

15th May to 16th June, forty-eight hours per week of seven days; and from 17th June to 13th August, thirty-eight hours per week of seven days. The dairying industry is a seasonal one, and during the flush season the maximum number of workers is employed for periods of fifty-six hours in a week of seven days in butter-factories, and sixty hours a week (seven days) in cheese-factories. As the supply of milk or cream diminishes the workers are gradually put off, and this occurs in the winter season when it is most difficult to secure other work.

Wages.—The highest-paid worker under the awards of the Court in the North Island is the first assistant, who receives £5 3s. 6d. per week. He is a highly-skilled workman, largely responsible for the quality of the article manufactured. If his wages are measured by the hours worked the average is less than that of the ordinary unskilled worker. At least three to four years' experience are necessary before this position can be obtained.

General Hands: The award wages of general hands, who comprise the great majority of dairy-factory workers, are £4 1s. per week, and their employment is casual. During the busy season, comprising the long-hour periods of fifty-six to sixty hours a week, the maximum number is engaged, and as the milk or cream supply diminishes they are put off, and very few benefit from the shorter-hour periods stated in the awards, so that we can honestly base the majority of these workers' wages on the long-hour period.

Whilst the statement we have had the privilege of placing before you is critical, we hope that the criticism is made on a constructive basis. We desire to assure the employers' section of the Conference, and in particular the representatives of the farmers, that we are prepared to co-operate with them to the fullest possible extent to find the most effective means of utilizing the national resources for the national well-being. In the ultimate, the interests of all who render service are common interests, and their progress mutually dependent on each other. We believe that the best measure of co-operation and good will can be obtained by complete recognition of the rights of the parties, and all agreements reached should provide a reasonable standard of comfort both for those who organize the industry and for those who carry out their plans. We will also assist to the utmost any efforts which may be made to remove or reduce the risks of production and distribution.

If the problems of land and labour utilization and rewards for services are approached in this Conference with open minds, and the spirit of good will and co-operation pervades the meetings in and out of committee, we believe that the decision of the Government to call this Conference cannot do other than bear good fruit, and will result in a real advance individually and nationally, economic as well as social.

Discussion.

Mr. Sterling: I would first like to correct what is evidently a misprint on page 93 of Mr. Nash's paper. It refers to the "Manurewa district": this should be the "Manawaru district." The question I wish to ask Mr. Nash is this: Is he not aware that the dairy-farmers of this Dominion—or, at least, that section with which I am closely connected, those in the North Island—are actively engaged in an endeavour to increase the production of the cow by systematically conducting herd-testing operations? Reading Mr. Nash's paper, it will be found that he says on page 94 that the farmers are "going slow" in connection with their one million and a quarter dairy cows, and he says that "they can increase their annual income by many millions easier and better, on the farm and through the cows—factors over which they have direct control—than they can by operations through the Arbitration Court or elsewhere." I would like to ask Mr. Nash whether the farmers are not doing that at the present time. Then I have another question correlated to that one: Mr. Nash in his paper suggested that the farmers are not doing something to help themselves; but I would like to ask him whether he is not aware that the farmers have made a very big constructive effort to increase their net income by decreasing their fertilizer costs. Particularly I would like to know if he is not aware that they are endeavouring to increase their efficiency as producers of butter-fat by having systematic examinations made of their skimmed milk, by which they can make more certain of getting a maximum degree of efficiency from their separators. Those are just three points which occurred to me while Mr. Nash was reading his paper, as combating the inference that is to be drawn from the paper, that the farmer, while shouting about the Arbitration Court, is doing nothing to increase his net income.

Mr. Turner: When Mr. Nash is answering Mr. Stirling's question, I think Mr. Nash should also deal with the question of meat-production. I would like to ask Mr. Nash if he has taken into consideration the big increase which has been made during the last few years in the meat-production of the Dominion, and also the good work that is being done, with the ultimate view of increasing production, in the agricultural colleges of New Zealand—at Lincoln College and at the Massey Agricultural College. Does he not appreciate the fact that steps are being taken there to do the very work which he suggests should be done?

Mr. Carr: On page 1 of his paper Mr. Nash says, "Nature has been exceedingly lavish to this Dominion in all those factors which are necessary to primary production. We are certainly thirteen thousand miles from our main market (Great Britain), but this handicap is largely offset by the quality of our lands, by a climate and rainfall that is the envy of our competitors, and by access to fertilizers in Ocean and Nauru Islands by which we can maintain the fertility which has already done so much for New Zealand." But is Mr. Nash not aware that superphosphate is much higher in price in New Zealand than in Great Britain, so that that is not very much advantage to us? Further on he refers to the large areas which he says are going back to wool-production. I can assure him that if the wheat-growers go back to sheep-breeding it is because of the successive costs that have been placed on the wheat-growing industry in the direction of costs of implements and wages, and not from the desire to do so. I am not on the Dairy Committee here, nor am I a representative of the dairy-farmers, but I do know something of dairying on the practical side. Now, Mr. Nash suggests that with scientific