

*Mr. Bitchener :* Well, I speak from my own experience, and I have had forty years' experience. I think it is largely due to the good work done by the Department.

*Mr. Jones.]* In the rotation cropping of an agricultural farm where grain is grown, how many years do you think a farmer should have to crop the grain?—That is a rather difficult question, Mr. Jones, for me to answer offhand, but I think that he should at least have a rotation which is as long as the length of the pasture. If the pastures are of three years, he should programme, more or less, for three years ahead; if it is a four-year pasture, then he might pencil in a four-year programme, and alter it if necessary during the time the crops are growing.

What would be the effect, Mr. Cockayne, of a stabilized and reasonable price upon the production of wheat?—Well, I do not know whether that is a policy point or not, but I would say this: that if the farmer was not terribly scared of a low price he would be more inclined to grow wheat.

On the question of costs, what is the cost of distributing?—If questions of costs are to be submitted I would prefer to work them out, because, although I might have a rough idea in my mind, it might probably be fairly wide of the mark; whereas they could be accurately attended to if the questions are specifically given and the answers worked out.

*The Chairman.]* If any member wants information of that kind you would prefer him to hand in his request for information, and you will get it?—Yes. Send it to the Department. The Department will deal with any points.

*Rev. Mr. Carr.]* The statement has been made to me that the results of the research into specially productive types of seed wheat have been rather minimized, if not rather nullified, by the fact that when a practically new seed wheat comes out the price is unduly raised and the farmer is not able to take advantage of the results of the research, and so on, at the Agricultural College. I understand the merchants raise the price of this particular seed wheat for the first year or so, and when the farmer is able, after some time, to avail himself of the seed it has probably deteriorated?—I do not for one moment say that that is actually correct, and I would like for a moment to mention the system that is coming into operation of crop certification in Canterbury, particularly with regard to wheat and other crops. That system of crop certification enables any farmer, when he requires to renew his seed wheat, to be able to get guaranteed pure wheat at a cost—although above that of ordinary seed wheat—that the farmer is absolutely prepared to pay. The system started three years ago. This season we have got up to the certification of about 20,000 bushels, and those 20,000 bushels of absolutely pure seed wheat have been purchased by farmers, and there has been no complaint of the additional 9d. or 1s. a bushel charged above the ordinary uncertified seed-wheat price.

That seed wheat is not available to the farmer direct from the agricultural colleges?—As soon as the colleges have supplies they sell it to the farmers. The Department of Agriculture, in co-operation with the Wheat Research Institute, then steps in, and those farmers who grow those crops are enabled to have their crops certified. The farmers who grow certified wheat have to perform certain extra duties, such as having the threshing-machines specially cleaned, and so on, and they get an additional price for their wheat. As soon as it has reached that stage there is no difficulty whatever on the part of the wheat-grower in securing the seed renewal.

*The Chairman.]* At a reasonable price?—I would not say it was.

That was the question?—At a price which is not higher than is reasonable, considering the amount of attention that is given in the preparation and sale of that material.

The point, I think, was that it might be that the merchant was getting more than he should?—The merchant is not.

You do not mind the farmer getting it, but it is a question of the merchant?—At the present time the farmer is getting a straight-out 6d. a bushel more for the certified wheat he is growing.

*Mr. Bitchener.]* It is worth it?—Yes. Never during the three years has there been a single complaint from farmers with regard to the price.

*Rev. Mr. Carr.]* The other point I mentioned was that, owing to the difficulty of getting that seed wheat at the price the farmers could afford to pay for it, the farmers find when the price is within their reach—so it has been stated to me—the seed wheat has deteriorated, and, of course, does not give the same result?—Of course, with some of the varieties of wheat grown in Canterbury at the present time it has been extremely difficult to get sufficient crops to which certification could be given. We will take such a variety as Dreadnought: At the present time, with the exception of certain quantities which we are having grown specially by farmers for ourselves, there is no other pure Dreadnought in New Zealand. Again, with regard to Pearl wheat, there are only a few crops that are absolutely pure; and as regards certain varieties the farmer is in the position, even with our certification methods at the present time, that when he wants to grow that wheat he has to go on the open market, as it were, and he gets a very poor sample. One realizes that, and one hopes that will be obviated shortly. With regard to the two standard wheats grown in New Zealand at the present time—namely, Solid-straw Tuscan and Hunter's—sufficient certification is being done to supply farmers with reliable wheat where they want to change their wheat stock, but there are certain varieties which are in a bad position.

The only other question I wish to ask is, Did the Department of Agriculture make any special effort to assist farmers so that they should do their cropping at the best time? A good deal of loss is occasioned—there may be practical farmers present at this meeting who may be better able than I to express an opinion—I understand, by farmers cutting the crop and threshing the crop at the wrong time, either too soon or too late, or either when the weather is too wet or too dry, with the result that you get wheat that is too starchy. Does the Department do anything in the direction of assisting the farmers to know under what conditions and at what particular times they should reap their crop and thresh their crop?—Advice is regularly given on those matters; but the majority of the farmers, even when they are harvesting their crop while it is in a wrong condition, know when it is the right or wrong time to harvest their crops, but circumstances make them do their harvesting at some particular time.