

H. M. MARTIN further examined. (No. 8.)

1. *The Chairman.*] I understand that you are now prepared to give the Committee a more detailed statement of the expenses and receipts from your farm?—Yes. I have in my hand the returns from the New Zealand Co-operative Dairy Co., which I supply from one of my farms, for the last two seasons. The area of this dairy-farm is 224 acres, and the returns are for the season 1927–28, which, I may say, was a rather dry season. The total butterfat I supplied was 27,156 lb., which returned me for butterfat £1,936 14s. 8d. For pigs fattened off the skim-milk I received £205 3s. 5d. I also reared eleven heifer calves, which should be worth £4 or £5 each. The herd comprised about one hundred cows. Of these ninety-nine were tested, and the Herd-testing Association's returns were 298 lb. of butterfat. This was from ordinary country in the Rotorua district which has been broken in for eight years. I bring these figures forward because there is a general impression that Rotorua land is almost worthless. I am glad to say that that impression is being broken down. The figures that I submit prove that in 1928–29 I supplied 25,000 lb. of butterfat from the same farm. I can give the costs of running the farm. I have had considerable experience in taking out costs. These 224 acres cost me £4 an acre, unimproved. The improvements upon it are valued at £3,584, making the capital value £4,480. I have one hundred cows, which gave me in 1927–28 27,000 lb. of butterfat. The receipts from that butterfat were £1,936 14s. 8d. For pigs sold I got £205, making the total receipts £2,141 14s. 8d. I value the cows of the herd at £1,200; three bulls (£20 a head) at £60; four horses (£25 each) at £100; five sows and one boar at £30; and implements and machinery at £400. That gives a total of £1,790 as the costs of the stock, implements, and machinery. I put down 5 per cent. interest on the capital value of the land at £224; stock and implements, £98 10s.; rates and insurance, £30 16s.; manure, £250; seeds, £30; cartage on butterfat, £94 7s.; replacements (ten cows), £120 (eleven heifers were placed in the herd, and these I have not allowed for); incidental, £10; depreciation, £144 10s.; power, £30; labour, £400; value in labour of growing hay and turnips consumed, £173; that makes a total of £1,586 3s.; and I had a profit of £555 11s. 8d. after allowing for those expenses. There are thousand of acres round about the district that could be treated in just the same way. No special knowledge would be required—just ordinary farm practice—to produce the same result.

2. *Mr. Samuel.*] Having done this at Rotorua, and having knowledge of the land of the Taupo country, you say that in your opinion that country would give similar results?—Yes, if they had facilities for working it.

3. Supposing that a block of 200,000 acres of Taupo land were taken in hand by the Government for experimental purposes, and that on that block a gang of men were put to road, clear, plough, disk, and fence it, and erect necessary buildings, and that the block was divided into sections of, say, 100 acres, that these men were paid wages while at work, and that they were given the opportunity of taking up the sections, charging to those sections the expenses that had been incurred, would not those men be ready to start in and make a living for themselves and their families?—Yes, under good supervision; but we must have supervision. I am quite sure that if one were allowed to select an area in the district, that could be done quite easily.

4. What kind of an area?—I should want it to be all ploughable.

5. My idea is that on such a scheme, the Government in the first instance paying all expenses, those farms would be ready for immediate occupation and an immediate return, and that the capital cost of the land would be so reasonable that every one who had the necessary knowledge would be able to start straight away?—That was my idea—to do the work by mass production, and have the land in such a state that men would be able to go on it and make a return straight away.

6. *Mr. Semple.*] I think you will agree that the question of supervision matters most?—Yes, it is very important.

7. Would you favour supervision by men who have had previous experience on pumice land, or by some one who may be sent by the Lands Department?—I think a man who has had experience would be preferable—a man who has had experience on pumice country. I have nothing to say against the officers of the Lands Department—they would be of great assistance; but if you come to “tin tacks” a man who has had to make his living on the country would be more suitable than a man who has only theory.

8. No one could supervise the work effectively except one who has been through the mill?—I do not say that altogether. A good practical farmer, I should say, would be 75 per cent. as good as the man working on that land.

9. But a practical farmer with other experience on the land at Taupo on top of that would be preferable?—Yes.

10. A man who has gone through the mill, and understands pumice land, would give more effective supervision than a man who had had greater experience, making mistakes which could be avoided?—Yes. You would save an immense amount of money through that system.

11. You are satisfied that applying mass action on this land, with modern methods of doing things, would bring down the cost?—Absolutely, under good supervision.

12. How long have you been on the land?—About thirty years.

13. You have made good under adverse circumstances?—I started with nothing. I had just been working in the bush and on stations.

14. In view of the fact that you and others have made good under those circumstances, would there not be very few failures under favourable conditions?—I can say conscientiously that I know of no experienced man going back on that land. They have gone ahead every time.

15. Do you think the development of the portion of the pumice area where there is sickness among stock would minimize the sickness, and eventually wipe it out altogether?—I think it would very largely wipe it out altogether. In the early stages of the breaking-in of Matamata the managers had