

subsidy is something that is permanent, and not depending on the state of the grain harvest each season, he will be quite prepared to grow wheat as long as he gets a remunerative price.

He is not concerned with how it is got?—Not as long as there is a certainty in its operation.

What length of period would you require for a fixed policy so that the farmer would know how to set about his business?—I could not say.

You did not come to any resolution on the data as between sheep-farming and wheat-growing?—I have not examined that aspect.

I think that no result is given?—I think that to the country as a whole the gross result is a very important matter.

I think you made a statement that if wheat were grown the price of bread would still be high. How do you account for the fact that bread is much cheaper in London, where the 4 lb. loaf is supposed to be 4½d.?—I have not seen the cost of production there, or what they pay their men for baking, or what they get for counter prices, or for delivery prices. There are all sorts of factors that have to be taken into consideration before you can make a comparison with London. I have tried to get details of English costs and prices, but was unable to.

WILLIAM WALTER MULHOLLAND re-examined. (No. 27.)

The Chairman.] I understand you wish to make a further statement?—Yes. I thought when I heard Mr. Jenkins's question some time ago that some very serious allegation had been made against the Wheat-growers' Association. Mr. McCombs was kind enough to hand me a copy of the evidence, and I find there is really nothing very serious in the matter at all. This is the evidence referred to:—

“Have you, as poultry-farmers, made any combined effort to get your wheat at bedrock price from the southern grower?—The suggestion has been put forth that the organization might do something of the kind, but at the same time we have been dealing through merchants experienced in the handling of wheat, who charge us on the basis of 2d. per bushel. Could an organization of poultry-farmers handle it at 2d. per bushel? I say they could not.

“The South Island poultry-keepers are organized, and they are buying on better terms than you are?—Well, we are organized here, and find that we cannot buy on better terms. What we have had from the South is the opportunity of buying through the organizations in the South. The result was that those organizations could not land their wheat in Wellington any cheaper than the merchants do for us.”

I understood Mr. Jenkins's question was a charge that we have refused to sell to the poultry men.

Mr. Jenkins: Oh, no.

Witness: Perhaps it would be well if I put on record what has actually happened between the Wheat-growers' Association and the poultry men, so far as the discussion is concerned. They had, I think, a Dominion conference in Christchurch some months ago, and some of the directors and the manager, and myself, from the wheat-growers' organization asked if we could go along and have a talk with them about the possibility of making an arrangement to supply them on more economical terms. We discussed the position with them, and they told us—more particularly the North Island poultry men—that they had no organization which was capable of handling the business on a business footing. We told them that we had the organization at our end, and that if they would set up an organization that could deal with the matter, on a business footing of course, we could come to an arrangement. We told them plainly that we would not consider dealing with them unless it was on a business footing; and they quite agreed. We also said if they put the matter on a proper footing then we would be quite prepared to deal with them directly, just as though they were merchants, and they replied that they would go back and see what could be done. They gave us to understand that an organization of that nature would not eventuate in a day or two, but they thought they could make such an arrangement. We have endeavoured to keep in touch with them, particularly through Mr. Bradford, of the Poultry Association in Christchurch, but as far as I can learn they have not made very much progress in regard to the suggested organization. We are still ready to do business with them when they are in a position to do business with us.

The Chairman.] That is merely as far as selling is concerned?—Yes.

You are not prepared to meet them in any price arrangement whereby they might carry on their business?—We are not prepared to sell at 6d. a bushel cheaper, or anything like that. I do not think we would be expected to.

I am just wondering?—There is no harm in wondering.

Mr. Jenkins.] It might be better than having to accept 6d. a bushel on the whole?—We cannot sell to the public.

The Chairman.] You quite understand they are in trouble with their industry, and they claim they cannot carry on with the high prices, and your answer is that your organization will not meet them by giving them any reduction in price?—Poultry-wheat has been quoted at very considerably less than milling-wheat.

Not very much from the figures put in?—Yes; even to-day milling-wheat is 6s. 5d. f.o.b., and poultry-wheat is 5s. 11d. There are many qualities of wheat besides good fowl-wheat, and there are some that could be put down to about 5s. 3d.; in fact, I know that one or two lines could be quoted below 4s.

But the poultry-grower requires good-quality wheat for his fowls?—Yes. They say they insist on milling-wheat, but we know they do not get it.

We understand that your answer is that you are not prepared to supply them with wheat below the market price?—We could not do it.