

and they are doing that now. But it is necessary that those duties should be kept on to give them an opportunity to try and do something to increase the production and lower the costs. I think it is necessary that the sliding scale of duties should be kept on for a year or two longer, until that can be done. It is being done now.

*The Chairman.*] A year or two?—A few years. These things take time. For instance, on our own farm we have been trying to produce more and to lower the costs. We have cleaned up thousands of acres. And we have had our share of bad luck. In one case a large area that was planted with good Hunter's wheat has "gone west" through heavy rain coming down. Things like that cannot be controlled. There are many problems to be solved. All we can say is that in a few years we may be able to solve some of the problems.

Do you suggest that if a reasonable price is secured to the farmers they will continue growing wheat, and at the same time ensure the price of bread to the public at a fair cost?—I do not know anything about the milling side of the question—perhaps a certain amount can be saved there—but I do know that we on the farming side are trying to put our house in order, and we have great promise of success in the future, but we require protection in the meantime. So far as the millers and the bakers are concerned there may be room for improvement there. As to that I cannot say, but I do know that we are doing our share.

*Mr. McCombs.*] What is the valuation of your farm?—£40 an acre.

And the super value?—The total value of the farm land is £44,055.

You could hardly regard your farm as an average farm?—No, it is larger than the average.

Your charge for super-tax, £1 1s. per acre, is due to the fact that you are valued at £44,055?—Yes, that is the reason.

That, of course, could be discounted considerably on the average farm?—Yes, the average farm would be lower.

Supposing your land was not used for wheat-growing, how many sheep would it carry to the acre?—I have not tried that out.

Would it carry two or three?—Say three. The £40-per-acre land would probably carry two and a half. I have not tried that out.

Your £40-an-acre land would only carry two and a half?—Well, I will put it this way: The wheat crop, like all cropping, is part of a rotation, in which you have to work the thing in. If you are restricted to certain crops it may cause serious losses. Oats, for instance, are going out. If wheat is also going out I would not like to pay £40 an acre for that land.

The values would come down?—Yes, if we are restricted in our farming operations the values would come down and labour would not be employed.

Are not the values here high as compared to Australia, and is not that really due to protection?—I am taking the Government valuation. I think the value is too high. £1 worth of land in Australia will produce more than £1 worth of land in New Zealand. So it looks either that our values are too high or that the Australian values are too low.

Being a practical man, can you explain why it is that ploughing, harrowing, and drilling, according to your figures, is so much cheaper in Australia than in New Zealand?—They do not do so much ploughing there. There is not the labour employed there that there is here. That is shown by those Turretfield Farm figures. They use 25 per cent. of labour; we use 40 per cent. of labour. We have heavier land, and have more work to put in.

There is also the difference in the cost of harvesting?—Yes. We have a high moisture content in our grain, and it costs more to harvest. In some parts of Australia they strip the grain, but with our higher moisture content we could not do that here. They have tried a few strippers here, and they have not been successful. If we left our wheat out sufficiently long to strip, and a good north-wester was to come along, it would be ruinous.

Is there any super-tax in Australia?—I do not know of any such tax in Australia, but I could not say for certain. This book gives all particulars of farming in South Australia.

I think you said in reply to Mr. Cobbe that if we were on the market for wheat the Australian people would probably put up their price against us?—Yes. I think we would be looking for trouble.

Then, how does it happen that in England they can import all the wheat they want from the four corners of the earth at a reasonable price?—But you must remember that England is a very big buyer, and the other countries are very anxious for her trade. We would be only a small buyer. It would be very different for us. If they thought they could get another 6d. per bushel I do not think they would be past it.

Would not competition in Australia and New Zealand bring it down to the world's parity?—That may be so, but in some cases the reverse has occurred. In some cases we have received flour from Australia under cost. Some people have been dumping, it seems to me.

Did not the millers petition this House in 1918, when the duty on flour was £1 per ton, and did not they say that if they could get £2 10s. they would be perfectly satisfied? There was concerted action between the farmers and the millers to get the £1 increased to £2 10s. Do you remember that?—I think I have some recollection of it, but I would not be quite certain.

*Mr. Bitchener.*] With reference to the price of the loaf in Australia and the price of the loaf in New Zealand, if it is considered that the price of our loaf is too high you would not care to have the reduction of the cost taken out of the wheat industry?—No.

I think it is generally admitted that a reduction of 1s. 4d. per bushel would mean a reduction of only 1d. on the loaf?—That may be so. I would like to point out that, on account of the research work now being done at Lincoln College and at the research stations right throughout New Zealand, there should be an increased production in the next five years at a lower cost; but all