

this year must be very low, because there is hardly any preparation for wheat. As far as next year is concerned, it is six months behind the time to start to fix the price now. Farmers are beginning to find out that by leaving wheat-growing alone they can do without manuring and can carry more sheep.

To Mr. Sidey: If there was no wheat coming from Australia I believe we would be getting 7s. 6d. for our wheat to-day if there was no interference.

To Mr. Luke: Fifteen years ago I drew a run of 312 acres in a ballot, and I have since bought 110 acres. For the last five years it has not been a successful occupation to grow wheat.

To Mr. Hudson: If you will guarantee the season we will guarantee the wheat. If we had had 7s. per bushel for our wheat for a number of years past, except this year, we would not have shown anything to credit. If we are going to have seasons like we have had for the past four years 7s. would no more than pay us a maximum price.

To the Chairman: The farmers in the North are getting 4d. more than the farmers in the South. Mr. MacDonald, the Controller of Wheat, was asked in Christchurch why that was so, and he said, "The position was that last season the North Island grew between 8,000 and 9,000 acres of wheat. Estimating the yield at 30 bushels, this would amount to approximately between 240,000 and 270,000, or barely enough to satisfy North Island requirements for ten days. It is therefore claimed that practically the whole of the flour ground in the North Island must be from wheat grown in the South Island, and the flour-miller must get the price for his flour based on the cost of wheat at his mill. This necessarily must include the cost of freight between the two Islands, approximately between 5d. and 6d. per bushel. If the North Island millers were allowed to buy North Island wheat at the same price as South Island wheat at port of shipment they would make, if the wheat were of the same quality, an additional profit equivalent to between 5d. and 6d. per bushel. Thus, if the North Island yield were 250,000 bushels and the freight between the two Islands is calculated at 5d., the North Island millers would gain in addition to their ordinary profits a further sum of £5,208 6s. 8d. It was thought better that this sum should go to the pockets of the producer and not into the pockets of the millers. If the North Island wheat were of the same quality as the South Island wheat the difference in price should have been between 5d. and 6d. per bushel. So it is inferior in quality. The difference in price allowed the North Island farmer was put down at 4d. in order to give the North Island miller an inducement to use the wheat grown in his own district, otherwise he might have bought all his requirements in the South, and inferior North Island wheat would have been left on the Government's hands."

The Chairman: I have a letter from a North Island farmer which shows that he did not get the 4d. difference. He received 5s. 10d., but out of that he had to pay the freight.

To the Chairman: I believe the cost of labour has increased by 80 per cent. It must have been more last year. I include in the labour the cost of threshing, which in some cases was over 1s. per bushel. I should like to see a heavy duty against Australian wheat.

G. L. TWENTYMAN, Farmer, examined.

I know of mercantile houses that have refused to finance people going on to wheat land. If wheat-growing pays a farmer he will grow wheat. It is my intention to grow very little wheat under present conditions: I am heartsick of it. It is a maxim among farmers, "Grow wheat and grow poor," and I must grow something else. We have been badly treated by the Government from the day Mr. Massey asked us to grow wheat for patriotic reasons. I saw the Minister of Agriculture in Timaru a month ago and I asked him, "What price am I to get for my wheat if I put it in this year, and what price am I to get for my wheat now in the paddock?" He said, "I cannot answer either question, but I will answer them as soon as I can." The questions have not been answered yet, and therefore I take it that the 5s. 6d., 5s. 8d., and 5s. 10d. have not yet been fixed. The price I expect to get for my wheat this year is 6s. 6d., and as I have grown the wheat in response to the request of the Government I look for its fair market value. The fair market value is the cost of delivery of Australian wheat in Timaru, plus the ordinary duty. In other words, I expect to get 6s. 10½d. The Minister did not dispute my figures when I laid them before him. A peculiar thing in connection with the price of wheat is that pigs will pay better than wheat: they will pay 50 per cent. more. I think there is an exaggerated idea among a good many people as to the profits of farmers generally and as to the profits of growing wheat.

To Mr. Craigie: Last year my wheat in November and December promised 50 or 60 bushels, and it threshed out at 30. 5s. 6d. and an open market would not induce me to grow wheat in the next twelve months, though it might induce others. There is no price that you could offer that would induce me to do it. We ought to know about October or November what we are going to do in the following year.

To Mr. Luke: I would prefer to grow wheat for bacon than for wheat. It would pay me better to hog my wheat. It is probable that, in small quantities, the pig will pay better than wheat for years to come.

To the Chairman: I am growing 15 or 20 acres of wheat, as much as anything for the straw. My next-door neighbour owns one of the best wheat-growing farms and he has not a single acre of wheat this year.

The Chairman: If the farmers are not growing wheat it is all up with the wheat business.

Witness: It has not been worth while growing wheat in the last four years.

The Chairman: I am sorry to see such a pessimistic tone with the farmers.

Witness: The tendency is to go in for grass instead of crop, and can you wonder? It is my intention in years to come to go in for stock-farming and to drop the grain almost entirely.