

of the words "occupier of the premises." We should like the "vendor" inserted because he is the man really responsible, in place of the "occupier of the premises." Then, we should like the words "from whom the sample was obtained" struck out.

JOHN BIGGAR WATERS examined. (No. 2.)

8. *The Chairman.*] Your name?—John Biggar Waters.

9. And occupation?—Seed-merchant and seed-cleaner, Dunedin.

10. Will you be kind enough to state your views with regard to this Bill?—Well, to begin with, Mr. Chairman, I should like, with Mr. Kaye, to thank you for your courtesy in allowing us to come here and give evidence in respect to this Bill. I may say that I am here to represent the Invercargill and Dunedin seed-merchants and seed-cleaners. I should also like to assure you that I am not here in any hostile spirit. The first motion carried by the Dunedin trade was to the effect that in their opinion the Seeds Examination Act was desirable, but there are certainly a few points in regard to this Bill which appear to us a little crude, and we should like to see some slight alterations. Mr. Kaye has already dealt with the principal point with regard to clause 2, and I may say that in Dunedin and Invercargill we are thoroughly in accord with Mr. Kaye on that point. We think the interpretation of the word "seeds" should read "'Seeds' includes seeds of every kind used in agriculture or horticulture offered for sale to or between growers in the colony of New Zealand." The reason we wish the examination confined to these seeds is that all seed-merchants and seed-cleaners have at all times of the year considerable quantities of seed in their warehouses which are really not offered for sale, which have not been cleaned, or possibly, having been cleaned, are there for export either to Australia or to the Old Country; and it is the experience of all seed-merchants that both London and Australian markets take seeds from us here which are regarded in the opinion of the farmers of our colony as no better than weeds. Mr. Kaye is perfectly correct in his statement. We simply cannot get enough Yorkshire fog to supply London ourselves, and I should like to add to that fact that we have frequent applications now from districts in Victoria and in Tasmania for cheap mixtures of seeds such as the suckling clover, and similar seeds for the purpose of sowing; so that you will see that it would be a great loss to the colony if merchants were debarred from having such seeds on their premises for export. I should also like to state that during the last year demands have come to us, which we have reason to suppose originated in America, for some seed which we were going to throw out as refuse because we could do nothing with it in the South. So it is necessary to have some provision of the kind suggested—viz., that the examination should be limited to seeds which we are offering for sale to the farmers in New Zealand. Of course, you will understand that seed comes in from the growers in an impure state, and a great many contracts for such seed occur between merchants. One merchant buys a sample of undressed seed from another—and a sample of undressed seed may change hands five or six times. It is not going into consumption; it simply lies in one warehouse; and before it goes into consumption it has to be dressed. In fact, merchants throughout the colony are only too anxious to see a high grade of seed used. Most of us have gone to considerable expense in fitting up cleaning plants, and it is to our interest that these plants should be kept as fully employed as possible. I think that in the Dunedin district alone there are eight cleaning plants, with a capital of £5,000 or £6,000 invested, simply for the purpose of dressing seeds. Naturally we wish to see these plants employed. The expression has been brought up "between growers." I may say with regard to that we find the practice has been in the country districts for farmers to supply their neighbours with undressed seed. They exchange or sell undressed seed to each other, and our experience of the "agricultural conscience" is that it is not at all awake to what is impure seed or pure seed, and we find that a farmer has no hesitation in using undressed seed from his neighbours for the sake of, perhaps, saving a matter of a shilling an acre on the cost of the seeding. My experience—and I have had an experience of over fifteen years—is that a farmer will, for the sake of getting a rise of a shilling an acre, buy undressed rye-grass at 3s. a bushel and sow it, where he will not use dressed rye-grass at 4s. an acre. The difference would be only a shilling per acre, and to save this shilling he would use impure seed. This is borne out by all seed-merchants. Of course, it is to our interests that that sort of thing should be stopped if possible. It is not fair that the farmer should be allowed to use undressed seed in that way. With regard to clause 4, changing the word "visit" to "application" is a change which is thoroughly approved of by the people I represent. We were under the impression when we read this clause that it simply means that the Inspectors under this Act would be at liberty to enter any premises in the same way as the Health Inspectors, and without even consulting the owner of the premises at all. We understood that the Inspector could enter the premises in an arbitrary manner. Possibly seeds might be lying there for export or for cleaning, and our reputation might be damaged thereby. Then, in regard to subsection (3) of clause 4, the last sentence—"together with such further particulars as he thinks desirable." We think that that clause is rather indefinite. We are not quite sure that that does not give a loophole for publishing, as the Invercargill merchants say, gratuitously damaging general remarks about a sample of seed. Well, we have every confidence in the discretion of Mr. Kirk, but we might not always be so fortunate as to have Mr. Kirk, and we think that that paragraph gives an opportunity to any gentleman examining the seeds to publish some damaging or disparaging statement. The examiner should confine himself to facts.

11. *Mr. McLachlan.*] They are not going to publish that examination in the newspapers?—Yes; I believe that is the intention of the Bill. Well, those words we think should either be more specific or they should be omitted. With regard to clause 6, Mr. Kaye has already dealt fully with that clause, and I will only say that I thoroughly agree with what he has stated. The trade as a whole are anxious that the one or two black sheep who might possibly be guilty of adulteration should have something to deter them, because we suffer from the competition of these unscrupulous firms, and we think it would be strongly advisable that the Government Examiner should have an opportunity of publishing the