

anxious to get their goods away. Under the special circumstances the Union Company were good enough to reserve the forehold of their "Rotomahana," which, besides the usual bulkhead between the compartments, is separated from the engine-room by a coal-bunker of 100 tons capacity. Our butter, which weighs over 70 tons in weight, frozen down to about 20° of temperature, was stowed without break from the flooring of the hold. It was anticipated that a small portion near the top would gather some heat from the deck above, but it was confidently expected by experts here that on reaching Wellington the average temperature would be below freezing-point. Your Grader's report does not furnish evidence that this expectation was not realised. I find that your Grader says, "At 8.50 went down 'Rotomahana's' hold, and had a good many kegs and boxes opened, and found that the temperature ran in the centre of the butter from 42° to 48°, and outside from 46° to 52°." On previous occasions your Graders have passed butter at a higher temperature than that, and the shipping companies have accepted it. Indeed, I have always found both the Shaw-Savill and New Zealand Shipping Companies most willing to facilitate business. The passing of the comparatively high-temperature butter has in every case been entirely in the interests of the industry of the colony. In the case under question even the few packages which could be examined without discharging the vessel, and which, because of their position, were likely to have gathered more heat than any other portion of the shipment, were only from 42° to 52° Fahr., while the bulk was doubtless much below freezing; and yet this was condemned. I remind you that your Grader explains that he "went down the hold," &c., and "found temperature," &c. The Union Company advise me that only a superficial inspection of the shipment could be made without discharging it." There is no evidence that any other examination took place. Indeed, all the information which I have obtained goes to show that it was upon this test that your Grader's action was taken. That is, upon this "superficial" examination of the packages most likely to be affected by heat, your officer undertook to forbid the shipment of our 70 tons of butter. My Wellington advices say, "Saw Captain Rose and the engineer of the 'Ruapehu,' and they informed me that it (the butter) could not go on board against the instructions of the Government Inspector." Your Department could not but have been aware of the extremities to which we were reduced and the losses which we had already suffered through the delay caused by the several mishaps in shipping matters during the two or three months preceding. It also might have known that the usual channel between here and Wellington was given up by ourselves in the interests of colonial dairying, and it is hardly credible that under these circumstances it should have used its position to hamper and waste as it has done.

I have referred to the ill-considered conclusions which your letter contains. You say, "The treatment which the parcel referred to has received has not only damaged it, but will have a detrimental effect upon the produce of the colony." I suppose this to mean that it is your opinion that the butter in question will reach England in a damaged and inferior condition, and that this condition will prejudice the reputation of New Zealand butter generally. For the present it will be sufficient for me to say I know something of the butter in question and of the probable effect upon it of a small portion having reached the temperature of 52°, and that in my judgment its quality for sale purposes has not been depreciated to the value of 6d. upon the whole parcel of 70 tons. I shall, later on, if you require it, be glad to give you proof that upon reaching England its quality, condition, and general sale value is equal to anything carried by the same vessel. I am naturally annoyed at this unwarrantable reflection upon my business, but I desire to address you with courtesy, and therefore content myself by asking you to try and imagine how little pleasure it would be possible for you to get out of a suggestion such as you make if you were the recipient of it instead of being the writer.

I am referring the Wellington Meat-freezing Company to you for payment of the freezing account. Any other accounts in this connection which come to hand I will also send you. As your Department's lack of care and judgment are responsible for having incurred these extra expenses, I expect that you will settle them.

I have already referred to the paragraph in your letter that "unless better arrangements are made for the proper coastal conveyance of butter to the final port of shipment it will be necessary for the Department to consider whether the present facilities for freezing provided at Auckland can be continued." Better provision for coastal carriage we shall very gladly hail. This is a matter in which your Department may be of the greatest service. You will speak for the whole of the coast, and doubtless with effect. Any information or assistance which I can give to enable you to obtain these advantages shall be at your service. I am sorry that the question of Auckland storage is again raised. I cannot suppose that you seriously desire that this district shall not have the advantages which are given to every considerable district in the colony. I assume that the time will come when the whole of the help now given to dairying will be withdrawn. When that happens we shall be content; but, while the present system exists, Auckland, which from its position requires more rather than less help, will ask for at least the same advantages as are given to other districts.

Should you desire it I will set forth at length the reasons why the present system of storing here is best. These reasons are numerous, so I refrain from adding them to this already very lengthy letter, especially as they must be evident to any one who knows anything of the business worked as it is and must be worked at this extreme end of the colony.

Awaiting the favour of your further communications, I am,

Yours, &c.,

WESLEY SPRAGG,

Manager, New Zealand Dairy Association.

Mr. J. D. Ritchie, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Wellington.