

these lower lands, a lamb taken off them, and the lambs and ewes fattened and sold, so they practically make a change of the whole of their sheep in the one season. That is also being done in our district, but not to the same extent. One of the farmers in the Sandon district got as high as 90 per cent. with fat lambs in his first draft. It is found that in the North Island the Romney is distinctly the best animal for mothering her lamb. There is a large area in the higher country very suitable for breeding, and ewes from this district are much sought after, Ruanui and Russell ewes fetching £1 5s. to £1 7s. 6d. per head. Going up beyond Marton you have an agricultural district, and then farther on you get into bush. You run into narrow valleys with hills on each side, and there is no chance of development so far as agriculture is concerned, because the hills are so steep and rugged that it is impossible to plough. If you go farther up the country becomes still more rugged, but it is still extremely suitable for sheep. There is a strip of country which runs from the Whitecliffs on the Taranaki coast to the east of Mangaweka, which is perhaps the best piece of land in the district. It is the most rugged and broken country that I have ever seen in New Zealand, and yet some of it carries as many as three sheep to the acre. It is found that the ewes bred there do remarkably well in the lower areas. If I am correct in my view the best way to work the country is to take the hilly country for providing your sheep and the lower country to fatten them. It is becoming to some extent the practice of men who are well enough off to have a farm in the upper country and also a farm in the lower country, and to develop his land in that way. He gets better returns from both the hilly country and the lower country by doing so. There is one portion of the Manawatu country that is so rich that I do not think they are likely to go out of dairying, but there is a large amount of second-class country which, with the high prices they are getting for the dairy-produce, they are doing very well. But if prices were to fall it is doubtful if this class of land would not be devoted to grazing and the fattening of lambs, for it is also specially suited for this purpose. If I have made myself clear, it will be seen that we are going to have a new system of farming altogether in our county. We are developing very largely the land in the vicinity of the Main Trunk line. There are going to be flocks bred there which are going to be brought down to be fattened in our district. It stands to reason that if you have something in one district which you have not in another there must be some reciprocal trade. Then, further, we have worked out the whole of our bush. We must have fencing-timber, and we are able to take some of the products of the northern portion of the Island and supply them in turn with products from the Sandon district in the shape of fodder.

3. Now, with regard to firewood, is that short in the Sandon district?—There is none in the district, and coal is largely taking the place of firewood. Personally we prefer firewood to coal, and we are getting our firewood from Rangataua at the present moment.

4. I think you obtained a statement from Mr. Malcolm Fraser, the Government Statistician, showing the progress of the Manawatu County from the year 1906 to the year 1915?—Yes [statement produced and put in]. His latest estimate of the increase of population in the Manawatu County is 900 as compared with the previous census.

5. How do you account for the decrease in the number of sheep?—Because dairying has been very profitable. The cheese-factories, I think, are paying out something like 2s. per pound for butter-fat.

6. What inference do you draw from the circumstance that the area under crop has remained the same between the years 1906 and 1911?—Because of the expense of getting it away.

7. Has there been any progress in regard to the areas under crop in the adjacent districts where they have railway facilities?—No. The Marton district has very largely increased.

8. Are there any advantages to the Government Railway Department in connection with the gravel-supplies, if there be a connection made with the railway at or near Marton?—Yes, I think there is a very great advantage. Gravel is a thing that the Government must have, and is one of their difficulties at the present moment, so much so that they have been taking land for the purpose close by the Greatford Railway-station. If we were able to extend to the Greatford or Marton district we should be able to supply them with an unlimited quantity of gravel, and if we were able to extend our present tramway down into the river we could afford to give them running-rights over the tramway to get the gravel themselves. I think that would be a very important matter. It is much easier for them to get gravel from us than for them to get it at the railway-bridge below Greatford.

9. Where do the Railway Department obtain the bulk of their ballast from at the present time?—They are getting gravel out of the Manawatu at Longburn, but I am not sure whether they have gone into the Oroua. They used to go into the Rangitikei River, but they have ceased doing that now. Of course, I am only giving a layman's opinion in regard to ballast, but when walking over the line above Marton it appeared to me that the ballast was of an extraordinary light character and very inferior.

10. Do you know whether the Railway Department brings ballast from as far as Oringi?—I do not know. If so, it seems a long way to bring it.

11. Now, I understand the county is not desirous of selling the tramway to the Government?—There has been no particular desire expressed by the county in that direction. I omitted to say that when the Roads and Bridges Construction Act came in there was an opportunity for the Government to take over the tramway at a valuation. Every Act since then has taken that into consideration. The gravel question is such an important one that we have no particular desire to part with the tramway, because we think there is a great future for it, as will be seen from the returns.

12. But is the County Council prepared to give any right of purchase to the Government should connection be permitted with the Government line at or near Marton?—I think they recognize that it is their duty to hand it over if the Railway Department think it desirable to hold it. We know they can easily take it if they wish to.