

11. In concluding their labours, your Committee desire to express their opinion that, to enable the subjects dealt with by the Committee to receive the attention which their importance demands, a Minister of Agriculture should be appointed, whose duty should be to conserve the interests of all industries having their origin in our fruitful soils, and that the department under his control should include experts capable of directing the attention of agriculturists and others to the best means of dealing with insect and other pests, and of utilising generally the products of the soil to the best advantage.

12th September, 1890.

GEO. BEETHAM,
Chairman.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

MONDAY, 18TH AUGUST, 1890.

Mr. GEORGE BEETHAM, Chairman.

M. MURPHY, F.L.S., Chairman of the Canterbury Fruit-growers' Association, examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You are Secretary to the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association?—Yes.

2. You have considered for many years the development of the fruit industry in New Zealand?—Yes. I have prepared some notes on the subject for your consideration. [Document handed in.]

3. This is the result of your full consideration of this matter?—Yes.

4. Have you anything further to add to this written evidence?—I do not think so. I have gone very fully into the whole subject. I have been Chairman of the Canterbury Fruit-growers' Association for some time past, and have had every opportunity of gaining information on every phase of the question.

5. We may take it that this written statement of yours would represent the concentrated opinion of your association?—Yes.

6. Is it a large association?—It is not a very large one, but it is doing good work.

7. Have you extended your investigations into the wine industry?—No; our investigations have been entirely with a view to export. I have given in my notes the result of the exports, the cost, and the price obtained for Tasmanian apples, also information as to the best kind of apple-trees to plant. I have referred to the small-fruit industry. If the manufacturers of home-made wine were allowed to sell their wine in less quantities than two gallons it would give an immense impetus to the growth of small fruits. As it is now, manufacturers are prohibited by law from selling less than two gallons. With reference to getting freight, I can bear out the statements you have heard as to the difficulty in getting suitable space in the direct steamers. One of the largest apple-growers in Canterbury last spring had to give up the idea of sending fruit, for want of space.

8. Have you dealt with the question of a cool-chamber?—I do not know that I have. If we had the space the produce would go direct to the ship. Fruit cannot be carried safely except in cool-chambers.

9. It is also important, where practicable, that cool-storage should be provided at the ports?—Yes, for the same reason as it is necessary for butter. I have suggested that one of the means of promoting the industry would be for the Government to collect all the information they can possibly get from the different societies throughout New Zealand. It would be of no use getting it from any one part of the colony alone, because what would suit Canterbury would not suit Wellington, and what would suit Wellington would not suit Auckland. Papers should be obtained from all the horticultural societies, and the information embodied in the form of an essay for distribution. A Fruit Convention was held in Victoria last year, and this pamphlet [produced]—"Department of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 5, September, 1889"—contains the result of the papers read and the discussions that took place.

10. Do you consider that a Fruit Convention on the same basis as this would be of service to New Zealand?—No, I do not recommend it; I think it is premature as yet. What we do want is information, collected and published in pamphlet form for distribution, as to soil, planting, the kind of trees to be planted—practical information as to the mode of selecting the varieties that would suit different parts of New Zealand.

The following are the notes above referred to:—

The Fruit Industry.

(1.) There is a great future in store for fruit-growers in New Zealand, for the reason that the same conditions which favour the dairy industry also favour the fruit-grower. I refer to the difference in the seasons. We can land our fruit in the Home market at a time when local and other supplies are exhausted. The demand is practically limitless.

(2.) The growing of fruit for export should be encouraged as much as possible. Like the dairy industry, it is peculiarly adapted to small holdings, and, indeed, for working in conjunction with that industry. I would go so far as to say that every farmer in Canterbury should have his orchard of not less than an acre and as much more as he could pay proper attention to. Of course orchards must only be planted in suitable soils.

(3.) In view of the probable condition of things arising out of the demands of labour, it is probable that farming on a large scale will in future have to be conducted differently, probably on co-operative principles, and on small holdings, where the labour employed will for the most part be