

total comes to £79: are you aware of that orchard?—I am not personally acquainted with it, but I know of it by repute.

41. You cannot tell the Committee as to whether or not his land is different to that at Motueka?—Yes, his land is different.

42. Is it more suitable for fruitgrowing?—Yes, of a certain class of fruit—that is, it will grow possibly a better crop of lower-grade fruit, although I would not say that definitely, because, as I say, I have not examined Mr. Rowlings's place.

43. I understood him to say that his average was 4 bushels per tree—out of that there are 8 acres in pears?—I would expect to get more than that in that particular locality.

44. And he gives his gross returns as £119 per acre, and it cost £80 per acre to produce that: do you think that that is a fair return?—I think his expenses are very high, so far as I am able to judge.

45. You said when giving your evidence yesterday that it cost 8s. 6d. to bring a case of fruit from Nelson to Wellington?—No, from Motueka, to be correct.

46. Well, from Motueka then: you said it cost 8s. 6d. per case?—That is for a single case—8s. 6d. to 9s. per case.

47. Of course that is for a single case, and I submit it is not a fair thing to take that into consideration. What would a consignment cost per case?—It would cost very much less.

48. Take a consignment of a hundred cases: what would it cost per case?—Probably from 9d. to 1s. per case. Of course, when I gave you the price of 8s. 6d. per case I was referring to an individual case being sent over.

49. That 8s. 6d. would be the price landed in your home?—That is the carriage to the office in the Farmers' Institute Buildings.

50. What would be the freight on the other consignment I referred to?—As a matter of fact the freight cost is about 9d., and the wharfage on that quantity would be round about 1d. or 1½d. As a matter of fact it would come to very little more than 1s., although it might come to 1s. 3d.

51. Of course, this Bill has really been brought forward, I suppose, as a consequence of your representations to the head of your Department?—I would not go so far as to say that.

*Hon. Mr. Nosworthy:* The Minister of Agriculture takes the responsibility for that.

52. *Mr. Corrigan.*] At any rate, you think this Bill will assist the fruitgrowers out of their present predicament provided it is passed into law?—I want to say this: that no one can guarantee that this is the solution of the difficulty, but we are aware from our past experience that the practice in operation now is more or less a failure, and there is a chance under this Bill to alter that state of affairs, and it is the only chance that the industry has, apart from the survival of the fittest.

53. You realize this: that unless something is done to assist the fruitgrowers a great number of them will have to go out of the industry?—Yes, all those people who have the small production I have mentioned will be forced out of business without a doubt unless something is done to assist them.

54. I take it that the Government is out to assist the fruitgrowers, and that is the reason why this Bill was brought forward?—Exactly.

55. *Mr. Forbes.*] In connection with the overseas market, I take it that you consider it is likely to be profitable—that is, a profitable market for the fruitgrowers in New Zealand?—Yes, the prospects are good. We must get our fruit on to the English market in good condition. There are a number of difficulties that have to be overcome up to the present time.

56. It is said that a good deal of deterioration takes place here?—Yes, there is no doubt about that, and very often that takes place at the orchard. For instance, in the handling of fruit in the orchard the stump of one apple may pierce another apple, and that apple will affect another apple; and if a consignment of apples are broken in the way I have described, and if they are not put in the right atmospheric conditions, the rot will start in the particular spot where they have been pierced; but if they are put in the right temperature, below 40°, the rot is checked, with the result that you can carry that class of fruit for a long time if you can get it into the cool store without delay. I may say that we are trying very hard to bring about direct shipments, but there is great difficulty in regard to that. We had an interview with the shipping company a few days ago, and we are trying very hard to bring about an alteration. They are concerned more with cheese than fruit, and they object to putting in alterations in the cheese-store in order to give us the facilities we require for our fruit. If we cannot succeed in bringing about something satisfactory with the Harbour Board we will have to cool-store the fruit in Nelson, and ship it over to suit the overseas boats. If we can come to no better arrangement with the Harbour Board it is going to be better than holding it for three weeks under conditions similar to those of last year.

57. The fruit now comes out of the cool store?—No, except the fruit for export. We aim at keeping it in the cool store.

58. What is the period for shipping overseas fruit from Nelson?—It commences round about the middle of February and continues right through to about May.

59. You aim at shipping it fresh from the orchard?—It is no good having the fruit waiting about if it can be avoided.

60. You have been shipping fruit for many years to the English market, and the Government has been interested in the matter by way of the guarantee and other ways: what has been your experience with respect to the price of the fruit in other years?—I understood you to say that the price seemed to be high last year as compared with previous years?—That is so. In 1920 there was a maximum price placed on the fruit in the Old Country of 21s. per case. Of course, the shipping freights and the cost of materials were very high, but, as I say, our fruit brought a maximum price of 21s. per case, which was satisfactory to the growers. The following year the position was not so good because our fruit had to stand on its own feet, as it were. The next year the market was bad, and although the fruit arrived Home in reasonably good condition—there was room for improvement—the price realized was not satisfactory. I submit that we ought to be able to land fruit in England in perfect condition.