

4. You are authorized to speak on behalf of them?—I am not authorized to speak on behalf of all of them; but all these factories have approved of the Bill, and have at times signified their approval.

5. What proportion of the factories down there do you represent?—I represent fifty-four factories in Otago and Southland. I can claim that the opposition can only bring in sixteen factories opposed to the Bill, and seven out of that sixteen are proprietary factories. There has been a very strong feeling in favour of the Bill in Southland during the last six or twelve months. When the Bill was before the Committee last time I was here representing seventeen factories in favour of it. Since then a good number have come in, and some that were opposed to the Bill then are to-day in favour of it. I put in a telegram from the Woodlands Factory. Last time the chairman was up here and opposed the Bill, but my telegram to-day is from the chairman in favour of the Bill.

6. *Mr. Masters.*] We had a director giving evidence against it?—Yes; a director of that factory was here opposing the Bill, but not on behalf of his own factory—on behalf of several other factories. I can claim to be able to say that the feeling in the South has gone strongly in favour of the Bill. We have had every chance to consider the Bill. It has not been rushed on the people. For the last twelve months we have been negotiating for the purchase of a cool store at the Bluff, and in these negotiations we have had to meet suppliers and shareholders of different factories, and the feeling has got stronger in favour of the Bill. At a meeting held at Winton sixty dairymen were present when this Bill was explained by Mr. Adam Hamilton, after which a motion was carried in favour of the Bill, with only one dissentient. The Southland executive of the Farmers' Union has on several occasions carried resolutions supporting the Bill, and at the meetings of the branches of the union I have never yet heard any one oppose the Bill. The Southland gentlemen who opposed the Bill said a good deal about what the proprietary factories were doing in Taranaki. That was the man who was representing the factories opposed to the Bill, but I noticed that he made no mention of the different conditions—the conditions with which he was familiar with in the South, where he and I come from. We have in Invercargill two proprietary factories, and last year a movement was organized by the suppliers who were discontented and they started a co-operative factory. This factory was opened by the New Year time last year, and it opened with 800 suppliers, and most of those were drained from the two proprietary factories. Here is a telegram from the chairman of that factory strongly supporting the Dairy Control Bill: "Directors Farmers' Dairy Federation (Limited), Invercargill, representing eight hundred cream-suppliers unanimously approve Dairy Control Bill.—Fisher, Chairman." This shows the conditions and feeling about which the Southland gentleman who gave evidence against the Bill could have spoken, but he dealt with a portion of the country of which he knows nothing. I feel that the conditions in the South are not similar to those in some other parts of the Dominion. I was present when some of the witnesses were giving evidence, and I was surprised to hear one witness say that they were giving their buildings, plant, and property as security against advances. We in the South know of no other security to be given against advances than butter and cheese. I have never heard of anything else being given. I would point out that the Board would have just the same security as the individual factories have to-day. One Taranaki witness said that the dairy-farmers are not in the same position as the meat men were when the Meat Control Bill was put through for them. I grant that they are not, but I would ask what has taken place in Taranaki. In the South the farmers are feeling the pressure, and a number have left their farms, and there are others whose position is not to be envied. They are not in a good way at all.

7. *Mr. Masters.*] They have too high-priced land?—Yes, possibly. They must get all they can out of it, and I think they would get more out of it under this Bill. Quite a good deal of capital was made out of the vote-taking in Dunedin. Without fear of contradiction I would say that the vote was taken by the strongest opponent to the Bill, Mr. Agar. He emphasized that they would demand a secret ballot. It has been shown by that vote that there were more votes recorded than there were factories in the South. Every factory over a certain tonnage has two votes, but where the one vote stops and the two votes begin I cannot say. They demanded a secret ballot, which was taken, and the result was eighty-nine for the Bill and thirty-six against. That is how it came about, and it was no fault of any one's. The opposition were clamouring for it, and they got it. I feel that the farmers in Southland were never more unanimous on any point than they are to-day on this question. I have here a telegram from the chairman of the Maitua Dairy Factory, who opposed the Bill. He says, "Still maintain that South Island Dairy Association should be only controlling body for South Island with full legal powers arranging levy insurance intelligence department factory retaining right to market own produce." He is different to quite a number of others in the North, who are objecting. He is not antagonistic to the association, as are some of the men in the North. I have heard statements made that are not very flattering to the National Dairy Association, but there is nothing like that feeling in the South. We are quite satisfied they are doing all they can, with their powers. On behalf of the factories which I am representing, I ask that the Bill be not thrown into the harbour, as some witnesses have suggested. We ask that it should be taken up and passed into law.

8. *Mr. Forbes.*] Is the South Island Dairy Association in favour of the Bill?—Yes; they have not passed a resolution for presentation to this particular Committee, but they did for the last Committee, and their attitude has not changed.

9. Are they represented here?—There is one member of the South Island Dairy Association present.

10. Is he here to give evidence?—No.

11. Is it not surprising that the South Island Dairy Association is not taking a prominent part in the controversy?—They are taking a prominent part in it: they are in favour of it.

12. Are they travelling round advocating the Bill and addressing the suppliers?—No, they have not addressed any suppliers at factories.