

2. What is your price to-day?—We are all in a state of *statu quo*—I suppose you would call it. There is no one buying, and we do not know where we are. All the millers will make a great loss if this proposal is agreed to, but next year and afterwards the farmers will make the loss—that is, if the £1 duty is taken off—because the farmers cannot grow wheat to sell at 2s. 8d. a bushel. The writer in the *Post* I have referred to says the competition of Australia would weed out the superfluous mills in the colony. Well, there are seventy-five mills, big and small, in the colony, and he takes very little notice of what would be the position of the small millers after what he calls the weeding-out had taken place. The savings perhaps of a lifetime would be lost, and this result is passed over by the writer in the *Post* as a mere nothing, while 15s. an acre loss on a farmer's crop, according to his idea, is a mere detail. For these reasons I hold that reciprocity, so far as wheat and flour are concerned, would not be desirable for the people of New Zealand. I have a telegram in my pocket showing that the price of bread in Sydney is 6½d. per 4 lb. loaf, as against 6d. the 4 lb. loaf in New Zealand, although over there they are selling their flour at £7 10s. a ton, as against our price of £8 10s. less 2½ per cent. discount. That goes to show that the people here have not to pay more than they do elsewhere, and that bread under the circumstances is really cheaper here than it is in Australia.

3. *Mr. Aitken.*] You say that the price of land—that is, freehold land—in South Australia where wheat is grown is from 5s. to 10s. an acre?—I have been told so. It may be some distance back. From 5s. to 10s. an acre as against from £15 to £20 an acre in Canterbury for the best agricultural land.

4. You are quite sure that the 5s.- to 10s.-an-acre land is not the worst of the land?—No; but it is away in the back country—say, three hundred miles from Adelaide. The farmers there grow one or two crops on their land and leave it, and go further back. That is what Mr. Darling told me. Land may be higher there within the last year or two.

5. You said something about introducing the harder wheat of Australia to mix with the soft wheat of New Zealand: what proportion of hard wheat could you mix with the New Zealand wheat?—That was the suggestion of the writer in the *Evening Post* last evening. I hold that it would be a very dangerous experiment to bring Australian wheat in at all, because the bread we now make satisfies our community. I do not think it desirable.

6. Would it be better for the consumers?—The bread consumed here now is quite wholesome.

7. My point is this: would it improve the bread?—It might. The tendency would naturally be in that direction; if we get good seasons here and the wheat is matured, after a few months it is quite equal to Australian wheat. In the limestone districts especially is this the case, and it is only at the beginning of the year when the wheat is damp that there is much difference. We generally keep back a few thousand bags of the matured wheat to mix with the early-grown wheat.

8. Have you ever gone into the question of how much it costs in labour to put the wheat on the market here as compared with the cost in Australia?—I believe the representatives of the Farmers' Union are going to give evidence here, and I dare say they will give you all the information that you require on that point. My opinion would not be so good as theirs.

9. *Mr. Hardy.*] Are the growers of Australia more favourably situated, so far as moisture is concerned, than they are here?—Most certainly, when, as I say, they can strip the wheat and bag it within so short a time.

10. Do they do anything to induce moisture?—I do not think it is required.

11. You have to dry your wheat in damp seasons in New Zealand, have you not?—We have to keep it in store and mix it with drier wheat. Some wheats may be slightly damp, and we could not mix the damp wheat if we wished to make good flour.

12. You have not heard of a firm importing machinery from Australia to put moisture into the wheat in dry seasons?—No. I have seen that they have washing-machines in England, but they are used only when the wheat is hard as flint and mixed with dirt. Our wheat does not require anything of the sort.

13. You think the miller of Australia is more favourably situated in consequence of the growers having dry land to deal with?—Most certainly.

14. He does not have to hold the wheat until it is dry?—No; he can take it almost direct from the field and grind it into flour.

15. *Mr. Hogg.*] Are you certain that New Zealand wheat fetches a smaller price in the English market than Australian wheat?—Yes.

16. You are prepared to contradict the information which has been supplied to me on this point?—I never expect to get within 2s. of Australia in the price.

17. Are you still shipping wheat to England?—I shipped last year.

18. Seeing that we export a large amount of wheat, and that the farmers produce little more than is consumed by the millers here, do you think a decreased consumption on the part of the millers would affect the farmers?—Most decidedly. If the farmers have to compete with flour at the price it is in Hong Kong we could not compete.

19. But if the farmers are able to grow wheat for export to the London market, do you mean to say that the millers give a higher price than the exporter?—They cannot help themselves. The farmers are holding out for 3s. 4d. and 3s. 6d., but if this reciprocal proposal was agreed to they would have to reduce their price to compete with the wheat from other countries.

20. Within the last fortnight have not the prices in New Zealand been the same as those in Australia—is there any material difference between the price of wheat here and the price in the Melbourne and Sydney markets?—Most decidedly. If the price were such as to enable the Australian people to export wheat to New Zealand—instead of paying £300-odd duty, they would be able to export much larger quantities if the duty was taken off.

21. I want facts and figures. Is any reliance to be placed on the prices given in the local and Australian papers?—I cannot tell you. I can only tell you that the price is with bags in there, but the bags here are extra.