

102. Do you think that these agents have had any considerable influence with the factories?—They have had considerable influence in some quarters unquestionably. I think that they have been largely responsible for the opposition.

103. Especially in Taranaki?—Yes, very especially in Taranaki.

104. You are of the clear opinion that these agents are opposing the Bill in spite of the fact that some of their principals are in favour of it, and that they are influencing the factories to oppose the Bill?—That is so.

105. I will put it this way: If it were not for the influence of the proprietary factories, and the influence of these agents, there would not be any considerable opposition to the Bill?—That is so. There would be practically no opposition to the Bill.

106. Do not these agents have a good deal of influence, especially with the smaller factories?—I think so.

107. With respect to those factories who have considered the Bill apart from that influence, do you think that they are practically in favour of the Bill?—Almost entirely so.

108. Do you think that the Bill will seriously affect the livelihood of those agents?—It might affect the interests of some of them, but for those who are honestly serving the industry there is no reason that they should expect that they will be put out. It is a question of service. They must legitimately serve the industry.

109. Is it not a fact that some of these agents receive very large salaries?—Yes, quite substantial sums.

110. About what do you think they receive?—Well, before this control question was raised several of them said that they got 1 per cent. of the 2½ per cent. that we pay on the consignments. Since this controversy has been going on, however, they have said that they only get ½ per cent. But that ½ per cent. is a very considerable item, and, as I have stated, they said that they were getting 1 per cent. before the Bill was brought forward.

111. What would ½ per cent. on the New Zealand output amount to?—Well, ½ per cent. on £16,000,000 is £80,000.

112. What is the largest amount shipped to any particular merchant in Tooley Street?—I do not know exactly what is dealt with by each merchant, even if it is worked out on ½-per-cent. basis throughout the country.

113. How many of these agents are there operating in New Zealand?—I do not know because there are what may be termed subsidiary agents, and we have in New Zealand secretaries of dairy factories amongst the subsidiary agents, and are connected with the matter in some way.

114. *Hon. Mr. Nosworthy.*] I take it, Mr. Grounds, that you are satisfied as a consequence of your having travelled round the country and having had a full opportunity of judging the position for yourself that you are aware of the number who are in favour of the Bill and will accept it without any alterations?—Yes.

115. Independent of any criticism that may be levelled outside or inside they are satisfied with the Bill?—A very large majority in the industry is in favour of it.

116. You are aware of the fact that there has been a great deal of latitude allowed to discuss the question before the special Committee set up last Parliament and before this one, and that there has been a great deal of evidence given by those interested in the matter in the Dominion, and also by London representatives?—That is so.

117. No Bill has ever had the analysis that this one has had?—That is so.

118. The Meat Control Bill which was passed and is in operation at the present time did not have the analysis that this Bill has had?—That is so.

119. You think that it will be in the interests of the whole industry to have two organizations to work in conjunction with each other to consider the position with respect to the carriage of dairy-produce and meat?—That is so.

120. You are satisfied, Mr. Grounds, that both inside and outside there is no further evidence necessary, and that the majority of the farmers supporting this Bill will be quite satisfied what the verdict of the House will be?—I am quite satisfied of that.

121. With regard to the statement made by the Prime Minister at Stratford it can only be interpreted in this way: that it was what the majority of the country desired?—That is so.

122. I cannot interpret it in any other way, and no other interpretation can be implied than that the majority are in favour of it?—We think so.

123. That is the only sound construction that can be placed upon the remarks?—That is so.

124. *Mr. Field.*] You have been addressing meetings throughout the country, have you not?—Yes.

125. Why did you not meet with better success in North Taranaki?—Unfortunately, I did not go to the first meeting in Taranaki. I may say that I asked if I could go, and I was told that it was not necessary and that they could carry on there all right as there were five of them, and as a result I did not go.

126. I understood that you went to Stratford twice?—No, once. I had been to New Plymouth the previous year—that is, when the Bill was before the House last year, and it was then that the resolution was passed referring the matter back to the factories. That was the meeting at Stratford. When I went there the representatives had already been committed—that is to say, they had received their instructions how to vote. Half a dozen of the representatives said they were satisfied when they knew what was the position, but their hands were tied, and the same thing applied at Palmerston North, and they did not agree with their instructions after they heard the full explanation of the position. I feel convinced myself that wherever the matter has been fully and frankly explained to the suppliers they are agreed with what is contained in the Bill.