

fact that the promoters have not understood what they have undertaken, that it is far too great for them, and that they have blundered. Therefore I ask you, gentlemen, to remember that I am not desirous of imputing wrongdoing to any one.

How support was obtained : Last year support to the measure was obtained by means of a campaign on the supposed evils of the present system of marketing, and largely supported by wild vilification of the British merchants. The tactics have been so discredited they have been dropped—except that we have a painful reiteration of the vague term “speculative manipulator,” and the stalking-horse latterly has been control of shipping and regulation of supplies—this will be dealt with later—but here we wish to state emphatically that very much support for the measure has been obtained by misrepresentation and by plausible generalities which have failed to stand the test of investigation.

These are plain definite statements which, if proved, should most certainly result in rejection of the measure. Clear instances in support of our statement will be given under a different heading, but here is one : In the *Dominion* of the 12th instant appears an interview with Mr. Grounds, chairman of the Producers' Council. It is headed thus : “The Dairy Pool.—A Growing Demand for Legislation.—How the Factories are Voting.” This is the article attached. The whole statement clearly and implicitly infers that since last year support of the Bill has grown throughout the Dominion and that it is now growing, and that the factories in Taranaki will abandon their initial opposition to the Bill. The statement also infers that the full position is displayed and that all the votes cast are given. I am glad to see that Mr. Grounds is present, because I would not like to deal with this point in his absence. Under each division this statement is incorrect and misleading : (1) Comparison with last year's figures will show that support has not increased ; (2) the full position is not displayed ; (3) all the votes are not given ; and (4) opposition is not decreasing in Taranaki, but, on the contrary, is greatly increasing. Mr. Grounds deliberately misleads by giving the votes only where in his favour and not where against him. He takes credit for North Auckland and Hamilton votes as cast at those places, and does not merge them in the Palmerston vote, although North Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, all Wellington, Hawke's Bay, and Taranaki voted at Palmerston, but though a vote for Taranaki was taken in Taranaki, as in Hamilton, Taranaki's vote has been merged in the Palmerston vote. Why ? Because the Taranaki vote was overwhelmingly against him.

Gentlemen, I would draw your special attention to the statement made by Mr. Grounds that “at all places I have been able to visit and at which I have explained the proposed legislation we have been supported even by those who were formerly opposed to the Bill.” That is a very serious statement.

But this is not the worst. At a representative meeting at Stratford on the 24th May it was decided that a vote should be taken by voting-paper, to close on the 24th June. Another meeting was called by the Council at Stratford on the 16th June, and Mr. Grounds did his best to influence the vote, but met with an overwhelmingly adverse vote on the voices. Nothing has been said about that ; but, further, the result of the Taranaki vote by voting-papers sent in to the secretary of the Council has been deliberately suppressed, notwithstanding application for the result and the names of the factories, now over three weeks overdue. That vote is judged to be under twenty for and over forty against. A number of gentlemen in this room will prove the complete accuracy of this statement.

Again, as Mr. Grounds's statement in the *Dominion* is clearly made to influence Parliament and the public by conveying the impression that the more there is known of the scheme the more it is favoured by the producer, it is important that the true position should be set forth. Although I have not the exact figures for last year, because the Department failed to comply with my request—no doubt by inadvertence—for names of factories opposed, though they supplied those in favour, it was generally claimed that the position was over three in favour to one against, and that was the supposed warrant for going on with the measure. Even then Parliament decided that the measure should be postponed until more opportunity was given to the consumers, and I will show you that as a result of that postponement the objectors have increased. It was then three to one in favour of the proposal. To-day it is about two in favour to one against, and the opposition continues to increase. The actual position as far as can be ascertained is as follows :—

					For.	Against.	Total.
North Auckland	..	..	..	..	15	3	18
Hamilton	..	..	..	..	17	7	24
Palmerston	..	..	102	52	154		
Less North Auckland, Hamilton, and Taranaki	..				60	13	73
Taranaki	..	..	..	..	19	40	59
South Island	..	..	..	..	89 (?)	38 (?)	127
					200	103	330

The adjustment of the Palmerston vote may vary by one or two votes, the same applies to Taranaki, but in either the alteration cannot be material.

3. *Mr. Langstone.*] Is that factories, or individuals ?—I understand it is factories, not individuals. Mr. Grounds has given the figures for Palmerston as 102 to 51. Anyhow, you will see the difference is not very great ; but taking out Taranaki it left the actual voting in Palmerston as 64 to 13, since when there have been others added to “against,” but I have not had time to check that. That is no way to get at the thing : if the factory is to be taken as the voting unit it should be “one factory one vote” throughout the whole of the Dominion. But the South Island figures—Mr. Grounds's—are peculiar. He states that there are 124 factories in the southern association district and that 89 only were represented at the conference : 41 more votes were cast than factories represented and 3 more than the total factories. However, the votes show less than two in favour to one against for the whole Dominion, and still less majority taking the North Island alone.