

92. *Mr. Bollard.*] You consider that it would be a great boon if we could manage to keep for our own use in the colony the £120,000 that goes out every year for fruit?—Undoubtedly it would make a vast difference in the welfare of the colony generally; but in the first place I cannot hold out any hope of any expansion in the fruit industry until we get an Orchard and Garden Pests Bill.

93. How would you suggest that the Government assist the fruit-growers and the fruit-canning?—By advancing funds, say, on the security of the land, buildings, and necessary appliances in equipping the buildings; that would leave any shares that would be taken in a company for working capital. That is only a suggestion. There is one difficulty that we meet with in the fruit industry that has not been met with in dairying, for instance, and that is the scattered nature of the fruit settlements and the fruit-growers generally. It is practically impossible to bring them and keep them together. So that it would be necessary to advance funds for the interests of the fruit industry on different terms to those on which funds have been advanced in the dairying industry.

94. *Mr. McLachlan.*] Are the Auckland-grown apples suitable for cider-making?—There has been some very good cider made in the Auckland District, but you cannot make the best cider from codlin-moth apples. And if you get an inferior quality of cider you are hardly likely to get a good market for it.

95. Do you know the Styx apple-orchard?—I have been there.

96. Could you grow as good quality of apples for cider-making in Auckland as they grow there?—Undoubtedly. The difficulty has been that they have not planted the right varieties for cider-making up to the present time; they have not extensively cultivated.

97. *Mr. Bollard.*] What is the average percentage of market fruit in the whole orchard, counting the windfalls as well?—I cannot give you that, because I should have to work it out from the percentage of infected fruit and the percentage of clean fruit given in my report.

98. Will you say it is not 32 or 33 per cent.?—The percentage of infected fruit gathered from the ground was 33½ per cent.—that is, there was about 77 per cent. of clean fruit gathered from the ground—77 per cent. of the windfalls was clean.

99. What I want is the average percentage, taking the windfalls and all the other apples into account?—That I could not give you without working it out from the statement.

100. *Mr. Massey.*] Have you got the orchard at Otahuhu in hand now?—Yes.

101. Do you intend to continue your expenses during the coming season?—Yes.

102. I think you told us that the orchard was in a very bad way at the time it was taken over by the Agricultural Department?—Yes.

103. Do you know how many years it had been neglected?—Several years before we took it over. I could not exactly say how many.

104. When you say it was neglected you mean that nothing was done in the way of spraying or bandaging?—Nothing was done for several years.

105. But the trees were well grown, the soil was good, and so on?—The trees were decidedly overgrown.

106. But the soil was good?—Yes.

107. Was it suitable soil for fruit-growing purposes?—Yes, very good soil for an orchard.

108. Was it necessary, then, to go to a lot of expense to bring the orchard into fair condition?—It was absolutely necessary, because the trees were so overgrown and the branches so much interlaced that it was practically impossible to get the spray inside the trees.

109. You think that the orchard is in fair condition now?—Yes, except that I could never reduce the trees to their proper size. They are far too high. I would not think of allowing trees to arrive at that condition.

110. You have had the orchard in hand for two years?—For three years.

111. Has it been necessary for you during the last year to give much of your own time to supervision, and so forth?—I have given very little of my time.

112. Did you have a good man there?—He is a good man now.

113. Something in the way of a manager?—One of the great difficulties is that the orchard at Otahuhu is not large enough to employ a competent resident manager. The first man I discharged. I took on another, and taught him what he knows at the present time.

114. How much of this second man's time is occupied in looking after the orchard?—I could not tell you exactly, because I employ him for, say, three weeks at a time, and then he is off for perhaps two months.

115. Does the £25 16s. shown in the balance-sheet represent the whole of the expenditure in connection with labour, including picking and packing the fruit?—Yes, spraying and picking and packing.

116. Can you give the Committee any idea of what the expenditure was in connection with picking and packing alone? I want to get the actual expenditure in connection with cleaning, spraying, and so on?—I could give you the details, but I have not got the figures with me.

117. Is it necessary for you to visit the orchard yourself during the fruit season?—Yes; I visit it occasionally to see that the work is going on all right, and to give general instructions for the intervals when I am not able to be present.

118. How often?—It varies, according to the other work that happens to be on hand and the necessity for my being present there. Last season at intervals of about a fortnight or three weeks I was there, with the exception that in the early part of the season I was away altogether for six weeks on one occasion.

119. That is to say, you visit it once every fortnight or three weeks?—I do if I can. There are times when I am not able to visit the orchard even at those intervals, and then I send written instructions.

120. The whole cost of labour is shown in the balance-sheet at £25 16s: do you not think
3—I. 12.