

43. How many would require new premises to-morrow if the regulations were enforced?—I could not say.

44. Would it run into 10 per cent.?—About that.

45. Would not some slight alterations get over the difficulty?—I believe every dairyman will do everything he possibly can. There were many anxious to do something, but the regulations were not out; consequently they were at a standstill all last winter.

46. If the regulations were introduced in a reasonable spirit the cost to your district would not be a serious one?—No.

THURSDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER, 1908.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER.

The Hon. R. McNab made the following statement:—

A statement has been made by a witness that the owner of a dairy in the Christchurch district applied to have his dairy inspected and that an inspection had not been made. The witness supplied me with the name of the dairyman. I have made inquiries into the case, and this is the reply I have received from the Inspector in charge at Christchurch: "The dairy of ——— was inspected on the 13th of April, 25th of June, and the 18th inst. On all occasions it was found to be in a clean condition. The dairyman had applied to have his dairy reregistered this year, and on complying with proposed additions to the premises and race leading up to the shed, which he is agreeable to carry out, will be granted the license."

HENRY ERNEST CAREY, Dairy-farmer, Lower Hutt, examined. (No. 13.)

Mr. Carey made the following statement:—

I would like to say that, as far as I am concerned, I am speaking solely as a man engaged in the producing of milk for the city supply. I have nothing whatever to do with supplying factories. The difficulties I have to contend against are common to any one supplying Wellington. We have to rent highly priced leasehold land. The position I take up in regard to the proposed regulations I embodied in the following letter I sent to the Hon. the Minister for Agriculture on the 28th July last. I received a reply from him saying he had forwarded it to the Committee. The letter is as follows:—

"As you have often expressed your wish to have the views of those interested in supplying milk to the public as regards the proposed new regulations to govern the dairy industry, we trust this letter needs no apology.

"We wish to draw your attention to one or two facts, and to submit one or two suggestions.

"1. On the 31st March last all existing licenses for dairies (or, at any rate, dairy farms) expired, and, as the whole of the old regulations applied to "licensed" premises, they have been legally of no effect during the last four months.

"2. In the four months referred to your departmental officers have publicly stated that efforts are being made by farmers in practically every direction to improve the surroundings in which milk is produced, and (in some cases, at all events) the herds from which it is obtained.

"We suggest, therefore, that there be no gazetted set of regulations issued for the control of the industry; that the question of allowing milk to be sold for human consumption from any dairy-farm be left entirely to the discretion of the Dairy Inspector for the district, with, of course provision for appeal from his decision. We refer to the method of this appeal later on. As you are aware, particularly near Wellington, configuration of country, alteration of suburban land to grazing sites, and consequent questions of land-values, &c., makes it almost impossible to fix a code of regulations that will justly apply to each and all.

"To an Inspector these considerations may be explained, and his assistance sought as to the best manner of attaining to the standard of excellence necessary before a farm may be licensed for producing milk for a town supply. Some of the Inspectors, at all events, have had practical experience of what may be termed the business difficulties of dairy-farming, and given such an Inspector, we feel that every dairyman in his district would consider his decision on what conditions must obtain on any farm much juster and more likely to meet difficulties of individual farms than any attempt to enforce a rigid set of regulations.

"We are aware, of course, that this is apparently putting a good deal of power in the hands of an Inspector, and yet, after all, if the new gazetted regulations are to be effective, as much power must be given to the Inspector to enforce them, and he will have no power to modify any one of them even where his knowledge of individual difficulties might commend such modification to his judgment. We are equally aware, too, that in the hands of an unscrupulous Inspector favouritism might be possible. We mentioned previously that some means of appeal from the Inspector's decision should be available. We suggest that such appeal be made to the Government Veterinarian of the district, and for these reasons: The difference of opinion, were it not frivolous, can be practically only regarding a question of hygiene of premises or health of stock. With all due respect to the Inspectors, they are only laymen like ourselves. Their opinion on the two points we mention is therefore as liable to error as is our own. Further, we understand that neither dairy-inspection nor the Inspectors are under the control of the Veterinary staff, and the decision of a Veterinarian would be therefore absolutely unbiassed towards either party, and would be final on any points of hygiene of buildings or health of stock. We think there is some such appeal to a Veterinarian allowed as regards stock proposed to be condemned under the Stock Act. According to Press reports, the only appeal from an Inspector's decision proposed in the new regulations now under consideration of the Government is to his superior officer. This we think unfair to the dairyman and to the officer who has to hear the appeal. His natural inclination will be, and perhaps rightly, to stand by his subordinate, and that he would do so would be the opinion held by most who had a conflict of opinion with an Inspector.