

MR. F. WAITE examined. (No. 21.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Your full name, Mr. Waite?—Frederick Waite.

2. And your official position?—I am chairman of directors of the Co-operative Dairy Company of Otago.

3. Will you make a statement?—Yes, sir. I am sorry to say that I have had the influenza, and I may not be able to make myself sufficiently well heard, but if you cannot hear me you will just have to ask me again. I am a dairy-farmer from South Otago, and milk on an average from forty to fifty cows. I am chairman of directors of the newly formed co-operative company of Otago, and I may say that I represent the purely co-operative dairy interests in the South—

4. *Mr. Forbes.*] Can you give us the factories you represent?—I represent a good few. I will refer to that matter later on. I do not want to go into the question in detail. I am just reviewing the position as it was last year in the South. There has been a good deal of difference between the North and the South on matters of dairy control. We have had different points of view for some time, but at last we are beginning to think nationally, and even the dairy-farmers in the South, slow as we are, are beginning to realize that we must get in with the more progressive people of the North. A year ago, as you are aware, we in the South were against almost anything put forward by the North Island, but to-day we come here rather humbly and say there has been a revulsion of feeling in the South Island in regard to dairy-produce control. There was a meeting last year about the Control Bill. That business was ventilated at a big meeting at which there were over seventy delegates from all over Otago. I convened a meeting to form a really co-operative dairy-butter company in the South to work against the proprietary interests—or, rather, not really to work against the proprietary interests, but really to work in our own interests. The only resolution carried at that meeting last year had a great deal of prejudice against the control. This was the resolution: "That, seeing that the whole of the cream-suppliers of Otago and Southland will be absolutely unrepresented at the conference in Wellington, this representative meeting of the dairy-farmers of Otago enters an emphatic protest against any dealing with our produce without our consent." That was the resolution carried at the biggest public meeting in Otago.

5. *Mr. Burnett.*] That was purely the representation on that conference?—Yes. At that time, sir, the scattered and isolated dairy-farmers of Otago only had proprietary concerns or joint factories to send their butter to their clients, and we were faced with this position: that, although we had no organization that could handle our butter, we had to be represented in Wellington by proprietary factories, who, of course, put their side of the case and not the case of the isolated dairy-farmers of Otago. I may say that I took a month off and we went round the country for the purpose of forming a company, and as a consequence we got £13,000 worth of shares taken up, and we bought out one of these dairy companies. Now, the dairy company that we bought out was called the Dunedin Dairy Factory. It had a brand-new factory, but it was an old-established concern. When the Dairy Control Export Bill was before the House of Representatives last year we find Mr. Dickson saying that he had received protests from the Taieri Peninsula, the Waitaki, and the Dunedin Dairy Company. Now, these three companies are the companies that handle all the butter, or, at any rate, all the butter of the Otago Province, and they are all proprietary companies. If we take the Dunedin Dairy Company's business I think it will be found that last year this particular company had five hundred suppliers who objected to the Bill; but when they were talked over by other suppliers they were all in favour of the Bill. When they were represented by the dairy company they were against the Bill, but when the position was put before them clearly they were all in favour of the Bill, and in consequence we got £13,000 worth of shares from them in order to buy out the companies I have already referred to. The farmers were anxious to support this organization because they are getting now what they could not get before in Wellington—namely, representation when the question of the disposal of their produce comes before Parliament, and so I am to-day speaking as chairman of directors of that dairy company which has been formed in Otago for the purpose of representing the scattered and isolated dairymen of that province. We have got to this position: that whereas a year ago the isolated dairy-farmers of Otago were represented by the proprietary companies, to-day they are represented by their own concern. We find that a great change has taken place, and that every co-operative dairy factory working in the interests of the dairy-farmers is in favour of the Bill that is before you gentlemen for consideration. We find, however, that every butter-factory representing proprietary interests is absolutely and totally opposed to the control suggested. So far as Otago is concerned, there is a clear-cut issue as between the proprietary interests and the co-operative dairying interests of the province in question.

6. *Mr. Masters.*] Are you speaking as the representative of Southland?—Yes, for the butter interests of Southland. Mr. Dunlop, who was present at this Committee the other day, was speaking as the representative for the Southland district, but, unfortunately, he had to go away. I am speaking for both the butter and cheese interests of Otago. Now, looking at the cheese position we find that Mr. Dickson in speaking in the House of Representatives said that certain factories in Otago had protested against the introduction of the Bill. We find that to-day the Momona Cheese factory, which is the second-largest cheese-factory in Otago, is absolutely in favour of the Bill, and they have changed their minds since last year. I desire to say also that the Waikouaiti Company, which was against the Bill last year, is now in favour of it; and then the Sterling Cheese-factory, which opposed the Bill last year, is now absolutely in favour of it. There has been a decided swing-over in the South in connection with the Dairy Control Bill. I may say that we have gone to a great deal of trouble in connection with the matter, but in order to have the matter properly understood and have the opinions of the various factories concerned we sent telegrams to all those concerned, and in consequence we have a pretty close record now of what the people in the South do think. The whole