

25. With regard to one district being under control and another not, do you not think that, if this Bill comes into force, it ought to apply to the whole country?—Absolutely—if it does. But my contention is that it is absolutely un-British to force people to do anything like that which is proposed in the Bill. It is absolutely against British nature to be forced and coerced.

26. *Mr. Hawken.*] Are you a partner of the last witness?—Yes.

27. What proportion of the fruit from Nelson is exported from the province?—I could not say.

28. But what is your estimate—just a rough guess?—Well, I should say, about half of it.

29. I mean, sent out of the district for either Dominion consumption or export?—Oh, 95 or 97 per cent., I suppose.

30. What makes you think that local control would be of no service to you?—Absolutely, it would be of no service to us. Local control means that we cannot ship our fruit to Wellington unless the Board comes and tells us that we can. We cannot ship it to Wellington, and we cannot ship it anywhere. We cannot even sell fruit, under this Bill, to any one who comes into the orchard and wants to buy a case of fruit. That often happens. We could not sell it to them without a permit.

31. Did I understand you to say that about 50 per cent. was exported from the country?—Yes, I should say about 50 per cent. is exported out of the country from Nelson. But that is only a guess.

32. Do you understand the working of the Control Boards in connection with meat and butter?—Yes; I have heard of them.

33. Do you understand that they have not taken full control?—I have not taken a great interest in them.

34. Each grower has a perfect right to export so far, and select his own agent so far?—Yes.

35. The only thing that the Board does is to see that the quality is kept up, and arrange for the shipping and the overseas selling?—Yes.

36. Would not that be satisfactory from your point of view?—Well, I think they could do quite a lot in that way—that is to say, in finding out where the markets are, and advising the growers. But when they come to try to handle the whole of the fruit in bulk, as this Bill proposes—well, with an article like fruit, that is absolutely impossible.

37. Of course you understand that powers may be taken in the Bill which are perhaps rather necessary in order to get the growers into it and in order to get satisfactory control. In order to get limited control you must have full control?—Yes, that is right; but then we are up against this all the time—that a man cannot go and extend his business as long as that law is hanging over his head. He cannot go with any confidence and extend his business.

38. Do you not think, if you put good men on the Board, that they will have a reasonable amount of common-sense in that direction? I do not think they would want you to spray your orchard or to pick your fruit without reason?—No, I do not suppose they would.

39. Now, do you not think that it would be of benefit to yourself, and to other large growers, if there was somebody to look after your produce from the time it is shipped until it arrives at Home and is placed on the market?—No, I do not think it would be, because we have that already in connection with the ordinary commercial firms. They can do that, and do it far more efficiently than any Control Board could do it. What I said was that I thought an advisory Board to advise growers as to the shipping and marketing of their produce, could do a lot of good.

40. Do you think it would be wise to have somebody to look after the commercial agents?—Oh, probably.

41. You cannot look after them, can you?—Not myself. But people would not ship through these firms if they had not confidence in them.

42. There is nothing in the Bill restricting the producer in that respect, excepting that he must send his produce through a certain channel?—Oh, yes. If you put it through a certain channel you are restricting your channels.

43. But you can use your own agent—whichever you please. The Control Board sees to your quality, to your shipping, and then overseas that agent of yours?—Yes.

44. It arranges for the shipping and all the various things. I should say that fruit is one of the things that has to be shipped exactly at the right time?—That is right.

45. And in order to get that done there will be on the Board experts who would be in a good position to do that for you?—Oh, yes, if they could arrange that. But they should not have the absolute control over the fruit that this Bill gives.

46. But do you not see that you could not have any system of control without absolute control? What I mean to say is that there would be no force behind the Board unless there was absolute control to be used as a last resource?—Yes. But I do not know that it is a last resource. I think we would be better off without the control at all.

47. Are there not a great many growers who are not in your position, and who cannot look after their interests—the smaller men? Suppose a man produces twenty, thirty, or forty cases: he cannot look after them like you can?—That is right. But there is nothing to prevent a dozen or more of such men combining together in a small group and shipping together.

48. But would it not be better to have one Board to do the work for them?—I think that any grower should have the right to say whether he will employ that Board, or allow any one else to handle his fruit.

49. You would employ an agent, while a number of other growers would employ the Board—and an agent would be appointed to act for the Board?—Yes.

50. It would simplify the marketing of fruit, as far as I can see. Do you not think that would be the effect?—No.

51. I am speaking of export, not of local control?—No. We have tried community packing—and that is what it means—and it has been a dismal failure; it has been an absolute failure.