

N.Z. HONEY CONTROL

MR. J. MURDOCH'S CRITICISM.

INDUSTRY IN WESTLAND.

Mr John Murdoch of Ross, a critic of the New Zealand honey control system, discussing Westland's honey industry, writes:—"I am alive—are you?" was the startling title of an article by Elbert Hubbard who found that scores of people are dead although still walking about. For some years past I have drawn your attention to the operations of the Honey Producers, Association, the directors of which engineered the formation of the Honey Control Board, with the result that what promised to be a thriving industry in the year 1924, to-day is, as far as Westland is concerned, dead—although the directors are still walking about. I have from time to

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time shown that the Control Board's policy was absolutely wrong and was doomed to failure. My words have come true as the directors consider that in view of the Association's liabilities and the falling-away of support by members, that it is advisable that the company go into voluntary liquidation, and accordingly will submit a resolution to that effect.

This resolution was carried on July 26th at Wellington and confirmed at Hamilton on August 16th, 1932. In the first place control was doomed to failure because the men who were at the head of affairs were not produce exporters. One was a brick and tile maker, the other was a chemist, another a schoolmaster. They ignored the fact that supply and demand ruled the world by attempting fixation of prices. They shipped to only one agent in London instead of direct shipments to all the principal points as well as the Continent. Control was subservient to the interests of the Honey Producers' Association who favoured a uniform blend of honey. The blending of honey suffered the same fate as New Zealand standardised cheese. People who liked a fine grained white honey such as Westland produce objected to eat it when blended with some North Island dark honey. Blending honey meant melting in a large vat certain quantities of light and dark honey to give a uniform colour, thereby killing the aroma and only adding expense. The last balance sheet of the H.P.A. shows that in the assets, the plant for handling honey in Auckland is valued at £438 17s 9d and the plant in London is valued at £2000. This plant expense is not required by the ordinary produce exporter who leaves the purchaser of bulk honey to pack to suit his own requirements.

To show the extravagance of the Honey Producers' Association in office furniture and fittings after 18 years the above is shown as assets at £764 6s 5d. Registration trade mark expenses account is shown in the assets at £340 12s 7d. I presume this refers to the name "Imperial Bee Honey." Now that the company is in liquidation I wonder who would pay 340 pence for the name. Again, the advertising account, London, is down at £15,455 12s 6d as an asset. How much would this bring? In the liabilities I see the company owe Messrs C. and E. Morton no less than £87,098 8s 7d, but it was only recently we read that Morton's wharf in London, containing New Zealand honey, was destroyed by fire. In 1922 the losses of the company were estimated at £19,557 4s 11d. Could this position have been known at the time, then the association would have been shown to be bankrupt, but the 1923 season's honey was sold before the position could be ascertained—so the company's report states. The interesting part of high finance connected with this company lies in the fact that someone had a brain wave resulting in the birth of the Honey Control Board and of course the Honey Producers' Association in 1924 were appointed as wet nurse. In 1929 the Honey Producers' Association came to the Government with a request for £9000 of the taxpayers' money, and, wonderful to say, they got it. I would suggest that the Associated Chambers of Commerce ask the Minister of Agriculture to have a searching inquiry made into the affairs of the Control Board. It is admitted that the Honey Producers' Association was bankrupt in 1923 but did not divulge this position when they applied for a Control Board, so that all honey shipped from New Zealand would have to be under Honey Producers' Association supervision. Since the Honey Producers' Association has gone into liquidation a new company, comprised of a number of the old hands, has been formed.

“I am alive—are you?” to the possibility of the new company wanting control of the export of honey. Prior to the control coming into force a considerable quantity of honey was produced in Westland, but last season there was not enough honey produced to supply local stores and supplies had to be procured from other districts. If free marketing of honey comes into force again by the abolition of the Honey Control Board there is no reason why the industry in Westland should not again flourish in our midst. Owing to the fire at Morton’s wharf in London, stocks of honey will be short until next March when the new season’s crop will be available, but unless a rush sets in, local requirements are ample.

In conclusion I wish to point out that members of Parliament are not free from blame in passing the Honey Control Act as they were warned what was likely to happen. Evidently de-

partmental advice was followed, and if so an inquiry would clean up the matter.
