

There is also this statement: "The wheat-grower cannot demand more than a fair price." Is that a statement of fact? The law in no way protects the consumer. You say that all the land must be regrassed at intervals?—Yes, all wheat-growing land must be regrassed at intervals.

Then, all the wheat-growing land, whether it grows wheat or not, must be regrassed?—Yes. In Canterbury there is some heavy land that is more suitable for dairying, but it is only a small area.

You say that land worth £40 an acre will only carry one and a half ewes to the acre?—I do not say that. I say "the average wheat land," which is of much less value than £40 an acre.

It is 34-bushels-an-acre land; and if 40-bushels-an-acre land is worth £40, then 34-bushels-an-acre land is presumably worth £34?—Not as much as that: I would put it down at £25 or £27 an acre, or something like that. In the statement I made to Mr. Taverner I may be a little low in the one and a half ewes to the acre.

Your whole comparison depends upon it, as between the sheep and the wheat?—I also did not allow for the death-rate in sheep.

Then, the sheep statement will be worse than it otherwise would be, if you made that allowance?—Say you put it at two ewes to the acre instead of one and a half, and allow a certain amount for the death-rate. You would have to allow 5 per cent. for the death-rate.

Then, suppose you have two ewes to the acre on £27-an-acre land?—Our land will drop in value if we cannot grow wheat.

Then, you cannot profitably turn from wheat to sheep. That only confirms the point I wanted to bring out. This goes to show that you cannot profitably do it?—I do not think it does. I myself have changed over because I thought the Government might have to take note of the cost of growing wheat, and I might have to show a loss.

Your action, then, might result in a greater loss?—It is very hard to say. I reckoned that my risk was less, anyhow, with the sheep than with the wheat, for the time being.

May it not be that you are now making a very great mistake?—I may be making a mistake if the sliding scale of duties is going on. Of course, it is going on now, but I did not know in time. If I had known in time that the sliding scale would have gone on, I certainly would have kept on with wheat-growing.

When was the pronouncement made that the sliding scale would be retained?—Not until late in February.

Was it not possible to sow then?—I do not think we got anything definite then. It is no use to grow wheat unless you can make a job of it.

The land would be worth £27 an acre if the sliding scale is retained and wheat is grown: What will it be worth if it will carry only two ewes to the acre?—I will get that worked out. You have to take into consideration whether you are going to keep your teams, and put in green feed and mangolds, and that sort of thing, to use the land for sheep. Put the same work into the land as you do for wheat.

What would you say that this land was — one-and-a-half-ewe land, or two-ewe land?—You want me to estimate what the average land is worth in Canterbury?

Yes; what it is worth as sheep country?—I can only give my opinion, and I may be wrong. I think one and a half ewes is putting the best side to London in my case with Mr. Taverner—and, of course, you must put the best side to London. I should say it would carry a little more than that: two ewes may be nearer. It is a very big question for me to answer.

What is the land that can be used for no other purpose than carrying sheep worth, if it will carry two ewes to the acre and fatten the lambs?—It is a pretty big question.

Would it be worth about £14 an acre?—More than that.

It would not be worth £27 an acre?—No.

Will land valued at £27 an acre be of that value because of the artificial addition of the sliding scale?—Well, no. Of course, as you know, in the boom-time land went in some cases a good deal above its value. We are getting back to its real value now. I should say that if you take away wheat-growing in Canterbury the land will certainly come down in value. It will be disastrous to Canterbury—absolutely disastrous—if you do not keep the sliding scale on.

You said in one place that the average wages you paid were £125 per man?—Yes. That was just an estimate. I have boys, old men, good men, and all sorts. To take an average—I have some on piecework, and some paid by the week. Some have been with me for years, and have grown old in the service.

What would be the average in 1914, immediately before the war?—Take harvesting, for instance: I should say the harvesting wages for us were about 1s. 3d. an hour. To-day the rate is from 1s. 9d. to 2s., on the average.

Could you not raise the average to £125 a year? What was the corresponding figure in 1914?—I could not tell you that.

Would it be £100 a year per man?—I think it would be less than that, taking the men and boys right through.

Would it be £90?—You are asking me about something fifteen years ago. It is too big for me. I will get you the figures.

If, from your figures, you cut out the rent, cut out the seed, manure, and resowing with grass and clover, and the sacks, twine, supervision, and interest: about £5 of the £10 11s. is wages—that is, 2s. 6d. a bushel?—Yes.

The total wages cost at that period amounted to 2s. 6d. per bushel: would the increase in wages since 1914, seeing that the total wages to-day are 2s. 6d. a bushel, be 1s.?—I think your figures are incorrect, because in regrassing most of the items are labour, and not only half.

If grass on that particular type of land has to be renewed periodically, whether you grow wheat or not, why should the cost of renewal with grass be charged against wheat-growing, and not charged