

recorded at once, as the time, from the 24th May to the 24th June, included the date of the Palmerston conference. But I submit that is not a valid excuse. As one of the deputation set up by the opponents of this Bill I have waited upon Mr. Brash and Mr. Grounds with a view to obtaining this information, and I submit that when any gentleman accepts the position of returning officer in connection with the voting on such a question as a dairy-produce pool he should declare the results of the voting. The mere acceptance of such a position should imply that the declaration of the poll would be made in due course. I submit also that we are being unfairly and unjustly treated in this matter when we are told that Mr. Brash has not been instructed to make the declaration of the poll, because, having accepted the position, he was in honour bound to make the return of the voting. It has been argued that some factories voted by proxy, as they were asked to do in the form sent round. Others voted at the Palmerston meeting. Surely it could not be contended that their votes were not recorded, or that the proceedings could not be regarded as exactly regular. The proxy votes could have been tabulated as quickly as the votes at Palmerston, where the voting was by the straight-out vote. And had a factory voted twice over it would have been put down as only one vote, and counted accordingly. Further, Mr. Grounds and Mr. Brash intimated that as soon as the list of factories for and against was available they would try to get them, and they admitted that it was practically impossible to obtain a true record for the South Island, but that a record would be handed to me personally as soon as the lists were sent to the Committee. But up to the present I have not received it, and I naturally presume the Committee has not either. I accept the statement the previous witness has handed in, but I say at once that we do not guarantee this statement; but as far as we can get at it it represents the feeling, as recorded, of the factories. In Taranaki there is one if not two factories whose votes are taken as having been recorded for the proposal, when, as a matter of fact, they are not absolutely in favour of it. On the word of the chairman of the factory at Mangatoki, I understand that at a meeting of the suppliers there he was not allowed to go any further in support of this Bill beyond the shipping question, but the vote there has been recorded as entirely in support of the Bill. Another question which has touched our suppliers up is that of the regulation of supplies. We are a cheese-factory making between 500 and 600 tons of cheese, and in the winter we make a little butter. In this connection I would refer to a statement made by a gentleman who has carried on an extensive grocery business for a number of years. I know something about this business personally. He states that the margin between Danish and New Zealand butter is very much bigger in winter than in the early summer. In January and February, he said, he would practically buy no Danish butter, but he would purchase New Zealand freely, because in those months Danish was very scarce, and not enough was available for his requirements in the district he operated in. Those who have farmed in the Northern Hemisphere, where I lived all my life prior to coming to New Zealand—in the north of England—know that the output of Danish butter is greatest when the output of English butter is greatest—during the summer months from April to the end of August. During the winter, although butter is made in Denmark and England, it is made in a much less quantity, and at a correspondingly greater expense, because the cattle all have to be housed. This gentleman, who has been in the business, emphasizes the necessity of prompt supply, and he points out that a large quantity of our butter is on the market when Irish butter was in abundant supply, but the latter was not a large amount, and did not affect the position. It was put on the market as “fresh creamery,” whereas ours is, of course, “frozen.” Naturally the fresh butter demands a higher price. I can testify to that fact, as were I to go Home to-morrow I should be as welcome in the homes of the working-people as I am here. I know the miners, quarrymen, and labourers in the North of England, as I have lived amongst them. I know them and their friends, and if there is one thing above another they desire it is fresh butter. My friend makes this statement in that connection: “During that period the fresh Irish butter commands a better price. During the summer-time the Danish comes first, Irish second, and New Zealand third.” The Irish can only make butter during a very limited period of the year, and then they go off. In the winter the order is reversed somewhat, because Danish still comes first, the New Zealand comes next, and Irish last. He further points out that, owing to the keen competition, if there were a thousand pools the grocer would still go to his merchant, on account of the efficient manner in which many houses provide supplies of butter, and so help the retailer over his difficulties. He asks a pertinent question regarding this pooling business—whether Tooley Street has nothing else to sell but New Zealand butter and cheese. Those classes in the North of England I have indicated are our best customers, and I hope we shall not lose them. The very first idea that those vast consuming classes in the North of England would have, if this pool were carried into effect, would be that the pool would endeavour to raise the prices of the food they use. However, our suppliers are very much against the Bill. They say it has proved unnecessary, and they ask why is it not proposed to apply the idea to New Zealand and its people in the first case, on the ground that “what is sauce for the goose must be sauce for the gander.” We say it is not right to interfere with the food of the people in New Zealand, and therefore it cannot be right to interfere with the food of our fellow-citizens at the other side of the Empire. A good deal has been heard of the question of loyalty, and the necessity of standing together. We must remember that we are all citizens of the Empire, and therefore we in New Zealand should do nothing to antagonize our fellow-citizens in other parts, but do our best to conserve amicable relations between all sections of Britishers. That reminds me that our suppliers are very strong on this point. You, sir, stated in addressing a meeting in Stratford that many of the producers did not want the existing channels interfered with, as they were satisfied with them, and added, “I must confess that their confidence in the present channels has not been misplaced.” As that is the case, and as this great industry has been built up on the lines of confidence in the present arrangements, we say the proposed change is altogether too radical, too far-reaching, and the industry is too important to justify any experiment. There is another matter still I would like to