

farms, and a great many of them have also the qualification as dairy-factory managers. Since their appointment they have undergone a short course of training, and a second class is now in Wellington, the object being to bring them up to one standard of action. They are not uncontrolled even then. One hears it said here that such-and-such a thing is left to the sweet will of the Inspector. That is not so. The Dairy Inspector is immediately assisted by the local Stock Inspector. Then the Dairy Inspector is absolutely under the control of the Inspector in Charge, and the Inspector in Charge again deals with me, and the administration is carried out on the lines approved by the departmental and ministerial chiefs of the Department of Agriculture; so that an inspector going off on a wild career of his own is impossible. A man might do a wild thing once, but it would not occur again. The general idea in carrying out the regulations was that it would not be in any shape coercive. Tactful assistance and advice has been the guiding line from the very commencement. And I believe it will be found generally that it will be carried out on these lines. I should feel exceedingly gratified if in five years' time we find an obvious improvement in the general condition of the dairies supplying the factories. If we can do anything in that time we should be satisfied. If we do it in less time it would lead to hardship. If we see what line the Department has taken in other cases and see no indication of hardship, there is greater proof that it will be carried out in a tactful manner. Take the Rabbit and Noxious Weeds Acts. If we carried these out to the letter every man owning land would be continually in trouble. The regulations are not to be acted up to, but the widest discretion is allowed, and that is in the way of assistance, not coercion. Since 1901 the Department has controlled the supervision of milk for human consumption. It is admitted by the community generally that considerable improvements have been made in that direction, and that has been done, I can assure you, with a very minimum of coercion. The suppliers of milk for city consumption are 1650, and the total number of prosecutions for that number since 1901 has been 259, an average of 37 per annum. Of these 37 yearly prosecutions, 9 or 10 have been in connection with registrations, other 8 or 9 have been for adulteration of milk. These were quite apart from sanitation conditions: they were wilful. This leaves eighteen prosecutions which might come about under these regulations—that is, in connection with sanitation. Now, this sits pretty lightly on the people when not one-fourth of 1 per cent. have come before the Courts under prosecution by this Department. It may be fairly admitted that the grade of milk for human consumption has been improved with a minimum of coercion. From the questions put to many people here one would imagine that these regulations may become harassing. When you consider the proportion I have named this can be hardly understood. If these regulations come into force we shall protect 90 per cent. of suppliers who endeavour to comply with the Act, and whom we should endeavour to assist. There would be 5 or 7 per cent. we should have to push along, and not 3 per cent. would be put to any serious expense. The regulations were wanted. We speak about the backblocks districts, where so many hardships might apply. I know a backblocks district, and when they tell me in Taranaki they can bring in milk it makes me think of the northern cases. I know dairymen who can only take in cream. They are in a worse position than any dairymen I know, and in spite of that they make a fairly good living. I have seen women and children milking in log yards in the early and late part of the season. The misery of it at these seasons is incalculable. Is it supposed that the regulations, even coming in in their more drastic form—that any one with ordinary common-sense would apply them under these conditions, which would have the effect of driving the farmers off the farms? If regulations come before us which may appear drastic, there is that great factor of common-sense and public opinion which prevents their misuse. The short lease, no doubt, offers a great difficulty. We have to meet that with great care. There are two places in my mind where to try and force the farmers to comply with the regulations would simply force them to give up the business. There is, at the same time, another factor which must not be lost sight of. If these people are supplying milk for human consumption, if they are doing it under conditions which endanger public health, we may have to step in. The public health must be considered before the supplier's interest. So in the case of supplying the factory. The milk from one or two places is injuring that of the whole. There the Department has to step in and strike hard and stop that. I am not supposing that the inspectors are going about as dumb dogs. They are going about as reasonable, discreet men. They have to hold the balance. I claim we have done that fairly satisfactorily. It was suggested that the city and factory suppliers should be separated. This is becoming more and more difficult. Wellington to-day is drawing its supply from sixty miles from the city. Some send it to the factory as well as to the city. It is very difficult to disassociate the two. Further, I take it that the factory-supply should come up to the city-supply. One is required to be as pure as the other, only we should be much longer in bringing up the factory-supply to that of the city. A much longer time would naturally be required. The only other question is that of appeal. The appeal I would recommend, the one that appears most desirable, is that to the Stipendiary Magistrate's Court. In the Rabbit Act of 1882 the Inspector's opinion decided the matter. Then it was "to the satisfaction of the Inspector." This was altered in 1901, when the case was decided on its merits by the evidence before the Court, as provided in the ordinary course of law. That would be better than setting up a separate Board, which would require considerable machinery, and the decision of which could not be made final.

1. *Mr. Okey.*] Where was this meeting held that suggested a tax of 6d. a head?—Dunedin.

2. Was the suggestion of 5s. made at Palmerston?—The statement was somewhat open, that it would be about 5s.

3. From your knowledge of farmers do you not think there would be great objection to a cow-tax?—The question of taxing you should put past me: it is a question more of policy than administration.

4. But you can give an opinion?—Naturally we all object to taxation.

5. Most of your inspectors were appointed from factory-managers, were they not?—Yes, but they have the farm experience as well.