

and did fairly well, but he was not satisfied, and went away to another district and took up 100 acres of good land. Well, when this section came back into my hands I commenced to work it myself, but when I commenced to go into figures I found that dairying was not now what I thought it was. I began to see, for one thing, that the land all around me had risen very much in value. The land I had sold six years ago had changed hands four times, and at a higher price each time. I thought at one time I should get that section back on my hands again. I sold it at £24 an acre, but the man I sold it to only paid a small deposit, and he had to pay me over £200 a year in interest. He was getting into financial difficulties. I believe he had over five mortgages on that property at one time. But somebody came along and offered him a higher price per acre than he had paid, and it also changed hands later at a higher price. The man who got it managed to hang on to it until eventually the Government stepped in and put returned soldiers on it. That is what has been taking place. Men have been taking up farms and hanging on to them in the expectation of being able to sell out at a rise. That section which I sold and which the Government eventually bought for returned soldiers was a section of about 150 acres, fully improved. I think it cost the Government about £32 an acre, and it was the cheapest place in the neighbourhood. Well, with regard to this section I have given you the statement about, which I took over from my son, when I took it over I had to go into the matter of stocking it, and I found that I could not buy for less than £20 cows which cost me in the autumn of 1913 only £4 9s. 6d. I commenced then to go into figures, and I found that working a dairy farm now is quite different from what it used to be. I could get £35 an acre for that land, but that is on paper. If I could sell at £35 an acre for cash I would accept it. I am satisfied I could do very much better by selling it at that price than by managing it.

8. I see you have in this statement of yours £364 for wages for yourself and a man at £3 10s. per week?—Yes. That is £2 10s. each for wages per week and £1 each for board. That seems a large amount, but I have worked it out, and I allowed for myself and the man 11½d. per hour each for twelve hours a day for eight months of the year, and eight hours a day for four months. Then in the statement I allowed something for my wife's assistance. I have put that amount down at £25, and it is a very small amount. Then I have put in depreciation on cows. I do not think myself that the average useful life of a dairy cow is more than six years, and I have calculated that amount for depreciation out accordingly. I have also allowed 10 per cent. for depreciation on plant, and £40 for rates and taxes. In our district the rates are very heavy. Well, sir, I honestly think that the calculations I have put into that statement are well within the mark, and I have come to the conclusion that there are hundreds of settlers who are just hanging on for somebody else to come along and get them out of the hole they are in. In my own neighbourhood nearly all the old settlers have sold out, and they are now simply sitting down receiving their interest. The Government has put about two hundred returned soldiers in Eketahuna County, and the settlers who have sold out are lying low for a year or so. They will probably be able to buy cheaper land in two or three years. That land which I sold six years ago changed hands four times, the Government eventually stepping in and buying it for returned soldiers.

9. *Mr. Powlrell.*] You must be a bad judge of land-values?—It does not follow that I am a bad judge of land-values. I think it is the others who are the bad judges. There are a very large number of bad judges of land: that is my opinion. My opinion is that there is going to be a very serious aspect to these high values in more ways than one. One aspect of the question is that when land is thrown back on to the hands of the Government no rates are paid. In our district last year we lost over £70 in rates in that way. I may also say that I quite agree with the figures supplied by Mr. Singleton regarding losses in dairy-farming.

10. *The Chairman.*] Supposing it was suggested that an export tax should be placed upon butter, what would you say to that?—I am against an export tax on anything. I believe that if everybody worked as hard as the people employed in the dairy industry work, and would put their shoulders to the wheel, New Zealand would very soon be out of its troubles. But as soon as our goods leave the factory the "go slow" policy comes into force.

11. You think that?—Yes, I do. And I think that the dairy producers should be the last people upon whom a special tax should be levied. What we want to get us out of our troubles is increased production, and the producers are doing all they can to increase production. If only the other classes of workers would put their shoulders to the wheel we would soon get out of our difficulties. I say if this money has to be found let those pay who can afford to pay; let those who can afford to pay pay most of the tax. I have heard it hinted that an increase in the income-tax might meet the case.

12. A small increase in the income-tax?—Yes, that might meet the case. I think myself that the man who can afford to pay should be made to pay.

13. What about the man with a family of ten?—I think the fairest thing would be to merely tax those who can afford to pay.

14. *Mr. Powlrell.*] Do you consider that the dairy-farmers work harder than the water-siders?—Yes; I consider that the dairy-farmers work much harder than the wharf labourers.

15. And you think it unreasonable that the wharf workers should have an equal rate of pay to the workers on the dairy farms?—Yes, I do.

16. And the same applies to the workers at the freezing-works. You believe that the dairy-farm worker should have equal pay for equal work?—Yes, I do.

17. *Mr. McCombs.*] You agree that land-values are too high?—Yes, I do. We shall all know it in a few years.

18. Do you consider that there has been an increased production of farm-produce during the last few years?—I am afraid there has not been so much as there should be, and I will tell you one of the reasons why. At one time I used a good deal of basic slag on my land, and it paid me to use it at the price I could then get it at; but the price now has become quite prohibitive, and land is going back in all directions because of the want of fertilizers.

19. Is it not a fact that the production of butterfat has increased during the last few years?—Yes, I believe it is.

20. Considerably increased?—Yes, I think so. Cheese has increased especially, but I think butter has gone back.