

No doubt this objective may be eventually attained, but for some years to come it is evident that the advantages to be gained by concentrating fruit-shipments at Wellington, and thereby securing prompt despatch to the London market, outweigh any smaller benefits attainable by shipping via Napier, even if the facilities of that port were developed to the same extent as at Wellington. It has been suggested in evidence that the Napier Harbour Board should take into consideration the desirableness of erecting a suitable cool store for fruit, and thereby provide for the handling of the Hastings trade. Such provision would not, however, in the absence of berthing facilities for overseas ships, do away with the handicap of lightering fruit to vessels in the roadstead; and, in addition, the comparatively small shipments made at Napier would very frequently be delayed in despatch from New Zealand, as it would be only a rare occurrence for a steamer loading fruit to make Napier her final port of departure for London. The erection and maintaining of cool storage is therefore not within the region of practical Harbour Board politics at present, and may well be left in abeyance until Napier is in a position to provide an enclosed port and wharf loading for overseas steamers. Fruitgrowers meantime would, of course, have to put up with the longer railway journey to Wellington and the extra cost of freight; but against this they must take into consideration the value of prompt loading and despatch at Wellington to London, and the advantage to be gained from placing their fruit on the London market perhaps three or four weeks sooner than they could hope to do by shipping via Napier.

Evidence has been given as to the delays which occur in railway transit between Hastings and Wellington cool store; but there is no doubt that, as the Hastings output increased, the New Zealand Railway Department may be reasonably asked to furnish special through fruit-trains and a sufficient supply of ventilated fruit-wagons. When the time eventually arrives for shipping via Napier the Harbour will do well to confer not only with the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association, but also with the Fruit Control Board, and to secure the co-operation of all parties in the arrangements in regard to cool storage and other facilities for loading fruit. A careful examination of capital and operating costs of cool storage and revenue to be derived therefrom will be, of course, necessary before embarking on the venture.

The following schedule shows the comparison of transport and shipping charges on fruit from Hastings via Wellington and Napier:—

<i>Charges on Fruit from Hastings to F.O.B.</i>						Per Case.
Via Wellington (187 miles)—						d.
Railage at 30s. 3d. per ton weight	..	..	..	..	..	8·07
Cool storage	..	..	..	..	..	6
Wharfage, 1s. 6d. per ton measurement	..	..	..	..	..	0·72
Total	..	..	..	..	..	14·79
Via Napier (14 miles)—						
Railage at 6s. 5d. per ton weight	..	..	..	..	..	1·71
Lighterage at 10s., Storage at 1s., Wharfage at 2s. 9d. per ton measurement	..	..	..	..	..	6·6
Total	..	..	..	..	..	8·31

Difference, 6·48d. per case.

(4A) *Dairy-products.*

There seems to be no reason to anticipate any marked increase in shipments of dairy-produce via Napier. The tonnage for the last four years certainly shows a recent upward tendency, as is evidenced by the following record:—

Exports, Butter and Cheese.

—			1922-23.	1923-24.	1924-25.	1925-26.
Butter—			Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
Overseas	..	..	Nil	49	450	939
Coastal	..	..	17	9	18	10
Cheese—						
Overseas	..	..	Nil	Nil	27	49
Coastal	..	..	52	41	24	24

The principal Hawke's Bay factories, however, lie on the border-line between Wellington and Napier, and the natural flow of the dairy trade from Dannevirke and the surrounding districts is towards Wellington, where the principal buying agencies are established, and where prompt despatch can be given to London and other overseas markets. Such factories as lie closer to Napier will doubtless continue to ship via that port, but the prospect of new factories springing up close to Napier is not apparent, and, all things considered, it would be too optimistic to expect a large increase in the volume of dairy-produce for shipment via Napier, even if that port were developed sufficiently to provide the same loading facilities as Wellington.