

been the subject of much careful consideration on their part. There was no consecutive consideration of the measure, and I consider that in a certain measure faith has been broken with the dairy companies and their suppliers. I will leave the matter there, because I do not think it is a very satisfactory way of pressing forward a Bill by stating that it has been seriously before us. If such had been the case it would have received our continuous and careful consideration. Suppose we assume that the promoters knew that the Bill was not dead and was to be resurrected, surely it is reasonable to believe that the most careful consideration had been given to it by its promoters, that the scheme would have been reorganized and would have been presented to the producers in the amended form. Would not the amendments suggested by the Committee of last year have been inserted? But under the present Bill we find that that Committee's recommendations have been put aside, while other powers have been reinstated in the measure, thus nullifying its effect. This action seems rather a reflection on the parliamentary Committee that dealt with the matter last year. We further say—I speak strongly on behalf of my fellow-directors—that this scheme, dealing as it does in such a radical way with the leading industry of the Dominion, requires long and thorough investigation. In the promoters' own words, "the scheme requires the exploring and testing of every available source of information." We consider that every possible means by which the desired reform might have been obtained, by ordinary business methods and free negotiation, should have been tried before even legislation of a permissive nature was asked for. We further contend that the premier position of our industry, and its far-reaching effects upon the whole industrial and commercial life of the country, as well as upon the farming community, render this course absolutely imperative, and that, further, the ramifications of the industry provide a simple source from which the necessary information can be gleaned. Instead of pursuing this reasonable and business-like method, the promoters have adopted a policy something akin to the old proverb of "acting in haste and repenting at leisure." Vague and contradictory statements and a continuous change of ground have been made and taken place, which all goes to prove that the promoters have failed to realize the task in front of them, and have failed to equip themselves as they ought to have done before entering upon such an elaborate scheme. In one sense they seem to have deliberately avoided acquiring information from easily available sources, as they have all along discounted consultation with the commercial side of the industry. So they have failed to realize that only by the most methodical inquiry could the facts be obtained. Moreover, it would appear that they have not grasped the provisions of the Bill itself, or, if they have, they are guilty of something very closely allied to misrepresentation. I will prove that statement by the following quotations: Mr. Morton, Chairman of the National Dairy Association, stated, alluding to the Board, "the other nine members would be elected by the producers." Mr. Grounds, at the North Canterbury meeting, said, "It would be seen that the producers would have the matter entirely in their own hands"; but when questioned he replied that "the dairy producers would not individually elect the Council." The fact is that the producers could not and would not have any control or voice in the matter beyond something so hazy, vague, and distant as to be for all practical purposes non-existent. How is any change desired in regard to the Control Board to be secured? According to the Bill the Board will consist of eleven or twelve members, nine of whom are to be appointed by the present Council. The permanent officials would be appointed by the Board. What has to take place before we get a change? Suppose, for instance, the management of this Board was not satisfactory and things became worse instead of better, we would have no practical power to change that Board, as a change would have to be fairly promptly made to be effective. The Bill provides for the Council being elected yearly by the factory directorates. So the first thing we have to do is to set about getting a very radical change in the Council itself, and if the suppliers, or factory directors, were successful in forcing a change, only three new members could be appointed to the Board—three out of eleven or twelve—a very small minority. At the end of another year, if the same thing went through again successfully, another three new members could be placed on the Board at the very utmost, and either half or a bare majority would result. So that under the most favourable circumstances two years would elapse before the barest chance of an alteration would be possible that would be likely to be effective. Even then we would be up against the fact that the Board's permanent officials would be in office, and the terms of their appointment might possibly preclude their instant replacement. Can the promoters assert honestly, and the Committee accept their statement, that a procedure such as this places effective control in our hands? Further, Mr. Grounds at Hamilton pointed out that "the Bill specifically set out that compulsion would be limited, or absolute, according to the will of the suppliers." I think there must be a mistake here; otherwise it is a misstatement, because there is nothing in the Bill to provide for this power. The opposite is the case—it gives absolute power to the Board without reference to any one. Then we get that strange contradiction at Stratford, where my friend Mr. Maxwell asked the question whether an assurance was given to Sir Thomas Clement expressing the Council's intention of not interfering with the present system of marketing and distribution. On that point local evidence has been put before you, and I am not going to stress the point beyond saying that I asked this question at Stratford personally: whether it was not the fact that Sir Thomas Clement had expressed his opinion most decidedly against any interference; and I received no answer. I asked it the second time, and it was ignored, at the same meeting. I again asked the same question at Palmerston North, and again it was ignored. I think, gentlemen, you can draw your own conclusions. In connection with this assurance I will quote the following statements: Mr. Grounds at Hamilton pointed out that "it would not be compatible with the principle of control to permit a factory to consign on its own account, no matter how good an offer it had." Mr. Corrigan, M.P., said we would save the £100,000 they were now paying the agents. Mr. Grounds in North Canterbury and Stratford made a great deal of their intention to "cut out the speculative manipulator." What does all this mean if it does not mean interference with the present channels