

that would be satisfactory to all concerned. We have had a meeting of the Farmers' Union, the Agricultural and Pastoral Association, and the Chambers of Commerce, all combined, and the opinions given were most diverse. The ultimate conclusion arrived at by a narrow majority in every case, in committees and in meetings assembled, has been to agree to the 44 in. by 26½ in. sack. That is what I may term the universal size used almost right throughout Australia. The only place, practically, where the 48 in. sack is used to any extent is in Canterbury, New Zealand. We felt that this 44 in. sack, though it is more or less unsuitable for holding 200 lb., is best, looking at it from all points of view—that is to say, from the point of view, in the first place, of buying—because this is a very important point; a 44 in. sack you can buy any day. You can telegraph to Calcutta to-day, and you can buy a thousand bales in a moment; but any other size of sack not ordinarily kept has to be made on special looms, like our 48 in. sack, and you always have to wait a certain number of weeks before you can get your orders executed. If you run short with the 44 in. sacks you can at all times replenish your stock from the nearest market—either Sydney, Melbourne, or Adelaide—or if you get a surplus you may very often find you have a market in which to get rid of your surplus quantity. If we have a bad harvest we may have too many corn-sacks, while if we have an excellent harvest which was not anticipated, then we have too few. All these points have been taken into consideration by the committees, and, though there has been a great deal of dissentient talk, we have decided that the best sack is this 44 in. by 26½ in. one. If it were only a matter of holding wheat and nothing else, I think the majority of the members of the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce would be in favour of the cental bag that they have in America; but that only fulfils one purpose. It brings in the wheat, and then it is, as it were, done with. If it were a good bag which might be sent out a second time and be filled again, we should like it; but it could not be filled for the number of purposes that a sack is used for, as anybody connected with farming knows. You send the corn-sack out again to be filled with chaff or potatoes, or oats, or barley, or whatever it may be; but this could not be done with any advantage if we had only a cental bag. Therefore it is that, taking all these questions into account, we have reluctantly, I might say, come to the conclusion that on the whole the least evil is to have the 44 in. by 26½ in. bag. At our last annual meeting we had a farmer who, you would have thought, would have been one of those who would have been pleased to have a lighter sack, very strongly opposing any other sack than the 48 in. one. When we were loading ships with oats for South Africa during the time of the Boer War, I myself went to a gang of men when they were eating their lunch, and said, "Now, do you like these smaller bags—these 80 lb. bags—better than the 48 in. heavy wheat-sacks?" and that particular gang, in one chorus, said, "No, we do not like these bags. We do not get any rest between. It is one continual rush with these bags to get them away." With the heavy bags the men would have to lift one, and then they would have a sort of spell; but with the small bags they were kept at it. So this particular lot of men said they did not want any change. But I think that is not universal. I do not know whether the men have deteriorated, or what it is, but at any rate the class of men who work now find this 48 in. bag, holding 240 lb., too heavy for them, and therefore we down in Canterbury have considered that the question has been practically settled by the action of the Government in issuing that regulation which limits the weight of the sack to 200 lb.; only, as you know, the regulation has been suspended. The whole question is one that is surrounded with great difficulties, and I have had, as I say, reluctantly, to come to the conclusion that we had better have the same bag as they have in Australia, and stick to the 44 in. by 26½ in. sack. As I was leaving Christchurch I got this circular which I have in my hand—a circular from Calcutta—to show you that they only quote 48 in. sacks for New Zealand, and that they only quote 44 in. by 26½ in. sacks for Australia. This shows that 48 in. bags are practically never used in Australia. The 44 in. by 26½ in. ones are always used there. I do not know that I can give you any more information, gentlemen, that would be of use to you.

1. *The Chairman.*] What bags were they that held 270 lb., 280 lb., and 290 lb. in Australia? The same bags that they use to-day—the 44 in. ones. They hold the same weight to-day. It is the peculiarly good quality of the wheat that enables the grain to pack so closely.

2. *Mr. Launson.*] You spoke about the weight of the sacks of wheat in South Australia in years gone by: did they have any appliances for handling those sacks at all, or did the men just have to shoulder them all?—They worked under far worse conditions than those prevailing here, because in those days they had to carry the sacks across a wharf. The trucks came down to perhaps 30 ft. from where the ship was lying, and they had to carry the sacks that distance. It might be of interest to you to know that in South Australia they have an entirely different way of buying wheat from the New Zealand method. Every large grain-merchant there has, perhaps, a hundred and fifty or two hundred buyers, and they go to all the principal stations, and they buy each load as it comes in, and each load as it is bought is weighed over a scale—each bag by itself. Every bag goes over 200 lb., the odd number of pounds over 200 lb. is marked on the bag, the man gets paid practically at once, and the wheat is either put into a stack or sent direct down to the ship. When it gets alongside the ship there is a tally-clerk, who has books like the ones I produced, and he checks these weights. The man then takes the sack on to his back, carries it across the wharf, and puts it down. The conditions are very much worse than they are here for carrying the bags. The heat is occasionally 114° in the shade there—something dreadful.

3. I do not suppose the men at that time lived very long?—I can only say that we did not have complaints. I do not know how it was. I think they must have been men of better calibre. There was no talk in those days. I do not know much about it since. On my trips over there I have seen them doing the same thing to-day as they did twenty years ago. I do not advocate it, mind you.

4. You were saying that the present size in Australia is 44 in. by 26½ in., and in New Zealand 48 in. by 26½ in.: what is the difference in the cost?—About 3½d. a dozen.

5. Would there be any difficulty in the way of the Indian manufacturers turning out a 48 in. by 24 in. sack—making the sacks the same length but narrower?—There is no difficulty what-