

required would be grown in New Zealand. A price that would induce the farmers to grow wheat is 7s. I believe if it was a fixed price, 6s. 9d. or 6s. 10d. might be sufficient, but 7s. certainly would.

*To the Chairman:* The average price of wheat before the war was 3s. 6d. to 4s. per bushel, and to-day it is 6s. 6d. I cannot suggest any other way than a fixed price for a number of years that would encourage the development of the industry.

*To Mr. Luke:* If we get a reciprocal tariff the general public may be sure they will not be thrown on the Canadian or Argentine growers for their wheat if the New Zealand farmer does not put in a sufficient amount of wheat. If the Government protect the farmers, and there is a good season in New Zealand, with a surplus, there ought to be a granary where the surplus could be stored, as the following season might be a bad one.

*To Mr. Hornsby:* I was present when the Minister made the promise to the farmers on the showground. It was the year before last. It was when the prices were 5s. 8d., 5s. 9d., and 5s. 10d. that Mr. MacDonald addressed the farmers about last year's crop. It was in the previous April that he announced what the price would be. I do not say it was official, because I cannot say it was gazetted. He was speaking Ministerially, and he said 5s. 8d., 5s. 9d., and 5s. 10d. I do not think there was any open market mentioned. This year we were promised 6s. 4d. by Mr. MacDonald when he was speaking in Christchurch. I was not present on the occasion. The statement in the paper was not contradicted, and I took it to be correct. If at the outbreak of the war the Government had fixed a reasonable price to the farmer no trouble would have arisen. It would be unpopular for any Government to put a tax on the food of the people. If we have no encouragement to grow wheat our bread will rise to famine prices, and we shall have to import wheat.

*To the Chairman:* It was in April, 1917, that the Minister made the promise for last year's wheat. That price was to be 5s. 8d., 5s. 9d., and 5s. 10d., and we got it. It was f.o.b. In 1918 we had a promise of 6s. 4d. with an open market, and we are going to get 6s. 6d. The open market, however, is the bone of contention, and that is the alleged breaking of the promise. The farmers would have been more satisfied with 6s. 4d. and an open market than with 6s. 6d. We are now getting 6s. 6d. f.o.b. The 6s. 4d. was also f.o.b. The farmers want a provision for "on the truck" or "at the mill." In regard to the experimental farm, it has occurred to me that on many occasions it is an unwise policy on the part of the Government to keep all the experimental farms to the North Island, while in this Island we have none. Lincoln College is experimental, but it is not a Government institution, and farmers do not avail themselves of the knowledge they might gain there. If we had two experimental farms in the South Island we would be satisfied.

*To Mr. Craigie:* Experiments in the North Island do not suit the South Island, on account of difference in soil and climatic conditions. An experimental farm in North Otago or South Canterbury would not do for the whole of the South Island. Look at the difference between North Canterbury and Southland. We cannot increase our acres, but we can increase the production of the acres.

W. H. FRITH, ex-Manufacturer of Paints and Varnishes, examined.

I wish to speak about paints, varnishes, and linseed-oil. Thirty years ago I commenced in Oamaru as a paint and varnish manufacturer. I started in a small way, and worked the business up to a fairly efficient state. It was giving me a good return for my labour. Twelve or fifteen years ago, however, I ceased to work, as I lost my money in dredging. I think a great deal could be done in the Dominion by encouraging farmers to grow linseed to produce oil. Some years ago Kempthorne, Prosser, and Co., of Dunedin, established a mill in Dunedin for the production of linseed-oil, and in my business of varnish-maker I used a considerable quantity of that oil, which was a very good article. For some reason Kempthorne's firm ceased producing the oil. At the time their representative assured me that from a farmer's point of view linseed was a payable thing to grow. I wish to point out that fact, and to assure the Committee that if anything can be done to encourage the growing of linseed it will be a good thing for the Dominion. In connection with varnish and paint, I was making a considerable amount of money. There is an impression that most things made in the Dominion are a losing proposition. This is a thing, however, that can be manufactured here to a great extent and at a good profit to the man who understands his business. If the farmers would grow the linseed they could produce the oil, which enters into the manufacture of varnish. New Zealand has one of the finest gums for the production of varnish—one of the finest in the world: I refer to the kauri-gum of the North Island. At present it is sent to the Home countries, to the United States, and to all the European countries, and sent back to New Zealand manufactured into varnishes, and we have to pay for all that going backward and forward, and 2s. per gallon duty on top of it. If the industry was encouraged here and people were to make the varnishes and paints here it would be a good thing for the makers, and would employ a considerable amount of labour. Again, in connection with dry colours, I used to make colours, but I did not deal with native earths, such as ochres, Venetian reds, umbers, and that sort of thing. I used to make colours by precipitation. While I was making paint I was repeatedly approached by men from the outlying districts—Livingstone, Tokarahi, and other places—who would bring me samples of earths which were really good. I was told that these deposits were extensive in the district. On the Otago Peninsula (near Dunedin) they are producing dry colours. At the Thames and at Nelson they are doing the same. The industry is not pressed forward sufficiently, however, to get the best results from the supplies in the Dominion. I believe that in many New Zealand districts there are large deposits of native earths which are easily treated. I know there is a great amount of