

that the Government or the Minister of Agriculture may elect. Surely it will be sufficient punishment if the vendor is prosecuted and perhaps fined, without any further attempt at publishing what after all might have been an error of judgment, and not a wilful attempt at fraud. We do not want to cover up any fraud in the slightest degree, but we do say that this clause as printed in the Bill is going to give the Minister enormous power to ruin an innocent man's business. Clause 10 is a peculiarly worded clause, and provides that the vendor of gorse-seed must first obtain the written permission of the Minister. We say that is doing the thing round the wrong way. We say the permission of the Stock Inspector ought to be sufficient, and the onus of obtaining the permission should not be on the vendor, but on the buyer. Then, clause 11, in regard to penalties, is a very important clause. The suggestion I have to make is this: that in all cases the grower will sow seed submitted to the Biologist at his own risk, and no claim in respect of the crop can be made against the vendor. That is, if the grower elects to have his sample submitted to the Biologist and he chooses to sow the seed, he cannot have any claim against the vendor in respect of the crop he gets, because he does so with his eyes open: he sows with his eyes open knowing he has sufficient suspicion of the seed to justify him in having samples submitted to the Biologist. It should not be at all allowable that the Biologist's report under any circumstances should be allowed as evidence in support of a claim against the vendor. I think, sir, that finishes the remarks I have to make, but Mr. Watson will be able to supplement what I have said.

7. You have suggested that the minimum quantity of seed for which a certificate should be supplied should be increased from 5 lb. to 5 cwt.?—Yes.

8. Supposing any purchaser wishes to buy, say, 5 tons of seed, all that would be necessary would be to divide it up to get rid of this clause?—Theoretically I suppose it would be so, but as a matter of practice it would be impossible. Besides that, the vendor could not do that himself. It would have to be a compact between the buyer and the seller. You could not split up an order without the consent of the buyer. If I as a buyer ordered 5 tons of seed, and the vendor chose to deliver me that in lots of 5 cwt. parcels, I think I would be a very weak man if I did not take some action to stop it—that is, if the buyer wished to protect himself. I do not think the objection holds good at all.

9. In the case of sealing the parcels, what is to prevent the bags being tampered with? In practice would any sealing be effective? You must, I think, realize, that it is different sealing Post Office bags?—In what way?

10. And sow the bags up again?—Well, I have not thought out the question of sealing, and probably some other member of the deputation has more experience of it than I have. It just occurred to me as I walked up the street that there could be some method of sealing the bags.

11. *Mr. Field.*] Is there any feeling amongst the merchants as to whether this Bill should not be extended further, and extend to the germination of seeds?—That point has not been discussed amongst us. I could hardly tell you what the general feeling on the matter is.

12. I suppose you recognize it is a very important one?—It is a most important point. It is a very serious question as to how you are going to regulate the selling of seeds as regards germination.

13. It is very easily tested whether the seeds have a strong germination-power or not?—No, it is not. One man will test seed and get 95 per cent., and another man will only get 70 per cent.

14. A wet flannel is one method?—There are different methods, and different methods for different seeds. You cannot just throw a few seeds on a wet flannel and cover them up and say that is a test. It is really an expert matter, and I do not know how you can deal with it. We have not considered that matter at all, and I am not in a position to tell you what the general feeling of the merchants is.

15. I judge from what you say that you think it is a fair thing for Parliament to consider that matter when dealing with the question of pure seed?—I think it would be quite cognate of the whole matter—the two should go together. Whether it is practical or not to regulate the germination of seeds I cannot say. I think it is extremely doubtful—I do not think you could do it. It seems to me you have got to let each merchant trade in the way that is going to promote his business the best, and that is by supplying the highest grade of seeds. The farmer is not going to buy low-grade germination seeds, and he is going to give his trade to the merchant who provides him with the best seed, and that is the best safeguard you have. I believe it is well known that the seeds grown and sold in New Zealand and the seeds that come to New Zealand are far and away ahead of the seeds sold and grown in other countries. We have the reputation here in New Zealand of having a much higher quality of seeds and much better dressed seeds. Our dressing-machinery is far and away ahead of that in America or any other colony, and therefore there is not the risk of a man sowing impure seed here as where they have not the proper machinery.

16. *Mr. Buchanan.*] It is well known in some cases seed is absolutely sterilized for the purposes of sale—to improve its appearance?—I have not known of any case that has come under my notice in New Zealand. I do not know if any of my colleagues ever knew of a thing like that being done in New Zealand.

17. *Mr. Field.*] With reference to the question of seed exported, I understand this Bill does not refer to that?

*Hon. Mr. T. Mackenzie:* No, it does not apply to that.

18. *Mr. Field.*] Do you not think it should apply to that to prevent the sale of inferior seeds?—No, not because we want to export inferior seeds, but all countries have their own regulations, and we have got quite enough to do to look after those regulations without having regulations here which might clash with the regulations in other countries.