

that is, for seven years—and, although having practically had nothing to do with dairies supplying milk to creameries and butter-factories, my attention has been almost exclusively directed to those suppliers supplying milk direct for human consumption to the cities and boroughs. At the present time in Otago the position roughly is this: There are between 1,100 and 1,200 registered dairies—that is, supplying milk direct for human consumption. They range from one cow up to dairy herds of considerable magnitude. I should say that the gross number of cows of these dairies is between ten and eleven thousand. The old regulations, some people say, bristled with the opinion of the Inspector. Inasmuch as the whole world had been endeavouring to do something to provide the consumer with pure milk, the question of defining that by law was such an indefinite thing. No doubt the original regulations bristled with the opinion of the Inspector, and consequently a very great responsibility rested upon the official administering the same, he having to protect the consumer and at the same time to guard against any undue oppression to the supplier. Now, gentlemen, the position, so far as my evidence will be concerned, is that while endeavouring to carry out these duties, I had to do what was right to the consumer without injuring the supplier. During these seven years there has been in Otago extremely little friction—in fact, I should say the friction in Otago during that period has been practically nil. I believe that abundant evidence can be produced from both consumer and supplier that, although the conditions are not perfect yet by any means, we have nevertheless achieved a very great deal indeed. The condition of these cowsheds and the intelligent management of cattle, I say, has improved very much indeed during these seven years. The question might be asked how these improved conditions were obtained. Well, with any official approaching his duties with the honest endeavour to do what is right between the two sets of people—that is, the supplier and the consumer—I admit that a very great deal of tact has been necessary. I may tell you this, gentlemen, that, while I admit that the tact and consideration is perhaps the leading point, this must not be forgotten: Times do arise when there is a dispute that cannot be amicably settled, and the person with whom the difference of opinion arises is absolutely and clearly wrong, then, after giving him due and fair notice, I have never hesitated once, when all other means had failed, to enforce the provisions of the regulations in the Magistrate's Court. I take it the position is this: that when it comes to sound argument, if the point which is a reasonable request is absolutely refused and no reasonable understanding can be arrived at, it would be weakness on the part of the official to do otherwise—in fact, he cannot ignore the laws that are laid down for his guidance. Since the regulations came into force in 1901, a little over seven years ago, only thirty-five informations have been laid in Otago. Of these, one-third were purely of a technical nature—namely, for failing to register dairies—while another fourth of the balance was for offences under the public health laws for adulterating milk, &c.; leaving only sixteen informations, which might really be termed “offences under the Dairy Regulations.” I might mention also that I have given the question of regulations a good deal of thought. First of all, are these regulations really necessary? I have thought the thing out from all points of view. The Dairy Industry Act of 1898 provides for everything contained in these proposed regulations. The Act is brief and very much to the point, and it provides for a very large penalty indeed for an offence. The maximum penalty is £50. These proposed regulations, which are the outcome of experience, are of very great assistance in this way. Take the new ones, for example. They set a standard which is higher than we are able to attain at present, but which is a good standard to keep in view and work up to. For example, a dairy might not be all that is desired at present, but if the farmer would keep the place in as sanitary a condition as possible, he would not be compelled to commence any elaborate alterations until next season. He might say, “I intend to build a new byre,” and the Department would assist him in every way in the selection of a site, supplying him with plans, and giving him any other information to guide him in spending his money wisely. Another point in favour of these regulations is that they secure a uniform standard throughout the Dominion. Secondly, they are a standard that we are steadily working towards, and hope to accomplish at some future day. Thirdly, by these regulations the farmer knows exactly how far the Department can ask him to go. Putting all these points together they demonstrate on broad lines that with solid judgment and sound common-sense the result cannot fail to be beneficial to all concerned. I think, if we can go cautiously forward with these regulations, without causing any great harm or undue severity to the supplier, and if we take them from a broad point of view, and endeavour to administer them with care, that in a few years' time the condition of our dairy industry will be a long way ahead of what it is to-day.

*The Chairman:* Do you wish to say anything, Mr. Okey?

3. *Mr. Okey.*] Did you find that the regulations in Otago took considerable time to be given effect to?—Yes. We are still steadily going ahead.

4. Did you find the dairymen were generally willing to comply with the regulations?—Yes. Sometimes when it was a question of building new premises time had to be given. When a cowshed is delapidated, it is much better for the official, if he can arrange amicably with the farmer to keep his place as clean as he can during the current season.

5. And there is another matter—using the dairy-cart for other purposes. Is there really any harm in using the cart for any other purpose so long as it is cleaned out?—I take it this way, sir, that in framing regulations you have got to frame them to meet extreme cases, and in drawing up regulations it is just as well to provide the machinery for an aggravated case. Supposing this clause was not there at all. I have heard of some very aggravated cases indeed, and had such power not been provided, the offender might go scot-free.

6. One man might use his dairy-cart for ordinary farm purposes, and keep it clean, where another man might use it and not keep it clean. Would it not be difficult for you to proceed against one man and not against the other?—It requires very great discretion.

*The Chairman:* Do you wish to ask any questions, Mr. Witty?