

under 640 acres—that a farmer in Victoria can hold 640 acres of first-class land without having to pay any land-tax at all. Then, the entire cost of living on a farm there, including the ordinary requirements of a farmer, is considerably less than it is here. For instance, harness, clothing, boots, timber for fencing, &c.—all these things are cheaper to the Australian farmer than to the New Zealand farmer, which means that if they get an opening to our markets here they can practically go on growing wheat and wipe us out of existence. I would just like to point out this: that in Australia, through the fluctuations of the seasons, it is not always that they have a surplus to export, so that if we are forced out of the wheat industry you might see wheat, in consequence of a drought over there, up to 7s. a bushel here. They will not have any to spare, perhaps through a drought, and this will counterbalance what might be paid by the New Zealand consumer in a cheap year. I would also like to point out that there is no product of the soil which gives the same amount of work to our population as wheat-growing. A farmer requires so much work both in putting the grain into the land and taking it off, and it is nothing to see four or five hundred men at a time waiting about Ashburton for the harvest to begin. It affords a large amount of labour and employs a large number of people in the towns, and, generally speaking, it circulates a very large amount of money throughout the country. If we are going to import thousands of tons of flour into New Zealand, the money represented both by the growth of wheat and the manufacture of flour will simply flow out to Australia, and our own land will not be in such profitable occupation as it otherwise would be.

56. *Mr. Hogg.*] I suppose you have been a considerable employer of labour yourself?—I keep six men.

57. How much a week do you pay them?—From £1 2s. 6d. to £1 5s., with a £10 bonus at harvest-time. The wages to harvest-men run from £2 15s. to £3 and found.

58. Have you ever paid any man you employed £3 a week and his keep?—No, not that sum. I pay them a bonus. Their wages are approximately from £2 15s. to £3 a week; it depends on the length of the harvest.

59. Have you yourself paid those wages?—I have not paid extra men more than £2 15s. a week and their keep—that is, the additional men required during harvest.

60. *Mr. Evans* has told us that the average yield of wheat is 30 bushels per acre. Do you know if that is correct?—It may be in some seasons; it was not last year.

61. I see that, according to the Government statistics here in 1905, the total number of bushels produced in New Zealand was 9,123,673, and the average, instead of 30 bushels, was about 35½?—Yes.

62. You are not prepared to say that is incorrect?—I do not believe it for a moment.

63. I am depending on the Official Year-book for 1905?—Well, the Year-book in this respect is not worth the paper it is written on. If you take the average consumption and the seed-requirements of the farmers and what is exported, and go back a few years, you will find that there ought to be some millions of bushels stowed away somewhere. If those figures are correct we ought to have some twenty or thirty million bushels hidden away in some cave.

64. A contrast was drawn between what was produced in New Zealand and South Australia: can you give us any idea of how much per acre was produced over there?—The yields there are often very light, but still there are some very good yields.

65. In 1904 the average is given as 7½ bushels in South Australia?—Yes. I do not know their mean average, but it is considerably lower than ours.

66. *Mr. Hanan.*] What area of land do they have under cultivation in Canterbury—approximately?—There were 156,106 acres under wheat last year, according to the agricultural statistics published in the *Gazette*.

67. What other places are growing wheat, can you say?—It is grown in small quantities all over New Zealand. Eleven thousand acres of wheat was grown in the North Island, including Nelson, Marlborough, and Westland.

68. Have you ever increased the area of cultivation on your farm?—Yes; I have 600 acres in wheat this year, and had about 500 last year.

69. Are they going in more for wheat-cultivation now?—Not generally, but I have special reasons for growing more. I want more money, as I bought a farm recently.

70. How do your prices compare now with what obtained five years ago?—I think they are about the same. I confess that I could not get the price for wheat quoted to-day.

71. What was your price last year?—3s. 2d. per bushel. The highest price I ever sold wheat at was 4s. 3d., to go to Auckland. That is about five years ago.

72. *Mr. Aitken.*] The Farmers' Union have confined their evidence so far to wheat. I would like to know if other grains are affected by this preferential tariff, also such articles as cheese and butter. The evidence so far has been almost entirely confined to wheat?—The gentleman with me, *Mr. Cooper*, who is from the Wellington District, and *Mr. Middleton*, who is from the south, will be able to speak on other points. My district is not a dairying district, or only so to a very small extent.

73. *Mr. Bollard.*] You have stated it as your opinion that if flour is admitted to this colony duty-free a very large proportion of wheat land in Canterbury would go out of wheat-cultivation?—That is so.

74. What effect would that have on the labour-market of Canterbury?—I should say a very considerable effect. The quantity of labour on the farms would be very much reduced.

75. Can you give us any idea of the number of men who would be thrown out of employment?—I could not speak of that, but it would have a great effect on employment. There is nothing so well suited to lubricate the wheels of business as the wheat-market when in a good condition. When I go into town many business people stop me to ask how the wheat is getting on; and a good harvest makes a great difference to all branches of business.

76. But leaving out the question of the harvest altogether, you think it would affect the employment of labour all round?—It would undoubtedly.