

That is the whole of the statement I wish to make to the Committee. I shall be prepared to answer any questions which members of the Committee might like to ask me.

*Hon. Mr. Forbes.*] During the time you have been wheat-growing what has been your experience from a profit-making point of view : have you been able to make a profit ?—Some years have been pretty good years, and other years have not been too good. In my farming operations I am mixed up with various activities. I grow fairly large areas of potatoes sometimes, for instance, but if you can get a decent crop and a fair price you can grow wheat profitably, but the margin of profit to-day is very low.

The statement has been made that in order to profitably work his land the Canterbury farmer finds it necessary to engage in wheat-growing as part of his crop-rotation. Now that you have sold your plant and gone out of the wheat-growing business, do you think that statement is correct ?—Well, I do not quite know. This is my first experience really in other branches of farming, and it is a pretty drastic move for me to go out of the wheat-growing business and go in for sheep only. I do not know how it is going to work out.

Still, you have been running a good many sheep. You grow a lot of turnips, &c. It is no experiment for you to stop wheat-growing ?—I have always grown wheat up to this year. I consider wheat works in with your farming. You can have your teams and at certain periods of the year you can prepare the land for sheep, and it keeps the whole thing running, and it is far better for the Canterbury farmers. I consider the Canterbury farmers have to grow a certain amount of wheat ; but they cannot grow it at a loss—they must make a profit.

Your opinion is that the present sliding scale of duty is the lowest form of protection, and will enable wheat-growing to be carried on at a profit ?—Yes.

But if there were any reduction in the present sliding scale it would mean that wheat would be grown at a loss ?—Yes. If the sliding scale is lowered there will be much less wheat grown. If you lower either the duty or the home-consumption-value basis you will get less wheat grown than you are getting now.

I notice you interviewed several people in regard to the wheat industry, but you did not come to me, as Minister of Agriculture, and ask what was going to be done ?—I came up to Wellington and had an appointment with Sir Joseph Ward. It was just after the elections, and I do not know whether you were here or not.

I was not present at any meeting of wheat-growers, and none of them approached me.

*Mr. Finch* (witness's accountant): When the interview with Sir Joseph Ward took place you were in the South Island.

*Hon. Mr. Forbes :* The statement was made in regard to the matter, and I was just raising the point why you did not come along and discuss the question with me as Minister of Agriculture. I had no idea you intended selling your plant and going out of the wheat-growing business on account of the position. However, that is a matter for yourself.

*Mr. Waite.*] Is it quite clear that you have gone entirely out of wheat-growing ?—I am not putting any wheat in this year at all. I have sold my plant, but, of course, if the sliding scale is going to be left as it is I shall gradually come back into wheat-growing.

Do you think it will be necessary, for the sole purpose of regrassing and getting young grass for your prime Canterbury lamb, to go back to wheat-growing ?—Not if you cannot make a profit out of wheat-growing.

How do you propose to establish your grass permanently in South Canterbury ?—Well, we can sow a grass called western wolths with turnips and rape. In fact, I have been doing that. It does not last so very long. It lasts a couple of years. If you did that, I think it would pay you far better than to grow wheat, if you could not grow it at a profit.

You consider you can grass the type of land you are farming more successfully, or just as successfully, with that type of grass than by putting wheat in rotation ?—I have not had a year's experience at my new farming venture.

You are not sure whether you will have to go back to wheat-growing or not for your ordinary farming rotation ?—A number of farmers in my district do not grow any wheat, and they seem to be keeping ahead of it. They seem to be living, anyhow.

It is not absolutely imperative for the farmers in your district who want to raise lambs to include wheat-growing as part of the crop rotation ?—Not if we cannot get a profit at wheat-growing.

*Mr. Jenkins.*] With regard to your statement that it is much more costly to produce wheat in New Zealand than in Australia ; it takes fifteen months to get a crop here. Is that the case in Australia—can you get an annual crop in Australia ?—I do not know anything about Australian conditions.

Regarding grassing, has lucerne been tried in your district ?—Yes, down in South Canterbury, but it does not seem to be a very great success. Very few farmers go in for it.

It seems to me that the grasses you grow are of a temporary nature—more or less rye-grasses. Then, of course, you have been mainly wheat-growers, and you have not made any attempt to grow permanent grasses there ?—I do not know that you can accuse us of that. Lots of farmers in the district have not grown any wheat for years.

Have they permanent grasses ?—Yes.

In your statement you put down the value of wheat-growing land as £40 an acre : that is a very high figure even for dairying-land ?—I consider that land which will produce 40 bushels of wheat per acre is worth £40 per acre.

*Mr. Waite.*] 40 bushels per acre is far above the average ?—Yes ; 34 bushels to the acre is about the average.