

Another witness expressed the following view :—

“ For the past five or six years I have been practising all-the-year-round dairying on my own farm.

“ As a result of my experience I can say quite definitely that there is no real reason why New Zealand should not be able very largely to even up her production of butterfat month by month, by milking all the year round. In certain areas there may be difficulties, as where, for instance, the farms are too wet to carry stock in the winter. This eventually may be got over, as grass is coming more and more to be treated as a crop. I myself have seen in Holland cases where grass is cut and carried to the cow-sheds to be fed to cows under cover. Rapid improvements in methods of handling grass are being made overseas. Those of us who produce winter grass in New Zealand are very careful not to leave the animals on it longer than is necessary for them to get a good feed, in order to reduce trampling and soiling to a minimum. It is quite certain, however, that we can, by proper management, produce excellent grass in this comparatively mild winter of ours. We certainly cannot get grass to grow in the dry summer period. The objections raised to winter milking are not convincing. The ordinary one is that the farmer wants a rest sometime. If this attitude is to be adopted, it means that farmers will soon go to the wall. Our competitors in other countries milk all the year round, so why should we expect not to? The other objection is that winter milking causes too large an accumulation of mud around the shed. Yet most farmers are already bringing in their cows in the end of July and in August, the wettest months of the year. The advantages far outweigh any possible disadvantages, and many people have stressed the advantages besides myself. From the marketing point of view, all-the-year-round production is of prime importance. In the first place, we should then be in a position to place supplies of fresh butter on the market all the year round. We should also even up the quality, because it is well known that the chemical and physical character of milk varies with the advance in lactation of the cow; milk produced at the end of the lactation period apparently producing butter which keeps less well than that produced from milk of cows in full milk. Owing to difficulty in getting cows in calf, quite a number of farmers are being forced into winter milking. By bringing in a portion of the cows in autumn less work is thrown on the bulls.

“ Calving down a portion of the herd in autumn actually eases the feed position on the farm in my experience, because in the Waikato the summer drought, if at all extended, means an enormous slump in autumn; and if this drought happens to be prolonged, the cows never come back on their milk, and the autumn and early winter production suffers. A certain proportion of autumn calvers will correct this slump. It is easier also to calve cows down in good condition in autumn than after a hard winter, and this partly accounts for the fact that these autumn calvers usually give a higher total production than spring calvers. The calves from autumn calvers are weaned in time to take advantage of the spring flush of grass, from which they receive great benefit. Spring calvers produce calves, which by the time they are weaned have missed this spring flush, and then are weaned on to dry summer grass and suffer severely from flies. It is also an advantage, to my mind, to put yearlings born in the late spring to the bull so that they calve down in the autumn at two and half years old. Similarly calves born in the autumn can be brought in to calve in the spring, when they are two and a half years old. Too many animals are brought in, underdeveloped, at two years old at present, with consequent breeding troubles.

“ As a result of my own experience and that of farmers practising all-the-year-round milking, however, it is important to point out that it is undesirable to bring in too many of the cows in the autumn, and we put the figure at not more than one-third of the herd at the outside.

“ As regards the effect of all-the-year-round milking on cost of production, we have to look at both the farm and the factory side of the matter. From the farm point of view there is no extra expense so far as I can see, except in a case where at times labour is stood off during the winter months, and except for the extra cost of power and light at the shed, which at the most cannot amount to more than a very few pounds. A certain extra expense may be necessary on manures, for all-the-year-round milking cannot be practised by using super alone. In any case I maintain that one-sided manuring must result, after a few years of intensive farming, in resulting stock troubles. The extra cost of manure, however, is more than made up by the increased production per acre and the cost of manure per pound butterfat is consequently much reduced.”

107. General Conclusion :

The Commission considers that further information on the marketing and quality side of the problem would be required to justify a definite recommendation in favour of the general adoption of continuous milking. It is of the opinion that the question is primarily a marketing one to which the Dairy-produce Control Board should give close attention; and, if on full examination it appears that the practice is sounder than that of storing butter, efforts should be made to extend winter milking, which is now practised to some extent in the more favoured parts of the Dominion, to other parts. The Commission inclines to the view that an extension of the practice is desirable on general grounds, and is of the opinion that, if seasonal fluctuations in production were minimized, less speculation in New Zealand butter would be indulged in. It is only the insufficiency of the evidence regarding the effect of winter dairying on marketing and quality that has restrained the Commission from making a definite recommendation for the institution of measures designed to bring about the general adoption of the system. Unfortunately, the necessary evidence was not available in New Zealand.