

and the butter was put exactly underneath, and was melting in the sun. The man apologized, and to remedy this he put a black tarpaulin over the butter. Another case was a shipment of butter by the "Wanaka," which was spoiled. We were going to take the agent to the shipment that came down by the "Takapuna" on another occasion; I went down to the "Takapuna" myself in the morning to see it, and I found it was melting, evidently caused by heat of the steamer's hold. It proved to us that the shipping by the steamer was useless to a very great extent; and that has driven us to the railway. One of our objects is to get the freight reduced. All the settlers up in the Taranaki District think it very hard that flax—a commodity that measures about two and a half times as much as butter—is charged very little more than one-half the rate, the rates being £2 8s. and £1 8s. per ton respectively. It has also been thought necessary by the dairy producers that some person here duly qualified should see that the butter is stowed in the ship in a proper condition. I may say that last year many of the lots that came down here intended for shipment in certain steamers did not go, nor were the consignors aware of that for months afterwards. The butter was put in the Wellington shed, where it remained. It would be quite impossible, I think, for the trains to meet the steamers. For instance, we will say that to-day those connected with the steamers telegraphed to us that a steamer is ready to receive a shipment of butter at a certain time. We get our special night-train to bring it down, and when we get it here we find that there has been a hitch in the interim, and the butter cannot be put on board, and it gets heated. I have been informed by the Shaw-Savill agents that it is impossible at any time to say with certainty when the stuff can be put on board any one particular ship. Special storage is therefore absolutely necessary. I see no other remedy at all. If butter is once heated it is spoiled. It does not matter if it be for only ten minutes. If it reaches a certain temperature all our trouble and care is wasted. The heat always liquifies the butter and destroys it. With regard to the question of the appointment of experts for the classification of butter, I was desired more particularly by the meeting held at Stratford the other day to bring it before the Committee—the question of the Government appointing experts to classify the butter, as is done on the Continent, and in Ireland particularly. It is believed that it would stimulate the makers to produce a better article, and that no bad butter that now goes forward frozen would be put upon the London market with damaging effect to the good article. We have found many shipments of good butter mixed up with inferior, thus depreciating the value of the whole parcel. If these experts could be appointed it would also be of very great advantage in our intercolonial trade with Australia, for then the merchant or producer would have to sell his butter at a certain standard. At the present time, being a large producing district, we sell our butter as "prime" free on board. This particular instance occurred to me last year: We sold a large parcel for Melbourne. We took expert certificates in Taranaki that the butter was prime. We put it on board, according to our contract, and it arrived in Melbourne on a falling market. They got experts there to prove that it was not prime, and our solicitors inform us that we have no remedy against them. This state of things is a loss of tens of thousands of pounds to us every year. The idea would be to brand the good butter as of first-, second-, and third-rate quality.

172. You say that liquification takes place and the butter is ruined?—Yes.

173. Assuming that your butter was graded in Taranaki, and during its progress to the steamer and at the Harbour Board wharf here it was exposed and ruined by the sun, would it not render your grading useless?—Yes; I would not have contemplated grading at Taranaki, but at the final port of shipment.

174. But at the port of shipment, at what period of the day?—It would be, I suppose, in a cool-shed. There would be no danger if put from there into the steamer. I am aware that this is a very important point in many ways, and it has occurred to me whether even grading in New Zealand at all was possible on that account, or whether it should not be graded by an expert when it reached London. It is a matter for the Committee to deal with. There is something to be said on both sides, in this way: that if butter happened to spoil going Home which was certified to here as being of first-, second-, or third-rate quality, it would militate against the New Zealand experts. I may say that the butter-makers are strong on the point of grading.

175. *Mr. Marchant.*] I would ask you whether, to meet that difficulty, it might not only be possible but very desirable that butter should be graded here, and inspected and confirmed at the other end?—Yes, I believe that could be done, and it would probably be a very good plan to adopt, at any rate for twelve months, until confidence was placed in the experts in New Zealand.

176. That would have the effect of preventing any butter which ultimately turned out to be only second or third class going on the English market with the New Zealand first-class brand on it?—Yes.

177. It would therefore be a distinct gain in this way: that our first-class brands would become established as really reliable?—Yes, it would have that effect.

178. *The Chairman.*] I assume that the wish of the people you represent in Taranaki is to insure that no bad butter—butter radically bad in manufacture—should leave the port of shipment branded as of good quality?—Yes, except being branded as of inferior quality. There is no doubt about that.

179. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] Do you not think that one parcel of butter might be branded as first class and another as second class, and, owing to some circumstance occurring during the voyage, the second-class butter might arrive in London in exactly as good a state as that branded first class?—That is really the point—whether grading in London should not be adopted. I would not advocate grading in London, but I think the point should be considered. There is little difficulty with inspection in London.

180. What influence would any grading in London have upon the buyer?—In the London market the buyer, I believe, does not question the grading at all. The Irish butter goes into the market, and is simply sold as first, second, or third class. Possibly the buyers never see the samples of any particular line. It would be bought just as wheat or any other grain is purchased.