against the auctioneers' charges of 23 per cent. I can produce such returns if necessary. Naturally, then, it is positively a disaster to some of us. Some of our growers expressed themselves to that effect at our meeting. They said that putting their fruit through the control was disastrous to them, and that they were better off when dealing with the auctioneers. That is why, gentlemen, that meeting of ours went unanimously against control. In our district many of the fruitgrowers have worked up a good private trade in New Zealand, right to the other end, and also down the West Coast. We have worked that trade up, and we do not see why we should lose the benefit of that. We cannot see that this Bill will be of any benefit at all to us, and that is why we have been sent up here. In regard to export control, it is altogether too drastic for us. We do not want export control; we do not believe in it. We want the right to sell our fruit where we like, how we like, and when we like, and let us sink or swim.

3. Do you say you have not met any fruitgrower who is favourable to local control?—I have spoken to possibly fifty or sixty growers, and 90 per cent. of those have not been satisfied with local control. It seems to me that though the local control may be good men at organizing, and that sort of thing, they are not good business men. I will give you an instance. My uncle sent some fruit to Wellington, and put the fruit in their charge. It was taken down and stamped "Fancy" or "Extra Fancy." There were five hundred cases of extra-good apples sent to the cool store and graded. If they had been put in the auctioneer's hands and sold in Wellington they would have realized 5s. 6d. Well, those gentlemen did not know very much about apples, to my mind. Apples need watching very carefully. Well, these apples were left in the stores for six weeks, and then they had to be degraded to put on the market, and they realized from 1s. 9d. to 3s. 2d. That is one of many similar cases. I saw some returns this morning where ten lots had to be degraded. Now, that sort of thing should not happen. They had no right to leave those apples six weeks in store. That sort of thing, it seems to me, is where all the expense is added up, and losses are brought about, and there is practically nothing left for the grower.

4. You think that growers should be allowed to run their own business if they wish?—Certainly so. We have had such a lot of experience of these schemes. We have had these schemes in succession for the last twenty years, and none of them have been any good.

5. *Hon. Mr. Nosworthy.*] This is the last?—Well, we do not want it. Things are better without control. Under control they do not look after our fruit like we do ourselves. We pick it and send it away, and get it sold as quickly as possible. They leave it about until it deteriorates, and cases after cases come back to us: then it is sold at a loss.

6. *Mr. Forbes.*] You think that, apples being such perishable produce, it is better to have the individual grower looking after his own output?—Every time. I grow from six thousand to ten thousand cases a year, and I can look after those cases. I personally see the apples picked and packed, and I send them away and get them on the market as quickly as possible. I say, let every man manage his own output, and look after it, and put it on the market to the best of his ability, and get as good a price as he can.

7. Who are supporting the Bill?—I do not know. We are not. We do not know who is bringing this Bill forward. We are not asking for it down our way.

8. Do you not think that a vote should be taken to indicate the real strength behind it?—Well, I know they do not want the Bill at all.

9. They would vote against it?—They would vote against it in Riwaka, and they would vote against it in Motueka.

10. *Mr. Langstone.*] What is the position in regard to the industry during the last few years—has it been sinking or swimming?—Well, before the war things were very good. Fruitgrowers were then looked upon as being better than the hopgrowers. It is true the fruit realized lower prices, but then the expenses were very much lower in comparison. In the war-time things were very bad. Last season and the year before was very disastrous. Last season I gave away four thousand cases, as there was no market for them.

11. What about this season?—This season has been a very good season. It has been a very favourable season for fruit in our district. The fruit is very clean. It is not always so. If we get a bad season, with a lot of moisture, we get a lot of black spot. We have made some satisfactory shipments, and the market is now very good.

12. *Mr. Corrigan.*] Can you give us any idea, Mr. Rowling, as to the quantity of apples produced in your district?—I cannot go into figures, but I may say that before the war practically all the apples came out of the Riwaka district. Only a few thousands of cases came out of the Motueka district.

13. I was wondering what quantity of apples the meeting represented which you say was held yesterday or the day before?—Well, Mr. Hamilton will be giving his evidence directly, and no doubt he will give you particulars in regard to that meeting.

14. You were telling us just now that you had lost a lot of money in connection with the placing of your fruit on the market: was not that due to lack of control to get the best out of the business?—The control put a price of 5s. 6d. on the apples, but the auctioneers could not get that price for them because the apples were deteriorated, and they had to sell at a lower price.

15. What is the control—that is what I want to get at?—They fix the price.

16. That is, the price-fixing committee; but they really do not take control of the stuff?—They take control of the stuff. They are men going about selling fruit, and if they cannot sell it they fall back on the auctioneers. Colonel Gray told us that up to the end of June they handled sixty-four thousand cases, and out of that total of sixty-four thousand cases they sold thirty-thousand, leaving thirty-four thousand to fall back on the organization, and consequently there was a loss on that lot.