

46. Has there never been any attempt to get at what the actual opinion is in relation to this ?—No. Personally I do not think it is necessary to take it. It must be obvious to Parliament that this measure is not wanted ; but if it is to be gone on with, that should certainly not be before the mind of the producer—not the dummy voter—is ascertained by means of a ballot.

47. You think that a ballot should be taken before this Bill is passed ?—Certainly before it is passed.

48. The opinion of the actual suppliers throughout New Zealand should be ascertained ?—Yes.

49. Then would you be willing to abide by the decision of the majority in connection with it ?—I will be absolutely candid : Personally I would not. I contend that this is not a matter for the majority. My rights, the rights of every individual, are involved, and no majority has a right to take from me my liberty as a British subject—the right to do with my own as I choose. I should not be selected for special legislation by any majority.

50. You believe in the conscientious objector in connection with the control of your dairy-produce ?—I can only tell you my own conviction.

51. No matter what majority might be in favour of the measure, you would still oppose it ?—I would not agree to my freedom being taken from me.

52. *Mr. Field.*] With regard to the proposal to take a poll of the suppliers : I suppose before a factory announces its decision for or against the Bill the directors do take a poll of their own particular suppliers, do they not ?—No. That is the trouble.

53. Have these decisions been arrived at by the directors of the factories ?—I say that Mr. Connett, who is a director of the Bell Block Factory, is a member of the Council. I say that Mr. Morton, a director of the Mangorei Factory, is a member of the Council. Both of those factories are against the Bill. I say that certain factories have never been called together, yet their chairmen have cast a vote. Previously in northern Taranaki the opposition was strong and the support was small. In the south the support was overwhelming. To-day the south is being smashed up. It is being honeycombed with opposition. The factories are not calling together their suppliers or directors because an adverse vote would result.

54. They have done it in some cases, I suppose ?—Oh, yes.

55. Does not the control of the industry in Denmark operate very beneficially ?—There is no control in Denmark.

56. They have a committee, have they not ?—It is purely voluntary—a price-fixing committee.

57. But they are bound by the decision of the committee ?—No, they are not bound. I have been told by people from Denmark—farmers and mercantile people—we have written and cabled information that there is no control. There is a combination which acts somewhat in the way we suggest for the interests and benefit of the lot ; but you are not bound. You can sell your produce as you like. It is a sort of guide.

58. It has no absolute powers at all ?—No. It cannot prevent any man from selling his produce.

59. With regard to this question of shipping : when the Dairy Association has applied for space, has it always got space, and has the ship sailed in accordance with the desire of the association ?—I cannot say that absolutely. I have gone through the whole of the applications and the space allotted and the amount shipped. There is a great variation. In many cases the application appears and is carried forward, which swells the amount. The allotment has been less. The shipment, again, has been greater. Of course, before the war things were very satisfactory. During the war period and afterwards things were mixed up. Now we are getting back to normal, and on the whole this year they were very excellent. I do not say they were perfect, but they were very excellent. In February all the produce was not shipped that might have been shipped.

60. Is it true that several shipping magnates control the shipping, to the prejudice of the producers of this country ?—That is a wide question. I am not saying that we should be bound to these people at all. I am not entering on that question : it is too wide.

W. J. F. DEAR examined. (No. 2.)

*Witness :* I am the Secretary of the Kaipara Co-operative Dairy Factory Company (Limited), Helensville. My company agrees to the provisions of the Bill for the setting-up of a Board of Control for the purposes of arranging shipping, finding markets, and other purposes, but objects to section 11 and other sections which provide for the Board's control of the produce, and consequently the financing thereof. The following is a summary of the reasons for the objections : (1) Advances on produce : Under present conditions 90 per cent. of the market value of the produce is available for payment of the monthly advances to farmers. The banks have a triple security for any overdraft under (1) the London agent's letter of credit, (2) the dairy company's draft, (3) the produce itself, by letter of hypothecation. These advances to the farmers are the life-blood of the industry. The Bill does not mention them, and reference to them by the members of the Council promoting the Bill are vague and unsatisfactory. They do not make it clear whether the present London agents are to be retained, or, if they are retained, whether they will grant similar letters of credit, or whether a similar percentage of advances will be available to the present. If that is not going to be so, the only security for these advances will be the produce, and in the ordinary course of events I do not think the banks could advance 90 per cent. of the value. From the best authorities I have been able to consult it seems clear that only 66 per cent. of that value will be available, instead of 90 per cent. The Dominion's export of butter last season was 63,963 tons, and if only 66 per cent. of the value had been available instead of the present 90 per cent., the monthly advances to the farmers would