

*The Chairman:* You know that it is the duty of the Government to see that the people get bread at a reasonable price?

*Witness:* It is my duty to pay my debts and to provide for my family. People do not give exorbitant prices for bread to-day. It is nothing like the price of meat.

*The Chairman:* You want 6s. 10½d., and that with one of the best harvests you have had for years?

*Witness:* I have not got a good harvest. The blight is in the crop.

*The Chairman:* In order to make you satisfied, how much per bushel do you want in the future?

*Witness:* It is hard to forecast and say what is a fair thing, but I do not think I should be asked to take less than the fair market value.

*The Chairman:* And on what basis would that be fixed?

*Witness:* On the cost of putting the Australian wheat in the trucks, with the ordinary tariff added—that is, 6s. 10½d.

*The Chairman:* And what about next year?

*Witness:* Personally the price for next year does not interest me, because I expect to have so little to deal with.

*The Chairman:* But what should be the price to encourage farmers to grow?

*Witness:* I cannot see that we can grow wheat cheaper next year than this year. 6s. 6d. is not too much this year, and we should not be asked to take less next year.

*To Mr. Sidey:* I have a farm of 346 acres—some of the most fertile land in South Canterbury. It has grown 80 bushels to the acre.

A. S. CALLAWAY, Electrical Engineer, Timaru Borough Council, examined.

I wish to speak about the future of South Canterbury industries. The Committee appointed by the Board of Trade to consider the question of electric-power supply for Great Britain reported that in considering a comprehensive scheme of super-power-stations they found that in Greater London alone seventy generating-stations were operating fifty different types of systems. The linking-together of these systems for the purpose of more efficient operations from a super-power-station will be very expensive and presents great difficulties owing to the absence of any attempt to standardize pressures and frequencies. In view of the suggested comprehensive water-power scheme for New Zealand linking up all the smaller supply-stations, I would point out that at present fifty electrical undertakings in the Dominion are at present working under sixteen different systems, and I would suggest that the question of standardizing existing systems and any that might be undertaken before the comprehensive scheme is in operation should receive early consideration. If greater uniformity obtained it would result in the trade and consumers being more satisfactorily supplied with machinery and accessories from stocks more easily carried, and should hasten the time when our electrical requirements may be manufactured in the Dominion. The present system of issuing licenses to electricians to carry out electrical work on passing examinations set by the Engineer in charge of electric-supply undertakings might be improved by having examinations conducted by an Inspector of Machinery and certificates issued as is at present done with steam engineers. The power at present employed in South Canterbury—steam, gas, oil, and turbines—is 4,241 horse-power. If the total amount of power was supplied from a hydro-electric source the saving of coal or its equivalent would be approximately 15,000 tons. In Timaru there is no need to stress the desirability of going on with the hydro-electric development. We have a municipal system which has outrun its usefulness on account of being a direct-current plant, and the area of transmission is too great. We are at present supplying power to the extent of 560 horse-power for industries. We are still able to compete with other forms of motive power, but we urgently require Lake Coleridge, as we have applications for 200 horse-power which we are unable to supply. We do not know the exact date that the power from Lake Coleridge will be here, or the price at which it will be delivered, consequently we are in the dark to some extent as to what our future will be. With the Lake Coleridge scheme in Christchurch the cost of producing flour is about 1s. 2d. per ton less than the cost of an electrically driven mill in Timaru. To show the growth of electricity in New Zealand may I quote these figures: In 1895, out of 1,723 engines running there was only one electric motor; in 1910, with 4,680 engines, there were 1,084 electric motors in operation; and since 1910 the growth has been considerably more rapid. An authority on growing corn by electricity states that installations have been established by the Board of Agriculture in Britain, where farmers can have the whole of their seed-corn treated by experts. The increase of yield from seed so treated is from 20 to 80 per cent. Coming more particularly to South Canterbury, there has been a private installation put in in the Mackenzie country, costing £2,500. Prior to the installation being in operation the owner's coal was costing him £6 3s. 6d. per ton, delivered on the station. The saving in coal alone through using electricity is paying interest on his capital. The same owner is embarking on a scheme in another station, costing between £3,000 and £4,000, and a big factor that has induced him to do this is that he can save £400 a year on the carting of his wool. He intends to scour the wool on the station.

*To Mr. Craigie:* If we get the Lake Coleridge power there will be other manufactories started in Timaru. It would be a mistake to have isolated plants and let local bodies go in for any scheme they liked. We would be inviting the trouble that they have in Great Britain now, with their multiplicity of small and therefore inefficient stations all over the country. The tendency to-day is to create as large individual stations as possible and to link up the whole country. In that way there would be a great insurance against any breakdown.