

10. *Mr. Masters.*] I am placed in a peculiar position. Representations have been made to me that there are quite a number of amendments wanted by the Dairy-farmers' Union. Now, they send a representative along here, and to all intents and purposes he is not prepared to answer any question asked with respect to the amendments they suggest? What is the position?—Mr. Chairman, would I be in order in not answering—

11. I have a whole list of amendments that the Dairy-farmers' Union have asked me to try and put into the Bill?—Mr. Chairman, might I be allowed to state the position in this way? We have the impression that the House, under certain circumstances, may possibly not be sitting much more than three weeks. We have no definite knowledge, of course, naturally, but my executive have that impression from the newspapers; and we feel that the time is extremely short. We recognize that if we force our amendments—the amendments which were passed at our provincial conferences—the chances are that the Bill will not go through this session. That is the point we wish to emphasize. I take it that it is quite possible to amend the Act in the following session if any of the provisions are not practicable.

12. And in the meantime you are prepared to swallow anything?—Hardly that. We are not asked to swallow anything.

13. As long as you get the Bill?—I am not expressing my personal views. My executive have the impression that the Bill is an honest attempt to do something for the benefit of the dairy-farmers.

14. Mr. Cobbe, what do you say to the Bill yourself, as a dairy-farmer. You are a pretty keen man. Will you give us your own private opinion on the Bill?—No, Mr. Masters, I am sorry to say I cannot. I am here representing the New Zealand Dairy-farmers' Union—not myself. I have no standing in this room as a private citizen.

15. Were you on the conferences that were held by the Dairy-farmers' Union?—Yes.

16. Do you remember a resolution coming forward from the Wairarapa Dairy-farmers' Union opposing the Bill?—Opposing the Bill?

17. Yes—in its present form?—It is not likely that such a resolution did come forward.

18. Yes, opposing the Bill in its present form. What has happened to that resolution?—Of course, the position is this, Mr. Masters: With a large body of farmers, certain opinions expressed at provincial union meetings are very often personal opinions. We sifted the whole thing out here at the Dominion Conference. We got the opponents of the Bill here, and those who were in favour of the Bill here, and we sifted the whole question out—and the consensus of opinion was in favour of the Bill. This Dominion Conference resolution has disposed of any difficulties brought up by any provincial union.

19. But it was carried at the Provincial Conference?—That may be so. I was not at that conference.

20. When there is a large section opposing a big change such as this, do you not think that that large section should have consideration, or do you think that the thing should be forced upon them? I will put it this way—I will give you an illustration: There is a suggestion for a Fruit-control Bill, and the Nelson growers are entirely in favour of that both by meetings and by signatures to a petition. But they ask for no compulsory clauses against any other people in the fruit industry. They do not require them. And there will probably be a Bill brought before the House on those lines. What are your views in regard to those who are opposed to the dairy pool?—Well, the Fruitgrowers' Association is hardly in the same position, for this reason: Those opposing the dairy pool—not altogether, but generally speaking—are straight-out proprietary interests.

21. Oh, no?—I should imagine so. That is the impression we have been given.

22. That is a wrong impression?—The whole of the gentlemen who have given evidence against the Bill here are representatives of proprietary concerns. If we have not some form of compulsion it is like giving a man the skin of an apple with nothing in it.

23. In addition to your occupation as a farmer you have been actively engaged in business?—Yes.

24. Do you not think, as a business man, it is a wise course to adopt, in a case like this, to bring about reforms gradually? In your own business you would not revolutionize your business all at once?—As far as I can see, the industry really requires legislation of this character, after what occurred at the time of the slump.

25. You do not think that the dairy industry is likely to go bankrupt?—I presume that the slump was responsible for the legislation which is now suggested.

26. Do you approve of the amount of the levy being charged?—We had an amendment with regard to that—that it should be half. We are not objecting to the amount so much, as we know that the Board would not levy for the whole amount, possibly only a proportion, but to keep it down we thought it would be just as well to suggest an amendment. But we leave that to the good sense of the House. With the evidence that the House will have before it it will be in a far better position than my executive to come to a decision on that point.

27. Do you base your views on the Dairy-produce Control Bill on the Meat Control Board in connection with the meat business?—We did not discuss the question of the Meat Board.

28. I am asking you?—I must say that I cannot express a personal view, Mr. Masters.

29. *Mr. Forbes.*] Where did you get your instructions from to come here to support the Bill?—From the Dominion Executive, which met in Wellington last week.

30. Where did they get their instructions from?—From the provincial executives. The provincial executives sent representatives to the National Conference, and of course they made the final decision.

31. You say that there are about five thousand dairy-farmers in your union: did you endeavour to ascertain the views of those five thousand dairy-farmers by means of voting?—Certainly.

32. Did you put a direct issue to them?—I would not like to say that a direct issue was put to them, but the various branches held meetings to discuss the Bill. And in an odd case or two their