

shopkeepers will buy that fruit. They dress their windows with first-class fruit at what they consider reasonable prices—at 4d., 6d., and 8d. per pound, but a lot of the fruit sold to the public is not what it is represented to be by the fruit in the window. They frequently get the fruit for the public from under their counters, and that is the fruit they buy at the lower rate. It is such difficulties as those encountered by the Nelson Control Board that have given rise to this Bill.

21. Do you think that, with a proper organization and more control a lot of this regrading that is going on now could be obviated altogether?—Yes, it could be almost eliminated. I say “almost,” because I have never heard of any system whereby deterioration in fruit could be entirely eliminated, but quite a good deal of the deterioration that has caused trouble on the Wellington market could be obviated under a proper system of control.

22. Do you think there would be any danger of a monopoly growing up in connection with this Board, and inflating or arbitrarily fixing the prices of fruit against the interest of the general public?—No; I think that under a system of this kind the general public will get fruit at prices nearly 50 per cent. lower than the present prices.

23. *Mr. Corrigan.*] I would like to ask you a few questions, perhaps a little outside the province of the Bill, but upon which I would like to have information. What is your work?—Well, that is rather a hard question to answer. It is pretty well everything so far as the fruit industry is concerned. In the Horticultural Division of the Department of Agriculture we have a staff of horticultural officers in the different fruitgrowing districts, called Orchard Instructors, and the control of that staff is my work. And anything else that crops up in connection with the fruit industry eventually finds its way, directly or indirectly, to my office to deal with.

24. Have you had any experience in fruitgrowing?—Yes.

25. I will put it this way: If I were starting an orchard, would you be the man I would come to to teach me my business?—I think so, if I happened to be available. As a matter of fact I was an Instructor in the Waikato district and the Hawke's Bay District before coming to Wellington. I had to attend to the whole of the instruction in those districts.

26. You have a first-hand knowledge of the conditions of growing fruit throughout the whole of New Zealand?—Yes.

27. Now, what do you consider is the fair average production of fruit per tree on, say, the poorer class of land in Nelson and Murchison?—Of course, the production depends very much on the condition of the orchard. From some of the orchards there which are fairly well looked after good crops are obtained. I do not say they are bearing crops equal to what they get in Hawke's Bay and on other heavy soils, but they are bearing satisfactory crops. They are bearing crops that should be enough, at any rate, to keep a man going on his own.

28. Is one hundred and thirty trees about the right number to plant per acre?—Yes.

29. What should each tree have to produce, on an average, before it would be a payable proposition to the producer?—Under the present conditions, with a chaotic market, you have to have better production than would normally be the case. The production depends on the availability of the markets of the world.

30. We have had it from growers that 4 bushels per tree is a payable price to them?—We will take it by the acre, because they vary. In the particular area that has been under discussion—namely, Nelson—the trees have been planted a hundred and fifty to a hundred and sixty to the acre. If that area has been credited with bearing only 2 bushels per tree, you have to take into account the number of trees.

31. I am asking you this question: on the average of a hundred and fifty trees per acre, what should they produce?—At a hundred and fifty trees per acre they should produce 2 bushels per tree to give you a reasonable return on the orchard.

32. That is an average crop?—The average crop is more than that. That is only 300 bushels.

33. An acre?—Yes, and an average crop is from 4 to 6 bushels per tree.

34. In Nelson?—No. Take it as four hundred to six hundred cases per acre. Now, six hundred cases per acre is a rattling good crop, and that is held to be very good average crops. In the best fruitgrowing lands of America they get from a thousand to twelve hundred cases per acre. There are parts in New Zealand where I have known trees to produce 20 bushels per tree, but not in the Nelson District.

35. You think then, that if a man started a new place in Nelson and he got an average of 2 bushels per tree that it would pay him?—On the present market it would not pay him. If he exported his fruit he would be working on the close side, but would probably make a living, provided, of course, he landed his fruit in good condition on the Home market.

36. You think then that 2 bushels per tree is not really a payable proposition taking one year over another?—I would not like to take it on with only 2 bushels to the tree.

37. Could they not exceed 2 bushels per tree?—Yes, provided there is sufficient prospects to continue—that is, if you can stabilize your market.

38. From your experience of the land over there is it possible to increase the production up to 3 bushels per tree?—I should say so—that is, provided the orchards are decently situated. I may say that orchards have been planted over there in unfavourable positions, and they would never be a success, and they have never reached anything like reasonable production.

39. I think a Mr. Kelling gave evidence yesterday, and I think he said that they had 21 acres?—Yes.

40. And he told us that a Mr. Rowlings got six thousand cases of fruit, and he said that his costs came to £16 per acre, and the following are his figures: Freight, cartage, and wharfage, £20; wages £14 per acre; manure, £5 per acre; spray material, £6 per acre; wrapping-paper, £3 per acre; nails and benzine, £1 per acre; cool-storage charges, £10 per acre; interest, rent, £10 per acre; and the