

24. You stated that the establishment of these dairy factories would go a long way towards a remedy for the loss occasioned to small farmers by the collapse of the potato and onion markets. This is to some extent due to heavy import duties levied in the colonies. Have you considered whether the establishment of starch factories would pay where the potatoes are produced?—I have written Home for information on the subject. My own opinion is that we can hardly produce farina, &c., cheap enough to make such an undertaking profitable; in Germany and elsewhere there is less to pay for labour, and less expense all round. I am not prepared as yet to offer any definite information on that subject.

*Manure Adulteration Prevention Bill.*

25. *The Chairman.*] What have you to say, Mr. Murphy, on the subject of this Bill?—In line 10, in the interpretation clause, I would advise, after “farmyard and stable manure,” “lime refuse from gasworks, fellmongeries, tanneries, wool-scourers, and breweries.” My reason for this is that a considerable quantity of refuse from these industries is obtained by Chinese gardeners and others. I am, of course, now speaking of Christchurch. If these words be not inserted, I take it it would be against the law to sell them without an analysis. As to clause 3, I have nothing to say about that. In subsection (5), clause 3, I would strike out the words after “boiled bones,” and add “should not contain less than 42 per cent. of phosphate of lime, and 2 per cent. of ammonia;” anything under this would indicate fraud. If the Bill remains as it is the result would be to shut up all small bonedust makers, who sell their bonedust for about £5 10s. per ton. Calcutta and other bones cost £7 10s.

26. *Mr. Wright.*] What percentage of phosphate of lime does the best bonedust contain?—A superior sample may contain 50 per cent. and upwards; anything under 42 per cent. would indicate an adulterated sample. In subsection (10), the words “other guanos” ought to be added. In clause 14, page 4, there is no protection for the farmer. I think the agents or vendors should be responsible, otherwise how can the farmer get redress in the case of fraud. We know that imported manures sometimes deteriorate in value during transit. In would be no hardship to the vendor, as he could have it analysed here at the manufacturers expense.

27. Your objection would go to striking out the clause?—Yes; I would make it read so that the vendor must be entirely responsible. I feel very strongly on this point, for I know that the farmers of Great Britain have in the past suffered incalculable loss from the operations of fraudulent manure manufacturers, and are still greatly imposed upon, notwithstanding the constant vigilance of the agricultural societies’ paid analytical chemists.

28. *Mr. Ritchie.* How would that do in reference to small establishments such as you have referred to?—I do not say that the Bill ought to compel the manufacturers of bonedust to supply an analysis with every lot sold; it should compel them to sell pure bonedust, guaranteed percentage of phosphate of lime and ammonia. If you do not make some provision of this kind in the Bill the door will be left open to a great deal of fraudulent proceeding. Legislation in the above direction is as much in the interest of the honest manufacturer and vendor as it is for the farmer. The manure trade is rapidly becoming a most important one; therefore wise legislation at this juncture will save much trouble in the future.

*Fruit Industry.*

29. *Mr. Wright.*] In your opinion has the fruit industry in Canterbury been a success hitherto; and if not, what has been the difficulty in its way?—I cannot say it has been a success—it is in its infancy as yet; there are one or two things, however, that will prevent it being a success unless they are seen to; the principal one relates to the method of carrying the fruit to the Old Country. In the report of the Agricultural Council, which recently sat in Hobart, there is a good article by the chairman, Mr. Shoebridge, showing why it was that some of the shipments from Tasmania have been a failure. If you look to the report of prices which have recently been received you will see that they are below anything that would pay; you will at the same time see in the margin the words “bad,” “rotten,” &c., showing the reason why only those low prices could be obtained.

30. *The Chairman.*] Are they sweated going Home?—Mr. Shoebridge is a very old expert. He is of opinion that the only method by which fruit can be conveyed Home successfully is by introducing a current of air amongst the cases. Under the present system they are put into the chamber where there is not a sufficient current of air—the air is introduced very often from the top. There is a large amount of carbonic-acid gas generated where there is a large amount of apples packed together. Being heavier than the atmosphere, it lies among the fruit. Unless there is a constant current of air kept up to remove it, it is the opinion of Mr. Shoebridge that the fruit will never get Home in a satisfactory condition until some provision is made for a constant current of cool air among the cases. Then, again, the cost of freight must be reduced—the expenses are too heavy.

31. What is the cost?—At present it costs 8s. a case from Canterbury; the freight is 4s. 4d.

32. *Mr. Lawry.*] Does the 8s. cost include cost of case?—It includes everything.

33. *Mr. Wright.*] You are aware that some cases of apples sent from Canterbury sold as high as 20s. a case?—When small lots have been sent carefully packed, they have reached Home in good condition. The reason is that they had plenty of air, and were not confined as larger quantities would be. The Styx Company have sent Home early apples (Alexandras), which fetched from 18s. to 25s. a case; these were also exposed to plenty of air. I induced Mr. Withell, of Brookside, Canterbury, to pack fifty cases. I knew they would do well if he undertook it. He sent them Home; they were packed so that nothing better in the way of packing could be desired. He had a letter from his agent after they were sold stating that they realised an average all round of 13s. a case. There are other instances of small lots. Dr. Lemon’s may be added, which reached Home in splendid order, and realised good prices.

34. *Mr. Lawry.*] Would 13s. a case pay?—Yes, very well.

35. *Mr. Wright.*] Could the difficulty on board ship be overcome by a current of cool air?—Yes; that would be the best solution.