

19. Would it not be possible for the farmers to combine and bring these men out?—I may state that I brought out three girls to assist in my household duties two years ago, and two of them have got married.

20. *Mr. Robertson.*] You spoke of men engaged in harvesting receiving 1s. an hour. Is it not a fact that harvesting and threshing work is only during a particular season?—If you do not carry out the work at that particular season you may just as well shut your door altogether.

21. But, looking at the matter from the workers' point of view, the men whom you propose should be brought out would be only engaged during a particular season of the year?—The farmers are short of men all the year round. For instance, I want two men to drain and cannot get them.

22. Would it be sufficient inducement simply to pay their fares out? Would they get work all the year round?—If they got plenty of work here and good money, and they are starving where they are, surely that would be a good inducement to them to come out.

23. Is there not a great demand for farm labour during certain seasons, and then that demand falls off during other seasons?—I do not think it will fall off here for a while.

24. Has not that been the case?—I could not say about that. I know that it has never been the case that labour has been too plentiful here.

25. You referred to wages paid during harvesting; but are those men employed constantly?—There is other work going on in the district I belong to, and the farmers are always short-handed.

26. Take dairy farming—milking: are the men employed by the week?—A boy about fourteen or fifteen years of age will get £1 a week, and girls for domestic service in the country get £1 a week and found. Surely that is good enough payment for a boy that age.

27. What about the men?—I am not a dairy-farmer. I have a farm that would make a good dairy farm, but the scarcity of labour keeps me from keeping cows. Plenty of my neighbours would go in for dairying if there was suitable labour available.

28. What is the weekly wage of a man working on a dairy farm?—That is out of my line.

29. *Mr. Veitch.*] Is there much difference between the profits that would be drawn from the farm by cropping compared with what you are getting now? Would it make much difference to the amount of money that would come to the country?—It would make a big difference to the country. If you do not grow crops and raise stock and send the produce out of the country, you will not get money into the country.

30. You are using your farm for cattle and sheep?—Yes; if you leave the land lying idle, or have simply cattle and sheep on it, you do not make so much money as you would by cropping.

31. Roughly, what would be the difference on, say, a 100-acre farm?—I cannot say, but I think there would be a good deal of difference.

JOHN CLARKE, Farmer, examined on oath. (No. 31.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a farmer, Mr. Clarke, residing at Clinton?—Yes.

2. Have you got a dairy farm or a cropping farm?—We just keep enough cows to supply ourselves with milk.

3. Are you also in your farming operations crippled by shortage of labour?—Yes, to a great extent.

4. Can you give us any idea from the point of view of a man living in the country as to what has caused the increase in the cost of living?—My idea is that a great deal of extravagance is going on. Young people nowadays when they are setting up housekeeping for themselves like to begin where the old people knocked off.

5. It is not so much the increased cost as the increased rate of living?—That is the beginning of it. In the olden days we were quite content with two or three rooms, but now they must have five or six rooms and every other convenience. That is one of the reasons.

6. You do not think it lies in the increased cost of the necessities of life?—I do not think there has been so much increase as has been represented. Labour has gone up a good deal. I do not know the position from the town point of view, but from the country point of view the position has not changed so much as has been represented. We can hardly tell in the country what it costs to live.

7. So you think that the cost really is very nearly the same: it has not risen?—As far as I can gather it has not. Tea, for instance, is very much less now than it was twenty years ago—perhaps a third less. You can get very good tea at 1s. 3d. per pound; sugar is 2d. per pound, or 9s. a bag of 56 lb. I do not think there is such a very great deal of difference in the country in the price of living.

8. It is the cost of high living, you think?—Yes: I am speaking from the country point of view.

9. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Do you raise stock?—Yes.

10. Can you give us any information as to the price you get for your stock?—At present we get from about 14s. for prime lambs to about 17s. 6d.

11. And for sheep?—I could not tell you; I have not sold any lately, but the price in the yards is from 16s. to 22s. That would be about 1s. 3d. to 1s. 6d. a head less on the farm. Fat wethers are quoted at about 20s.

12. Are they still selling lambs in the market?—Yes, there will be lambs for the next three months.

13. *Mr. Veitch.*] With regard to the proposal to import labour for farming: suppose the Government decided to import assisted immigrants to work on farms—farm labourers and so on—for the purpose of making up for the shortage which you allege exists, what would be the position of those men so far as the farmers are concerned? Would the farmers as a class be prepared to employ them all the year round when they came?—I am certain of it. I myself have