

orchard in the northern district is really worth having under present conditions; in fact, it has come to this: that in a great many districts where dairying is carried on the apple-orchards have been allowed to go back. In some places they have been actually taken out.

70. That is not the question. Supposing you had planted an orchard yourself—that you purchased trees at the ordinary price, planted them, and got the orchard into a profitable condition, and attended to it until you expected to get some return—say, £5 or £6 a year—what do you consider would be the value per acre of an orchard like that? What would it cost?—The value to the owner would be a very different thing to the value to the purchaser at the present time. It would cost a lot of money to plant an orchard and bring it into bearing.

71. How much? I do not want to take an unfair advantage of you. I want to know whether £15 per annum is too much for a man to claim as interest on his outlay—as the rent of an orchard in good condition, as you said yours was last year?—In that case you would want to take the first cost of the land, the cost of the trees, the cost of cultivation up to the time of bearing, and everything else. I could give you that, but I should like to have a little time for consideration.

72. You put down £15 as the rental in this statement, and then you say in your report that it is too much to charge. I want to know whether it is too much or not, taking into consideration the cost of getting it into full bearing?—It would take some little time to think it out.

73. You are not prepared to say at the present time whether this £15 for rent is too much or too little?—I consider it excessive.

74. Will you tell the Committee why?—The land is at Otahuhu, which is almost a suburb of Auckland, and land there is worth from £50 to £70 an acre.

75. *Mr. Kidd.*] What is the extent of the orchard?—There are 2½ acres under trees.

76. *Mr. Bollard.*] Five per cent. on the value of the land is a very small matter in a question of the expense of getting an orchard in this condition. It is the planting, and the getting of it into full bearing?—The condition of the orchard when we got it was such that the owner was actually taking out the trees.

77. You say you have it in good order and in full bearing, and that has been done at the Government expense?—Only partly. The trees were grown before we took them, but they were in a very bad condition. We simply remedied the condition of the trees.

78. You admit that last year the orchard was in good order. Assuming it belonged to you, and it was in good order and bearing, do you think that £15 would be too much for the rent?—Yes, I do.

79. What do you consider would be a fair rent?—Under present conditions I myself should not be prepared to pay more than £1 10s. an acre for land there bearing apple-trees.

80. *Hon. Mr. Bowen.*] With trees five years old planted on it?—Yes, with trees five years old.

81. *Mr. Bollard.*] Does this area of orchard include the shelter-beds around?—No; it is just the actual area under trees alone. There are 2½ acres actually in apple-trees, according to my own reckoning.

82. What is the total area rented?—Probably about 3 acres. Before we took the place over some rows of trees had been removed in one part, and that land is not actually under apple-trees.

83. As a matter of fact, you do not know the exact area that the Government have rented?—We have not had it surveyed.

84. Do you consider this balance-sheet satisfactory from a commercial point of view?—I do, taking this fact into consideration: that under ordinary circumstances a grower would do a great deal of the work himself, and with the assistance of his family, and he would use his own horse. That would allow of a very fair margin for profit.

85. You stated that one drawback that you experienced in connection with the sale of the fruit was the fact that there were hundreds of tons of infected fruit sold in the Auckland market?—That is so.

86. Supposing that was all clean fruit, would you get a better price?—Decidedly. The very first result of preventing the sale of infected fruit would be to increase the price of apples to such a profitable figure that a grower would be fully justified in giving, and would be glad to give, all the care he possibly could to his apples.

87. Supposing that the hundreds of tons of infected fruit that you say is sold in the Auckland market was all clean and sound, do you think you would sell your fruit better in Auckland? Would there not be more?—Not if there were a very large quantity of clean fruit. The price of the clean fruit would certainly begin to drop, but then we should establish an export trade.

88. I am leading up to this: as to whether you would suggest to relieve the market. Supposing the fruit was all clean, would you suggest exporting it, or canning, or preserving of some sort or other?—I should suggest establishing an export trade with apples of the best quality. With other varieties not suitable for export, but suitable for canning purposes, I would advocate putting up a really good canned article. Fruit that was not suitable for that could be used for pulp.

89. Do you favour dried apples here?—I do not altogether, on account of the enormous expense involved in drying fruit, and the fact that in a great many districts where apples are largely grown fuel is very scarce.

90. Do you think the Government should assist the fruit-growers in establishing canning-factories, and so forth?—I do, most decidedly.

91. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Can the Government reasonably assist: are there any means by which they can do so?—There are no means at the present time, but I hope that the Government will see their way to pass a Bill to enable the Department to assist the fruit-growers in establishing canneries, and possibly, in connection with them, distributing agencies, so that the fruit may be better distributed in the colony and an export trade initiated.