

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 16TH SEPTEMBER, 1910.

SAMUEL CRAIG, Farmer, Paeroa, examined. (No. 1)

- 1 *The Chairman.*] Your name, please?—Samuel Craig
- 2 You are a farmer?—I have been farming off and on for the last thirty years in different places. At present I am at Paeroa.
3. You are aware that the question under consideration is the Beet-root Sugar Bill?—Yes.
4. Will you be kind enough to give the Committee any testimony which you may have on the question?—About twenty-five years ago Mr. Graham, of the Waikato, was a very strong advocate of sugar-beet growing, and I thought I would try and grow the sugar-beet too, not with the idea of making sugar, but because I wanted to see how it would do for feeding cattle. It is supposed to be very good for feeding cattle, and I started first experimenting with it when I was living at Waipa Flats. I grew it for two years there, not on a large scale, only a few pounds or so of seed in an experimental way. I found there that the roots would not grow smoothly to start with. The second season was the same, and I gave it up for a long time. When I came to the Thames Valley we started an A. and P. Show, and I thought I would start growing sugar-beet again. The result was just about the same. The last I grew was about two years ago. I tried some in the open paddock, and the results were the same again. I have never been able to get decently shaped roots. I could not get anything like the weight of roots that I could with mangolds on the same area. I have come to the conclusion that, as a commercial venture, and for the use of stock on the farm, it is much better to grow mangolds.
- 5 Have you anything further?—No, unless there are any questions I may have to answer
6. *Hon. Mr. T. Mackenzie*] I take it from your evidence that it would not be a success to grow beet in this country?—I have not found it so, I have tried three or four times.
- 7 Were you pretty careful in the selection of the seed?—I bought the seed from Yates.
8. The quality of seeds has altered within the last few years?—The last I grew was about two years ago. I have not grown any since then.
- 9 You have not studied the possibility of obtaining sugar from Indian corn?—No, I have not.
10. *Mr. Witty*] What weight per acre could you grow of beets in comparison to the mangolds?—About a quarter of the weight.
- 11 What tonnage can you get per acre of mangolds or carrots?—I have never weighed it, but I have got a good average weight. I should say from 15 to 20 tons. Though it had been a very dry season, some of the mangolds stood 18 in. out of the ground. That was in sandy-loam soil.
- 12 Would a light soil have a tendency to create "fingers and toes"?—Yes.
13. It does not apply to the mangolds or carrots, or the beet?—The beet were the worst.
14. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Have you had experience in farming outside of Waikato?—Not in this country, except in the Thames Valley and Te Kowhai
- 15 Any experience in the Old Country?—Yes.
16. What part?—In the North of Ireland.
- 17 Did they grow mangolds there?—Yes.
18. What would you take to be a fair average crop of mangolds in the Old Country?—Somewhere about 50 tons, I should say
- 19 In the *Journal of Agriculture* for the year 1907 the analysis of beet grown in the Waikato is set down at certain percentages of sugar. Do you know anything about that?—No.
20. It says, "Beet-root grown in the Waikato District." I take it that it was taken from different farmers?—I should say so.
- 21 Your attention has not been specially drawn to growing beets for sugar at all?—No. I have tried over and over again to see if I could be successful, but I was not—there were too many fingers and toes.
- 22 What cultivation did you give to the beets during their growth?—I should think from memory that I cultivated the ground four or five times, besides keeping them clean, and thinning. I wanted to cultivate trees in the orchard more than the beets.
- 23 You say that they had fingers and toes?—Not to a very great extent, but there was a great deal of fibre.
24. You say that you cultivated the land during the growth of the beets, say, half a dozen times, or something like that. Can you give the Committee any idea, or an estimate, of the cost per acre supposing you were growing sugar-beet for sugar purposes on a considerable scale?—No, I could not.
- 25 You know, no doubt, the class of land that is best adapted for the growth of beets, mangolds, &c. Is there any large area of land in the Waikato which, in your opinion, would be suitable for this class of plant that would compare favourably with the best class of land that you knew at Home?—No, I do not think there is any area worth speaking about in any one part. It is very difficult to get a large area of suitable land in any one part.
- 26 Would you consider this piece of land on which you grew the sugar-beet better or worse than the average that you could get for these purposes?—Where the orchard was I would consider about the average of what you would get.