

Mr. BERNARD RASKIN examined. (No. 16.)

*The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a poultry-farmer at Levin, where I arrived in 1919 with a capital of £1,100, which I invested in the property I now occupy. Having had some experience in poultry-farming, I decided to establish myself in that line, hoping gradually to increase my flock to about four thousand birds. Prospects then were promising, in spite of the high costs of materials for improvements. About that time I was one of those who gave the undertaking to do my share to provide New Zealand with pulp to the exclusion of the foreign article. It has been necessary for me to adjust my finances from time to time, and I have had to pledge my chattels to satisfy pressing creditors, mainly merchants and others, for poultry-foods obtained during periods when prices were below the cost of production. It is true that there have been seasons when, with additional income from the sales of day-old chicks, the poultry-farmer has been able to make both ends meet, but I am not aware of any period when the farmer has received any return for his labour. The present season promises nothing, because the day-old-chick business has been killed. It has been necessary, owing to the loss on poultry-farming, to find other means of existence. My flock was not extended beyond eleven hundred birds. I had to devote my attention to growing vegetables for that purpose. In addition, I reduced my flock by three hundred birds, using the proceeds to pay debts incurred for food during the lean periods, and I am still in debt to the extent of £100 for feed alone. I have been urged by friends on several occasions to leave the property and seek other avenues of employment, but as my life savings are sunk in the property I am loth to do so while there is any hope that better times may come. One distressing result of the position is that in it social life is out of the question when the needs of the home cannot be satisfied. Giving my children an education beyond that of the State schools has only been possible through personal sacrifices that should never have been necessary. I can only hope that some changes will come about which will place the poultry industry on a more satisfactory footing than that of to-day, and so save myself and others from ruin. All that we ask is for the removal of hardships that have been placed upon us. The poultry-farmer is not asking for any assistance; he is quite prepared to stand the cost of production, provided he is not hampered by duties. We do not ask the Government to subsidize our production, but merely for relief from the tariff imposition. If the cost of production were lowered we could export the surplus of eggs beyond those required for the home market, and this without assistance from the Government. We have had to pay 12s. 6d. per bushel for maize, though the duty was placed only upon wheat, and though we could have landed the maize on the Wellington wharf for 2s. 6d. As to the duty on Asiatic egg-pulp, I say that I would be glad to have free-trade within the Empire.

TUESDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER, 1929.

Mr. CHARLES HOWARD HEWLETT examined. (No. 17.)

*Mr. Wright.*] What is your full name, Mr. Hewlett?—Charles Howard Hewlett.

You are the managing director of the Canterbury Seed Co., Ltd.?—Yes.

And I think you are a member of the Canterbury Agricultural College?—Yes.

On the Board of Governors?—Yes.

Being the Government nominee?—Yes.

And you are also the Government nominee upon the Wheat Institute?—Yes.

An offshoot from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research?—Yes.

And I think you are the Government nominee on the Plant Research Institute?—Yes.

At Palmerston North?—Yes.

For a number of years you have been actually interested in the wheat industry?—Yes.

I think you have done a considerable amount of research work in connection with the growing of wheat?—Yes. I have assisted the Lincoln College officers and the Department of Agriculture officers in trying out in the fields the results of their laboratory investigations.

Will you kindly proceed with your general statement?—Yes. I have made my statement very short. In the first place, I will deal with the importance of the wheat industry in New Zealand. It is essential that a country should, if possible, be self-supporting in its chief food-supplies, and should not depend for such an important item of food as wheat upon a country at a distance, from which those supplies might be seriously interrupted or cut off altogether in times of war, and which in times of peace would most certainly be constantly interrupted through shipping and other strikes, which have been so prevalent in Australia during the last few years. The importance of wheat-growing in crop rotation in arable husbandry is so apparent and so universally acknowledged that it is unthinkable that the New Zealand Legislature could permit of any protection being taken away, the result of which would mean widespread dislocation in arable farming. Wheat-growing, and the auxiliary industries of flour-milling and baking, are the means of giving employment to a very large number of men and circulating a considerable amount of money. For instance, the amount of labour involved in ploughing and preparing the land for sowing, the manufacturing of manures to be applied, and the drilling of the seed, the reaping, stooking, stacking, threshing, carting to the railway, handling at the railway and at the wharves, handling at the mills, making into flour, distributing wheat and flour both by rail and sea, and the baking and delivering of the bread employs a very large number of men in useful work on farms, in grain-stores, wharves, mills, bakehouses, carters, railways, and ships, with all the subsidiary industries, such as the making of binder-twine from our locally grown flax, farm implements, &c., which are necessary to keep these concerns going. Probably in no other industry is so much labour employed and money circulated so many times, the whole of the labour being employed and all the money circulated within this country. What would be the result if we had to depend on Australia for our supplies? In the first place, we should not be used as a dumping-ground and offered