

have the merchant prosecuted? If the merchant's reputation is to be based on the samples, the samples should be taken in his presence or in the presence of his agent, and before the goods pass from his control. With regard to the certificate, I would just point out that it does not really affect the larger seed merchants who deal in larger parcels so much as it does the retail seller of seeds. The bulk of the trade of the retail seed-merchant is done in small parcels, and he sends out a very large number of small parcels in the course of a day. I have heard of some men who handle two hundred lines or more in a day, and if all those details have to be filled in the certificate for each order, then, gentlemen, it means far more work than you imagine. It would mean adding to the staff of the man who does that trade and adding to the expense of conducting the trade, and, of course, the inevitable result would be the adding of the cost on to the seed to the farmer. With regard to the locality, I would suggest that it would be sufficient if the merchant declared on his invoice where the seed was actually imported from—whether colonial or imported. All the seed that is used in the Dominion is either one or the other. As you all know, a large quantity, particularly of rye-grass, is grown locally; practically all the cocksfoot is grown here; some fescue, a large quantity of cow-grass, and a good deal of white clover is grown in the country. Merchants like to use the local seed because they find that on the whole the quality and germination are excellent; but when you come to import seeds—and the great bulk of our seeds of other descriptions have to be imported from Europe or America—it is practically impossible for the merchant to say where that seed was originally grown. England imports an enormous quantity of clover-seeds from the Continent, and both England and the Continent import from America; and when things are bad in America the trade is all the other way. Sometimes seed goes from Europe to America, and sometimes from America to Europe; and it would be practically impossible for the merchant to give any information which would be of the least service to the farmer. With regard to the germination tests, some mention was made of testing in flannel, and in regard to that I have only to remark that it is a very unreliable test with regard to many seeds, because I have been told by one man who made experiments that there are some flannels of a certain description which will absolutely kill the seeds. There are some classes of seed that are very difficult to grow under artificial tests: nothing but subjecting them to the course of nature will inform you what the germination points are. I can assure you, Mr. Chairman and gentleman, that the only desire of the seed trade in approaching you is to put before you the practical difficulties in the way of conducting the trade that would be brought about by the passing of this Bill in the form in which it has been printed, and we feel sure that we can safely leave it to your judgment to see that the conditions are made fair not only for the farmer but also for the merchant; and in closing I would desire to say that the one feature of the Bill that the merchants feel would render it impossible to carry on the business with safety is that clause which gives the farmer power to draw samples, at the risk of the merchant, after the seed has passed from the seller's control. If that clause became law I for one would not feel safe in carrying on the business and would have to take up something else. I am sure that the farmers do not want anything which is going to inflict hardship on any traders in the country, or otherwise provide a hardship for himself, because if anything is to be done which would inflict a hardship on the seed-merchant it will recoil on the farmer.

3. *Mr. Hall.*] You heard Mr. Shirtcliffe say that the machinery collected in New Zealand for cleaning is probably superior to that in any other part of the world. Is it your opinion that the machinery used for seed-cleaning in New Zealand would be absolutely sure to eradicate the weeds, as provided for in the Bill?—I do not think that any machinery would take out the last weed, but I agree that there is no finer machinery for that purpose anywhere in the world than in New Zealand—it has been perfected to such an extent.

4. You think that the trader would be absolutely safe in sending out seed according to the Bill by using this machinery?—Yes, I do not think there is any difficulty about that.

5. This Bill provides that the grower of seeds may sell to another, but he has no liability the same as the merchant that his seeds should be absolutely pure. According to this Bill he has a privilege in that respect. Do you not think it will have the effect of throwing the trade wholly into the hands of the merchant as between the merchant and buyer?—The farmers can still sell to each other if they choose. Of course, a good deal of dirty seed is exchanged in that way between farmers, who would do better to send it to town and get it cleaned.

6. You say there might be unscrupulous farmers who might place you in a serious position?—That is so.

7. And if that was provided against you would be satisfied with the Bill?—Yes, with the modifications mentioned by Mr. Shirtcliffe.

8. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You have a copy of the Bill?—Yes.

9. Well, look at clause 3: Supposing two farmers met together, one wants to buy and one to sell, and they do not agree that the seed is sold for some purpose other than sowing—they simply buy and sell without any agreement. The purchaser then proceeds to sow what he bought. Does he then come under the penalties of clause 7?—I would refer you to the Minister for that, sir. If I were Minister of Agriculture I could answer it very quickly.

10. *Mr. Field.*] On the subject of germination, you say there is no germination test sufficient unless it is of Nature's forces?—I say, with regard to certain seeds. Of course, there are some seeds, like turnips and clover seeds, where the germination test is comparatively simple, but when you get into fescue, meadow, foxtail, and some other seeds it is a difficult thing.

11. I understood from Mr. Shirtcliffe that you very often buy on cable on germination tests of samples?—As a matter of fact I always specify as regards samples before I buy. I do not think I have ever bought on germination tests. In regard to turnip-seeds, we always deal with one good house we have dealt with for years. We test it when we get it, but we are sure they will send us stuff that is up to the mark. We have never had any trouble with them.