

banks, which will cover ground that neither of the other institutions cover. The banks would go further in the matter of credit in deserving cases. I urge that a man should be prevented from acquiring a new transfer within, say, from five to seven years. In this matter I am expressing my own views: I do not speak for the Farmers' Union.

T. W. OWEN, representing Taranaki Executive of the Farmers' Union, examined.

I have been deputed by the Farmers' Union executive to lay before the Industries Committee some of the ways in which the production of Taranaki can be maintained and in some measure increased. The true basis of the production of this province is the pastures, and it is with them that I propose to deal principally. The soils of this portion of the Dominion are of a volcanic nature; they are light and friable, easily worked, and are what may be termed "generous," because they give out freely of the constituents which go to make up our pastures, assisted largely by a climate which is warm, with an abundant rainfall. These favourable conditions are largely responsible for the valuable exports which leave this district with almost constant regularity, and which have been on the increase for the last thirty years. That being so, is it reasonable to expect that this heavy drain on the resources of our soil can be maintained without some assistance? I say unhesitatingly that it cannot. Already thousands of acres of the lighter soils are showing unmistakable signs of lessened capabilities of production, and if timely warning is not taken and practical methods adopted, then it is certain that our present rate of exports cannot even be maintained. Very great improvement can be made in the laying-down of pasture. A badly-laid-down pasture is not only a loss to the individual farmer, but it is a loss to the whole community. Thorough cultivation and the eradication of weeds and couch-grass before sowing down are the chief essentials; also the judicious application of suitable manures. Then we have to deal with the large areas of land which come under the heading of old or original pastures. In many cases the best grasses have died out, and only the inferior kinds, which provide a poor quality and a small quantity of feed, remain. How to in a measure bring back this land without going to the great expense of going through an expensive course of cultivation is a big problem which must be met in a practical manner. Cheap and effective manures may do much, and in this respect the assistance of an expert thoroughly versed in agricultural chemistry and the best methods of the application of manures would be invaluable to the district; and I would recommend that the Government be advised to obtain the services of such a man. The present experimental methods of applying manures are, I am sure, most wasteful and often very disappointing. Supplies of manures of good quality at reasonable rates are a great necessity to the district.

*To the Chairman:* The experimental stations at Stratford and Moumahaki are of value to the farmers in a certain degree. I am not acquainted with the experiments which have been carried on at Stratford, but I have been to Moumahaki on several occasions. Valuable experiments are being carried on there, and valuable information has been given to the farmer; but, on the other hand, I question whether the ordinary farmer could afford to pay for the labour employed at Moumahaki, and if he could pay for it he could not get it. The system carried on there is rather beyond the reach of the ordinary farmer. I question whether even in ordinary times every farmer could afford to employ the amount of labour that is employed at Moumahaki. Farmers from this district go to Moumahaki to get information, but in order to carry out the system adopted there would require more labour. It has been a very good thing to establish an experimental farm at Stratford, because the soil there is lighter; and if the Government officers can get the best results it is more creditable to them. There is a great variation in the soil of Taranaki, and I am sure that a system that will suit one portion of the district will not necessarily be successful in another. In Maniaia you have some of the richest soils in Taranaki, and experiments carried out there are not going to be a success at Stratford. Of course, both experimental farms give assistance to some extent. During the past four years farmers have been too busy to visit other farms in order to see what is being done in the way of experiment. I am not aware that the Farmers' Unions have applied to the Government to appoint an expert to give instruction in regard to manures. If such a scientific expert got sufficiently into touch with the farmers he could get the practical knowledge from them to enable him to thoroughly discharge his duties. I think the Farmers' Unions might co-operate with the Government in that matter; it would be a splendid investment for the farmers. I am aware that the Education Department has sent round men who have given us valuable information in some respects; but I could point out instances which have come under my own notice where these men have advised farmers to adopt a certain mode of cultivation, and it has been an absolute failure. I think it would be better that the instruction to farmers should come from the Department of Agriculture.

*To Mr. Pearce:* As far as I know, club-root is brought about by bad farming. If the soil is robbed of certain necessary constituents the plants become more liable to disease. I am aware that club-root is a very serious trouble. It has come to my knowledge that on some farms club-root has occurred the first time a crop was put in. If the officer I have suggested were appointed and he was a thoroughly scientific man he could investigate the question of club-root, as well as other troubles. I think personally that a good deal of the trouble with regard to club-root is owing to too many crops being taken from the land, but I know it is not always so.

*To Mr. Hornsby:* The assistance given to the dairy industry by the Government has certainly been splendid, and what has been a success in connection with dairying could also be made a success in connection with other branches of farming, providing the proper men were appointed.

*To Mr. Hudson:* I regard the experimental farms as being a distinct advantage to the farmers. For instance, it was demonstrated at Moumahaki that lucerne could be grown with success and advantage. I question whether we would have the amount of lucerne that is grown in the district to-day if it had not been for the experiment at Moumahaki. I think the Minister