

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 30TH AUGUST, 1907.

ROBERT SCOTT, farmer, Kyeburn, examined. No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You represent the Farmers' Union, I understand, Mr. Scott?—I am president of the Otago Provincial Executive of the New Zealand Farmers' Union.

2. Will you state the case from the farmers' point of view, as to what size of sack you consider most suitable?—Yes, sir. The sack in general use among the farmers of Otago is the 44 in., and occasionally the 46 in. The 44 in. is what we call the ordinary 4-bushel sack, and it is a sack of what I may term general usefulness. It is a sack that we use for all sorts of produce. It is used likewise for coal and other things. The weight of the 4-bushel sack when filled, of course, you are all aware of. The only thing that seems to be a little bit heavy, perhaps, in it is rye and wheat, but we have no complaints from our men as to the weight when they are loading drays or anything like that. The position, so far as we can see from a farmers' point of view, is this: that if the bags were changed to a smaller size it would mean inconvenience and expense. For instance, if the size of the bags was changed so that they would only hold 200 lb. weight, that sized bag would not be so useful a bag after it was emptied as the bags we now have in use. Take chaff, for instance. A large number of second-hand bags are used for chaff. Well, this smaller-sized bag would be inconvenient and mean a loss. It would be inconvenient, because there would be more bags to fill, and there would be a loss in the way of railage. We are allowed to put 140 bags of chaff on a truck, and naturally there would not be the same weight in 140 bags if we used the small one that there is with the present ones. The question of storage also comes up. When we have our grain in the store we pay by the bag, and for the small bags we should be paying proportionately more. The opinion generally throughout Otago at all our meetings—branch meetings, conferences, and provincial executive meetings—has been that the size of the bag now in use should be adhered to—that is, the 4-bushel or 44 in. bag.

3. *Mr. Laurensen.*] You said that your men did not complain of the weight of the sacks when loading a dray?—That is so.

4. How long during the year are they engaged in carrying wheat to drays—does that comprise much of their work?—Oh, no! It depends on the size of the place. It may be a matter of only a week or ten days.

5. Is it not a yearly job?—No.

6. But just a casual thing: when they are loading these drays, do they have to go up any flights of ladders?—There would probably be two or three tiers of bags on the dray or wagon being loaded.

7. They do not have to go up to any great height?—No. They lift them from tier to tier.

8. You say that one of the great objections to the use of a smaller bag for grain is that when you came to get the bag returned and to use it for your chaff, you would have to fill more bags in order to get the same quantity of chaff away?—Yes.

9. And that the Railway take 140 bags to the truck at present, and that instead of getting, say, 2 tons into 140 bags, you might only get a ton and a half?—Yes.

10. Well, supposing the size of the sacks was reduced, and the Railway said, "Well, now the sacks are smaller, instead of allowing you to send 140 sacks away in a truck we will allow 160": would that meet that position?—Scarcely. More handling would be entailed, more sewing, and more expert work at the bagger. Under these circumstances, the larger the bags we can get at the bagger the better it is, because you must understand that bags of chaff are cut at the rate of anything from 60 to 100 bags an hour. If the size of the bags were reduced, it would be impossible for the men to do it.

11. Do you, as a practical farmer, grow wheat on your farm?—Yes.

12. Have you ever lost anything through bags bursting, or through leakage from the wheat-bags?—No, I personally have not. I do not grow a great deal of wheat myself.

13. Has this thought ever struck you: that these excessively large bags put such a strain on the sacks as to cause bursting and a good deal of loss that might be obviated if the bags were smaller?—It might be so if an inferior class of bag were used, but with careful handling I do not see that any new bags should burst with wheat. It is almost the universal rule to put first wheat into new bags.

14. You do not know of any loss in that way?—I never heard of it.

15. Of course, you have not been much in the stores at the shipping ports?—No.

16. Boiled down, the great objection that the farmers have to a reduction in the size of sacks is that they would have smaller bags to put their chaff and bran and stuff such as that in?—That is one of the chief objections.

17. And the chief objection after that is that the Railway charge so-much for so-many sacks, and you would not be able to send away the same amount of stuff for the money you now pay?—That is one of the objections, and another is the greater amount of work that would be entailed in chaff-cutting and sewing the bags.

18. Would the delay that would be caused by sewing up these extra bags make a great difference in the course of a day or two or three days?—I should think it would.

19. Of course, you are only chaff-cutting for a very limited period in the year?—We are chaff-cutting all the year round.

20. Not every day?—Oh, no!

21. How many days in the year are you chaff-cutting—two days a month?—Some of us are, for part of the year.