

and during the third six-monthly period the price rose to over 10s. per bushel; and in the fourth period, whilst we were taking delivery of the last 1,000,000 bushels, the price varied from 14s. to 16s. f.o.b. Williamstown. In a large measure, if I remember rightly, the last very high prices were due to drought conditions ruling in the Commonwealth. I should like to add here that that wheat was bought in the last year of the war, 1918, and this big price was ruling in 1920, two years after the war closed; therefore it could not be understood that it was owing to war that the high prices ruled. The foregoing points to the necessity of New Zealand providing its own supplies, as it would appear that such difficult times come in Australia in fairly frequent cycles, and it shows how quickly the position can alter from plenty to conditions of scarcity.

At this stage Mr. D. Jones took the chair.

Witness (continuing): Scope of protection: Under the protection afforded the wheat-growers by the sliding scale of duties New Zealand should be in the position of permanent self-support at a fair return to the grower, with the knowledge, on the other hand, to the consumer that by the same scale of duties the price cannot rise in New Zealand above the average, at the worst, of, say, 6s. 6d. f.o.b. Therefore, because the wheat-grower has the protection in a fair return, the consumer also is protected in that wheat cannot go to extreme prices through unfavourable conditions ruling in other countries. It could not go to 14s.

The Chairman: That is right.

Witness: Rotation of crops: Balance of exchange and substitution for wheat-growing: Wheat in New Zealand is mainly grown in Canterbury and North Otago, which provinces contain lands suitable for the growing of this cereal, and for the successful farming of wheat lands it is necessary that there should be a system of regular rotation in cropping, including wheat. The provinces in question, I think, could not make the same value-production from any other form of farming as a substitute for wheat-growing. If the Dominion ceased to grow wheat it would mean that some two and a half millions sterling at least would have to be sent out of the Dominion each year to pay for supplies, which would greatly upset the balance of exchange, and leave the wheat country unable to make an equal return from, say, sheep-farming on the wheat lands. To illustrate this I would say that New Zealand growing 250,000 acres with a yield of 34 bushels would have 8,500,000 bushels of wheat available for use. The value of this, even at 5s. per bushel, which is about the average Australian f.o.b. price, would be £2,250,000. The same land under sheep would carry, say, 500,000 ewes, and with 100 per cent. of lambs at £1 5s., and 8s. for the fleece, would give a revenue of £825,000, against the above revenue for wheat; added to this, the wheat lands, were sheep-raising continued, would be in serious danger of deterioration.

Employment: I submit that the Wheat Committee will find that the subject of wheat-growing bulks very largely indeed in employment, and as one of the primary industries is very far-reaching in this regard, a great amount of skilled and unskilled labour being catered for in its production, as under: (1) Labour employed on farms in sowing and harvesting of wheat; (2) threshing-mill proprietors and men employed on the threshers; (3) hauling to railhead or port of shipment; (4) handling and hauling on the railways; (5) handling wheat into stores or flour-mills, and the work at ship's side at loading and discharging ports; (6) its indirect employment in many trades, as follows: Implement-makers, and the importation of machinery necessary in growing wheat; saddlers; blacksmiths; flax-mills; twine-mills; coal-miners and others. Again, I submit that wheat-growing is a very valuable asset to the whole farming community of New Zealand in both North and South Islands, in that under-grade wheat for poultry-feeding, and the use of offals in dairying and pig-farming, bulk very largely in the success of those following these farming pursuits; and did such farmers have to depend on importation, and probably at much enhanced prices, for their supplies, there would be times when they would have to pay very dearly for same, or even find that they could not get their requirement owing to drought conditions ruling elsewhere; in consequence their businesses would suffer very seriously. This applies chiefly to the farmer in the North Island.

Value of wheat lands: I submit that if the necessary protection in sliding scale of duties is taken away from the wheat-grower the value of wheat lands would be jeopardized, in that growers could not successfully compete in times of plenty with other countries, and the land under any other use would not give anything approaching a proportionate return, because of its relatively high price.

Cost of growing: No doubt expert evidence will be submitted by growers giving detailed costs of growing wheat, and it will be noted that labour is a considerable factor in the expense. I would submit, in addition, that costs of machinery and implements necessary to wheat-growing have advanced out of all proportion to the increased price that farmers can obtain for their wheat on sale, as per the following instances:—

	Cost in 1915.				Cost in 1929.			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	
Ploughs (walking)	30	10	0		48	10	0	
Ploughs (riding)	47	5	0		76	0	0	
Harrows	5	12	6		9	12	6	
Drills	43	0	0		92	10	0	
Binders	40	0	0		70	0	0	
Ploughshares, per dozen	0	12	6		1	6	6	
Wheat (delivered Timaru), per bushel	0	6	8		0	6	0	