

My opinion is that your climate in this province, also the soil, are well suited for fruit-growing. In Auckland Province we find the sun rather too powerful during the months of February and March for some kinds of apples. I do not mean to say that we cannot produce good fruit in Auckland that will keep.

124. You have often seen American fruit in our own market?—Yes.

125. What has that fetched?—It has fetched as much as 16s. a case of 40lb. That is a high price.

126. When our own apples are not to be had?—I have got them to keep up to October. That is my experience. I have kept them to December; but I have experimented with fruit, and found it not possible to keep fruit in any large quantity beyond October or November, or, at the latest, December. But it cannot be done with profit. I should therefore prefer disposing of my fruit earlier in the season, on account of the loss and waste of apples, which would deteriorate or "spot." It pays me better to sell at a lower price earlier in the season.

127. I am speaking particularly as regards the industry itself: By the establishment of canning-works, in which large quantities of fruit would be prepared for the foreign market—is that a direction in which you would suggest that the Committee should report? What I wish you to tell us is whether that is a direction in which this industry should be developed?—Nothing will pay so well as the fruit shipped in large quantities at the proper times to suit the market. Nothing in the way of canning can approach it, if the prices given in these papers can be realised. These prices are from 15s. to £1 3s. per case.

128. *The Chairman.*] That would suit the New Zealand grower if his fruits are properly selected?—Yes, and properly graded, which is a very important thing for the English market. Each apple should be properly packed in tissue-paper—that is to say, packed in a business-like manner. Proper packing, grading, and brand of the grower has a very great effect in the profitable disposing of fruit, providing it arrives in good condition. But I am also deeply impressed with the importance of canning, evaporating, drying, and crystallizing fruit. As I pass through the towns, even in the Province of Auckland and in the country districts, I see everywhere the bright labels of American fruits, which is a crying shame, seeing what advantages we have for fruit-growing, canning, drying, and crystallizing fruit.

129. *Mr. Walker.*] Do you know a Mr. Blagrove?—Yes.

130. Are you aware that he has been drying fruit by a particular process?—Yes; there are several others who are also drying.

131. Have you seen any of his results?—I have not seen his, but I have seen the results obtained by others which have been exhibited at horticultural shows. I have seen apples, dried by the evaporator, produced and sold in Auckland, quite equal to those turned out in America. I know, as I have said, several others who are producing and evaporating apples—for instance, Mr. Wilson, of the Wairoa, Auckland; Mr. W. Webster, of Hokianga; and Mr. Gubb, of Port Albert, who is a large fruit-grower. Mr. Spawn is not a practical fruit-grower, but he is connected with the evaporating process.

132. *The Chairman.*] Have you turned your attention at all to the production of cider?—No, I have not; but people in Auckland who have done so have not been able to dispose of the cider. They found that whiskey was in much greater demand than cider. Some people appeared to think that the whiskey was better than the cider. I am of the opinion that in the colonies there is not the same demand for cider that there is at Home.

133. *Mr. Walker.*] Do you say they cannot make good cider?—I cannot say that the cider was not good, but I know they could not dispose of it. The "Golden Harvey" is a first-class apple for cider, but would pay better to sell as a dessert apple.

134. *The Chairman.*] You have mentioned £1 2s. and £1 3s. a case being got for apples in London?—Yes; but that was an extreme price.

135. What would be the expense of sending the apples to the London market?—About 7s. 6d. a case.

136. Does that include all charges from the orchard?—Yes; freight and everything.

137. What is the weight of the case?—About 40lb. That would be the highest price—in the month of April. The lowest price is 15s., in May. For Cox's Orange Pippin 18s. is the highest price. These are extreme prices. Of course, we could not expect these prices would be maintained. There are one or two other things with regard to fruit-growing in this colony which I want to put on record. First is the fact that the New Zealand Railway Commissioners do not encourage the fruit industry as it was expected they would do. I think Mr. Walker was one of twenty members who waited on the Government on the subject of encouragement to be given to industries. The result was that a clause was put in the Railway Bill in which the Commissioners were requested not to regard the question of revenue only, but to encourage local industries of this kind. So far they have not done so. Then, the railrage rates in New Zealand are nearly double what they are in Victoria; the rates in Sydney are about one-third what they are here. I have the tariff by me, so that I can verify what I say. "Empties" are carried free on the railways in Sydney (Mr. McKerrow has the Victorian tariff). Under the new tariff for August in New South Wales I know that "empties" are put together and sent to the country districts by rail free; they also carry milk-cans, butter-boxes, fish-baskets, and such things free. Even the shipping companies in New South Wales do the same.

138. *Mr. Walker.*] You mean empty butter-boxes, cases, and packages which are used in collecting freight?—Butter-boxes and "empties" for all kinds of produce. I think it will be a terrible blow to us if our steam-service connection with San Francisco comes to nought. I look to America as a market not only for Auckland but for people down South. It will be a better market for our fruit than even England.

139. At certain times of the year?—Yes; it is only for three months of the year that the English market would be available.