

Act in the rest of the colony. There is a subsection to the clause which says that the order empowering them to come under the provisions of the Act shall not come into force except on the application of a majority of the Councils in the district, or in respect of any specified county, except on the application of the Council of the county. This leaves them free to act at any time. Considering the opposition that the Auckland people have always shown to the passing of such an Act unless some such provision as this is made and brought into force there, they will continue to distribute diseases to other places. Considering also the way in which the American blight and the codlin-moth have increased in Auckland and other districts, it is manifestly unfair that we should have to run the risk of having these diseases disseminated broadcast among us while they are experimenting further to learn the truth. The acreage under fruit-growing in the Auckland district was 9,255 acres in 1897, and it is now 9,238 acres, showing a decrease of 17 acres. The acreage in the rest of the colony was in 1897 12,675 acres, and is now 12,885 acres, showing an increase of 210 acres. I consider that until we have an Act of this sort in force we cannot really establish and maintain a fruit industry in this country. We know what this industry has done for Tasmania, where a good Pest Act is in force. In 1891 it was started there in a practical sense, and they have exported since to England 140,000 cases of apples and pears. Now, I have seen and tasted these Tasmanian apples. It is said that they can compare with those brought from any part of the world, and certainly with anything that New Zealand can procure; but I can assure you that the Tasmanian apples are in no way superior to our own. At the Brisbane Exhibition deciduous fruit collections from the colonies of Tasmania, Victoria, and New Zealand competed. They were judged solely upon their merits, and we received the first award. In the face of this I have with me an auction return of the sale of fruit on the 23rd July this year, and it says that Hobart apples fetched 9s. a case, and local apples 5s. 6d. Now, it is well known that they send their best fruit Home, and that the other colonies only get, as a rule, fruit of the second grade from there, and yet these apples were worth 9s. a case, while New Zealand fruit was only fetching from 4s. 6d. to 6s. 6d. a case. I am sure that is not as it should be, because I, who live within thirty-three miles of Wellington, and in a district not well adapted for apple culture, by spraying and cultivation can get 13s. now for 48 lb. cases of apples, and am pleased to say obtain more orders than I can fill. I think this Bill, if made law, would prevent this sort of rubbish being sent into the Wellington market, and would be good for the industry generally.

112. You think that this stuff, which is sold at 4s. and 5s. a case, is poor stuff?—Yes. We proved conclusively at the Brisbane Exhibition last year that we can produce fruit superior to any that was exhibited there, and if we had encouragement to keep up the quality of our fruit it would be a great benefit to the industry; but we have no protection from infectious diseases, and therefore no encouragement at present. One may expend any amount of labour and spend any amount of money in growing fruit of the highest class; but if a neighbour across the fence will not do anything to keep his orchard clean, good work in pest-combatting is nullified. Your neighbour may be separated from you by an eight-wire fence, but that will not keep his blight out of your orchard. Again and again men have approached me with regard to opening up orchards, and asked me what guarantee there was that they would get a return for their capital, and I have always had to tell them that there is absolutely no guarantee at the present time. I maintain that it is quite as necessary for the encouragement and development of the fruit industry that those who are engaged in it should have protection in the same way that is afforded to other industries. Take, for example, the sheep industry. There exist precautions to protect it against the infection by such diseases as the scab, &c. Why should not the same thing be done for the fruit-growing industry in respect of its peculiar pests? I have taken an interest in this subject for many years, not only in New Zealand, but in other parts of the world, and I know what is done there, and the immense good to all resulting therefrom.

113. *Mr. Flatman.*] You said something about empty cases being returned; do you consider that empty cases should not be used a second time unless they have been fumigated or something done with them to prevent the spread of scab through their means?—I am strongly against the use of cases a second time. They should go with the fruit as sacks go with grain when it is sold. If you were to put a charge of, say, 6d. on the case, then everybody would know what they were buying.

114. Do you think that fumigating would not be a sufficient preventative to the spread of the disease?—It would give a lot of extra work, and entail the necessity for what I deem unnecessary machinery; whereas, if the rule were once established that 6d. was to be charged for every case, it would be all that is required. I am strongly against cases being returned whether they are fumigated or not.

115. When speaking of the difference in price given in Wellington for New Zealand and Tasmanian apples, you said that the New Zealand apples only fetched 5s. 6d. a case, and that you had a market at 13s. a case?—Yes. I endeavour to cultivate, spray, and prune as thoroughly as I can, and I am happy to say that I am in a position to be able to choose my market. My fruit is clean, and there is a great difference between the flavour of fruit which is properly cultivated and that which is not. The flavour of fruit depends very greatly on the manner in which it is grown.

116. *Mr. Lang.*] I understood you to say that you have not got the codlin-moth?—Personally I have none.

117. I think you said also that there is much opposition to this Bill in Auckland; I suppose that is on account of the codlin-moth?—Yes, and of the woolley blight too.

118. Are you aware that many Auckland growers have taken even greater precautions than this Bill provides, and find them not useful?—I am quite aware that there are men who do so. I should think there must be some local influence not taken into account. I do not think that all the circumstances of the cases have been thoroughly taken into consideration.