

Mr. Were reports in part as follows :—

Creamery Butter.—The general standard of quality of our butter, judged by examination of many brands from all over New Zealand, is sound from a present-day commercial viewpoint, with a seller's market. Its uniform quality is appreciated by merchants, and many reliable and experienced people in the provision trade do not hesitate to quote it as the best butter imported into Britain to-day.

While it is gratifying to hear favourable comment on our produce, it is necessary to keep a constant check on condition and quality of our goods. I am of the opinion that the flavour of much of our butter would be made more attractive by the exercise of greater care when neutralizing cream. Some of our butter, though commercially fairly sound, may be described as insipid, flat, neutral, and occasionally alkaline in flavour. The best definition of such butter which comes to my mind is "overprocessed," thereby removing much of the desirable character we expect to find in top grade.

There is no valid reason for our butter to contain less than 1·5 per cent. of salt, but care must be taken to avoid harsh flavours because of its excessive use. It is preferable to have too little rather than too much salt in butter. I am informed that 40 per cent. of our butter is handled by patting-factories and is distributed to retailers in the form of $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. pats. Some of these patting plants show a useful overrun by adding salt to suit the requirements of different districts. Public taste for salt content of butter is by no means uniform in Britain, and I consider this to be a sound reason for not patting butter in New Zealand for this market. In my opinion, the patting of all butter for United Kingdom trade should be carried out in Britain so that the taste for salt in different districts may be catered for.

Whey Butter.—There is a much wider range of quality in this commodity than should exist. Before the war, when whey butter was used exclusively for manufacturing purposes, its quality was of less importance than at present. Recently, when the stock of butter was low, whey butter in its original form was issued to the public for table use. The Ministry was obliged to adopt this measure to honour the ration. Normally whey butter is used in a blend, the ratio being five creamery to one whey, and sold as national butter. The quality of such blended butter depends largely on the quality of whey butter used in the mix.

Therefore it should be recognized how necessary it is to raise the general standard of quality of whey butter.

Cheese.—Under present conditions of bulk stowage in warehouses, where crates are often piled ceiling high, it is not possible to examine and report on as many individual brands as we were accustomed to do when crates were stowed to brand, grade, colour, &c. Many more cheese are examined than our reports indicate, but it is considered inadvisable to report on single cheese unless some outstanding feature is associated with it. Viewing the position from the Ministry's angle, I see no advantage in stowing to marks while the need for rationing continues. The extra expense of stowing to brands would be considerable and the return for such extra expenditure nil.

The average quality of New Zealand cheese has been fairly well maintained. What little flavour our cheese possess is fairly sound, but it may almost be described as a negative quality, chiefly because of immaturity. Bitter flavours have been less prevalent this season than last, but there is a greater tendency to slittiness; this blemish is not serious, but is sufficiently noticeable to merit comment.

At present and for some time past cheese has been distributed for consumption almost immediately on arrival here, and the result has been that New Zealand cheese has not reached its best condition for eating.

Cheshire-type Cheese.—A goodly proportion of special cheese on arrival here resembled Cheddars more closely than Cheshires, but this does not mean that the quality is poor and the cheese unsaleable. On the contrary, though the quality of some has been disappointing, the cheese have had a ready sale and have mostly been the subject of favourable comment from the trade.

With few exceptions, flavours have been reasonably sound, with that comparatively sharp lactic taste which appeals to the palate of so many people in Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, and north Wales. Bodies of many have been inclined to rub smooth and Cheddar-like, and, in my judgment, this is the chief fault. Texture shows considerable improvement on some of the early trials, and in this respect many bear a close resemblance to home-produced Cheshires.

It is desirable that bigger shipments of this type of cheese should arrive here early in the season and fade out as the season advances. From the end of September to early March home-produced Cheshires are scarce, and this is the period when specials from New Zealand would be most acceptable. Home-produced Cheshires account for from 20 per cent. to 75 per cent. of the cheese distribution in the Cheshire-cheese area from March to September. Large consignments of New Zealand specials arriving here during the English manufacturing season may be regarded with disfavour and upset the balance of supply.

Distribution.—The Ministry of Food releases supplies in accordance with registration permits to the Butter and Cheese Association, Ltd. (B.A.C.A.L.). This organization passes the goods over to number one suppliers, who, in turn, distribute to the wholesale trade and thence to the retailer.

With dairy-produce in short supply, trade and consumer opinion on quality is difficult to assess. I have not heard of any complaint about the general quality of our butter and cheese, but that does not mean that our products have reached the peak of perfection, which should always be our aim.