

Of late years, especially during the war, we have found a tremendous difficulty in working the back country. One of the principal difficulties is with regard to the man on the land. The same remark applies all down the coast; facilities for educating the children in the back country are practically non-existent. Men have taken up farms—young men have gone on land, and they have worked it and have done well; and when the land is beginning to return them a reasonable profit for the labour and capital they have put into it they find they have to move in order to give their children a chance of being educated. For that reason land often changes hands without the people who should get the benefit out of it receiving their dues. That has an influence in preventing men taking up land of that sort. The same thing applies to managers who may take their place. If a man does not wish to part with a place he probably moves nearer to town himself and puts in a manager; but the same remark applies to the manager. The owner is thus practically confined in his choice of manager to single men, and, as you all know, we do not get the best results from single men in anything. A man who has his home there puts most into it and gets most out of it.

To the Chairman: I advocate special provision in the way of school facilities. I agree with the suggestion that schools should be provided where there are five children; but I also think better provision should be made for taking the children to where they will receive better education. The result of the small schools appears to me to be this: that the least capable teachers are put into these schools, and, of course, the capitation acts against it too; it does not act in the best interests of education. Probably a different scheme of capitation would be better than that in vogue. But I think it would be better to take the children to the bigger schools; they could be transported to the larger schools. They might be brought to the ends of roads and picked up by motor vehicles or something of that sort. There are motor mail-services on most of these roads now.

To Mr. Hornsby: The system adopted in America of appointing itinerant schoolmasters—thoroughly qualified masters—might be of considerable advantage. I think it would be better than the children being placed under more or less incompetent instructors.

Witness: There is another point in connection with the hill country sheep-farms, and that is in connection with the weed commonly known as “biddybid.” I think the Department should make a very careful study of the plant and of its natural enemies, and of the best methods of dealing with it.

O. HAWKEN, Member of Board of Agriculture, examined.

In regard to the question of the subdivision of land and housing, I would like to draw your attention to the necessity for some aid being given not only with respect to houses in the towns, but also in the country. As a matter of fact, I believe that a great deal can be done in the way of subdividing the land by providing a method of helping the people to build houses on their property at a cheap rate, and apart from the first-mortgage business. I think the Government could subdivide land by providing houses, and so save themselves a very large amount of money in buying land. I should propose that houses should be built for people who wish to subdivide the land. The system would have to be worked on the suggestion as to the perpetual mortgage. Under the advances-to-settlers system no man who has a mortgage on his land can borrow money to build a house; the Government does not lend money on second mortgage. If the Government adopted this suggestion men would build houses and so sell a portion of their property. I believe that a great deal could be done by the adoption of that principle for the returned soldiers, for instance. It is even more necessary, I think, to provide houses for country workers than for town workers.

To Mr. Hornsby: Arrangements might be made to have a sort of village centre; it would have to be judiciously chosen. At present the drawbacks in connection with educating children in back country are generally recognized. A suggestion has also been made with regard to seeds. I think we should deal with this matter somewhat on the lines of the British Act passed about two years ago; otherwise this country will become the dumping-ground of all the bad seeds of the world. I think that Inspectors under this Department might in many cases be appointed from our returned wounded soldiers. I think many of these men would be suitable for this class of work. My observation is that right throughout the coast here noxious weeds are being spread rapidly—Californian thistle and all sorts of weeds. Farmers understand the difficulties which confront the Department of Agriculture; but at the same time I am certain that the work cannot be carried on properly with the present vote. More attention should be devoted to scientific research in connection with agriculture; and here again there is a field for the employment of some of our younger men—men who have perhaps lost their health. Let suitable men be trained in specialized occupations which might be very suitable for them—trained in work that would be for the good of the country. Much more might be done with advantage in the way of research work.

To the Chairman: This research work might be done on the experimental farms. It would take some time, no doubt, to bring it into order. With respect to stock, there has been no real policy, and they have been starved for money. A question has been asked about agricultural education. My opinion is that the primary schools should not trench on the Agricultural Department's proper sphere. The Department of Agriculture should deal with the men, and the primary schools with the boys. Reference has also been made to experimental farms. I think the American system is the best. More good is done by sending round thoroughly qualified men—men with scientific knowledge and training, and men whom the farmers respect—than by asking farmers to pay periodical visits to experimental farms. I would not for a moment advocate the selling of the experimental farms, but I think their activities should be restricted to demonstration purposes. I may say that recently I went into the question of the losses in sheep. I examined the statistics. I have gone into the statistics and the question generally; I have worked out the