

gested purchase prices and the ordinary retail prices show a sufficient margin to ensure that the suggested Department could be run without fear of financial loss. As the Department would be the sole consignor of fruit, and would therefore be handling it in enormous quantities both for local and overseas trades, very considerable reductions could be made in the costs of transport and distribution and also in the cost of cases. During the last few years shipping freights and cost of cases have both doubled. A co-ordinated scheme of railway, steamer, and other means of delivery should enable the Department to supply case lots to almost any part of New Zealand at, say, not exceeding 2d. per pound during the greater part of the season. We are sure that this proposal will appeal to the consuming public for various reasons. Firstly, it means the cheapening of the cost, to them, of one of the most popular forms of food, which under present conditions has to be looked on as a luxury. Further, it is a food recommended by every doctor and dentist for health reasons, especially for growing children. If such a scheme as we suggest could be carried out we believe that the consumption of apples would become as common as that of potatoes, with great benefit to the national health. The evolution of a really effective and economical scheme of distribution would put the fruitgrowing industry on a more stable basis than it is on at present, and the increased demand would encourage further planting of orchard areas. As fruitgrowing is looked upon all over the world as the closest form of land-settlement possible, in many cases utilizing land otherwise worthless, its extension will appeal to all those who believe that the primary producers are the backbone of the country. Under a Government Department, ruled by a business man, there would be no difficulty in making such a scheme bear good results. Let the Government commandeer the whole of the fruit and handle it in a businesslike way, with cheap railage and boat transit, and the community will be supplied with fruit at a cheap rate. It would assist the industry, and the consuming public would be benefited.

To the Chairman: Some of the growers might object, but the large majority would welcome such a scheme as I have outlined, because they would know what they were going to get for their year's work. I think that 95 per cent. of the growers would agree with the scheme. The price would need to be on a sliding scale. If you had a set price people might produce apples that were not of commercial value.

To Mr. Hudson: The scheme was placed before the Board of Trade, which was taken up with the idea.

To Mr. Veitch: The small growers would also come under the commandeer system—those who produced, say, 100 cases.

To Mr. Sidey: As to the supply of tonnage, we take it that the Government have some control of the matter. I believe that if we had a proper system of distribution the public would consume ten times more than we are now producing.

To Mr. Craigie: We also have a market in South America which would absorb practically unlimited quantities at a good price. The Panama Canal has diverted the boats from South America, and it will be for the Government to arrange for opening up that trade again.

To Mr. Forbes: We will never get the same results from a small local company as from a Government Department, for the reason that the Department will control all the supplies. We are up against the small grower, who is making it a side line and sells at less than it costs to produce. We can cater for the English market, as we have improved our method of grading and packing. Legislation gave us power to tax orchards, but I do not think it has been a success. The idea was that the federation should develop an overseas market, but the war hindered operations.

To Mr. Luke: If there is any loss in the commandeer scheme the Government should stand in, because the scheme will be for 95 per cent. of the population. I think we can depend on export. We have an absolute market in South America, except that we want the shipping. Surely the Government can get a direct service between this country and South America for a certain part of the year. I think it is the duty of the Government to see that not only fruit, but dairy produce, is sent to South America. We have a great market on the eastern coast of North America. There are two months in the year in which we could supply them.

To the Chairman: The present system of distribution is wasteful. We send fruit to the auctioneers, and take whatever price comes along from them. From Nelson to Wellington we pay 1s. per case, and to Auckland (by boat and train) 1s. 7d. We have protested to the Union Company and the Anchor Company. The Government have been reasonably fair in the way of moneys lent to the companies. We have never had a refusal where we could show that we had a hope of succeeding. I think the Government might increase to large companies the sum they now advance for the erection of cool stores—that is, in the event of the Government not going in for the scheme I suggest.

R. B. JACKSON, Orchardist, examined.

I endorse the scheme outlined by Mr. Allport. It is the only one that will benefit the consumer and at the same time make the apple-growing a success.

WALTER S. SNODGRASS, Orchardist, examined.

I think that Mr. Allport has placed the matter before the Committee. There is this I might add: I do not know what the retail price of apples is in Wellington, but the report in the papers is that cookers are from 4s. 6d. to 5s. per 40 lb. case. That is what we as the growers will get. When we went into the question we found that 4s. 9d. in Wellington would net the grower $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound, as we have to pay for cases, freights, and sundry charges. Then there is a phase of the industry that is worthy of attention—I refer to evaporated apples; and in a national scheme that is a branch that might be encouraged as far as cooking-apples are concerned. It