

ALFRED COOMBS BLACKMORE examined. (No. 19.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A farmer at Rototuna.

2. You have forwarded to the Committee a statement of your receipts and expenditure and the capital in your farm?—Yes. The statement is as follows:—

CAPITAL.				£	£
50 acres dairying-area at £90	...	...	...	...	4,500
1 bull at £25	...	...	...	25	
25 cows at £20	...	...	...	500	
2 yearlings at £15	...	...	...	30	
2 dry cows at £18	...	...	...	36	
1 working-horse	...	...	...	20	
5 pigs at £8	...	...	...	40	
				—	651
Plough, milking-machines, trap, farm implements	...	...	...	...	300
					<u>£5,451</u>

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE, YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 1920.

Expenditure.				£	£
Interest on capital invested at 6 per cent.	...	...	...	327	
Insurance, rates, and taxes	...	...	...	15	
Benzine, oil, rubbers	...	...	...	43	
Loss of stock (one horse)	...	...	...	30	
Depreciation at 10 per cent. on stock	...	...	...	65	
Wages	...	...	...	206	
Manures and seed	...	...	...	76	
Cartage of cream	...	...	...	21	
Sundry charges	...	...	...	68	
				—	851
Revenue.					
6,704 lb. butterfat at 1s. 8½d.	...	...	...	572	
Calves sold	...	...	...	16	
Pigs sold	...	...	...	64	
Value of farm products	...	...	...	40	
				—	692
Loss	...	...	...	...	<u>£159</u>

3. You have put down the value of the 50 acres at £90 per acre: is that the price you paid for it?—That is the price I refused.

4. When did you buy it?—I paid £32 an acre for it six years ago.

5. Your loss on the year you put down at £159?—Yes. My son works the place with me, and that includes the wages.

6. What about your own wages?—I am not working on the place. The wages are put down for thirteen hours a day and seven days a week. My work takes me amongst hundreds of farmers, and I find that, generally speaking, Sunday is set aside for overhauling the milking-machines. The average farmer has not the time to put too much work into those things during the week, and he gives them a general clean-up on the Sunday. My son runs the farm and works thirteen hours a day, and on Sunday for seven hours.

7. *Mr. Powdrell.*] There are twenty-five cows and only one man on the farm?—Yes.

8. *Mr. Hockly.*] You put down the butterfat at 268 lb. on the average?—Yes.

9. *The Chairman.*] Have you a special breed of cows?—Jersey.

10. *Mr. Hockly.*] Does the one boy milk the whole twenty-five cows?—Yes, the whole lot.

11. And does he do all the rest of the work on the farm?—Yes, everything.

12. *Mr. Powdrell.*] You have charged interest on capital, £327, and £206 wages for your son, a total of £533, and you have shown a loss of £159. If you take that £159 away it leaves £374. So that you either do not get full interest on your capital, which is £327, or else you work for no wages?—I would absolutely not be able to work it at all unless I counted interest on the £90 per acre. If I got in on to-day's prices I would not be able to do it. I am able to carry on because I bought at £32 an acre. I would not be able to do it otherwise. My results are much above the average from my herd, and if I only had the average herd I would be in a worse position.

13. If you charge anything for labour you get nothing for interest, and *vice versa*?—Yes. People say, "Well, why don't you sell out?" but I would have to go somewhere else. A farmer's son gets no commercial education, and he has to be a farmer. A lot of the labourers who are share milkers very often get a farm themselves, and they have to go on and cannot get out of it. Their only bank is the increase in the value of the land.

14. *Mr. McCombs.*] How do you think that man was going to get on if you had accepted the £90 which he offered, seeing that you show a loss of £159 and only pay £206 in wages?—It would be impossible for him to make a do of it on last year's price of butterfat.

15. *Mr. Kellett.*] And yet there are hundreds going on the land?—I do not know how they are doing it. If a man goes on it he will be out of it in eighteen months. I do not see how he can do it.

16. *Mr. Hockly.*] An extra 1s. per pound on butterfat would give you £335 more of a return?—Yes. The farmer is, generally speaking, living from hand to mouth.

17. *Mr. McCombs.*] The farmers are all making a loss under the existing conditions, and yet expecting to sell their land at a profit?—The cost of production has gone up in some cases 200 per cent. Basic slag has gone up tremendously, and the land must go up in sympathy with the increase in the price of commodities.