

41. *The Chairman.*] But surely the cost of taking a ton of chaff from five miles out of Blenheim to Auckland would be more than carting it from Sandon to Marton?—One of the reasons for the competition is that the chaff is better, and will often command 30s. per ton more. It does at the present time. That is the Marlborough chaff. It is lighter in colour and heavier in oats. Their chaff would possibly run twenty-two sacks to the ton, and always commands a higher price.

42. What about oats from the Bluff?—We bring oats from the Bluff, but we cannot bring oaten chaff.

43. You have told us that, in your opinion, the Sandon district was as adaptable to oaten-chaff production as the Marton country?—Yes; probably better.

44. In your opinion what is it that prevents the participation by the Sandon farmers in that trade?—The present means of access—the cost of cartage.

45. We have been told by Sir James Wilson that there is little or no firewood and no building-timber in the lower Rangitikei and Manawatu Counties?—Yes, the only firewood left now is the stump-wood. It is practically exhausted.

46. Would this railway connection be beneficial to the whole district in relation to the supply of firewood, fencing-posts, and timber?—Yes, there is an inexhaustible supply, taking the line from Ohakune.

47. Do you Marton farmers find a ready market or a fair market for your straw and threshed hay?—There is very little threshed hay, but they find a reasonably ready market for baled straw and a lesser demand for straw chaff.

48. Where does that demand lie?—As far north as Auckland.

49. I think there is a considerable demand for straw for packing purposes?—Yes, and for bedding stables.

50. You mentioned to me an illustration of straw for packing?—Yes. A. B. Donald (Limited), said they were prepared to take 1,000 tons if the price was right. We sold some at £2 5s. on trucks at Marton, and I think £2 per ton on trucks at Marton would do the business to-day.

51. What are the farmers able to dispose of the straw for?—They are able to get 10s. a ton net, and they consider it better to do that than to burn it. There is not much margin in it. One man delivered at 32s. 6d., and found it cost him 33s. to put it on the truck. They can reasonably expect 10s. per ton net in a normal year.

52. Would a demand exist for threshed hay in regard to Marton farmers?—Yes, we have had a demand.

53. Then, in your opinion the difficulties of the district lie in the cost of cartage?—Yes, entirely.

54. What would you estimate to be the cost per ton for cartage for half a mile?—Taking the Marton prices, from 1s. 6d. to 2s. per ton.

55. And for one mile to two miles?—2s. 6d.; three miles, 3s. 6d.; four miles, 5s. 6d.; five miles, 7s. 6d. to 9s. 6d.; and ten miles, 15s. In the shorter distances we are able to cart it at a low price by employing an extra man in assisting to load the cart. If a man had to load his own wagon he would not do it. By employing a man to assist in loading we can do it for that price.

56. At what distance is a carter prevented from making more than one trip a day?—I suppose eight miles would be about the distance—from six to eight miles. He might get in two trips at six miles: it would be possible.

57. In your opinion how much per ton in the shape of cost for cartage would preclude a farmer from profitably selling his chaff?—With the present competition 5s. per ton might knock the farmer out. In fact, 5s. to-day would knock us out of the Auckland market, and it has already done so up to a certain point. The chaff-market is very sensitive as regards price.

58. *Mr. Hannay.*] Does that not mean that the Auckland market is very uncertain?—No, it means that at the present time we are not able to supply sufficient at £4 15s.—not a large quantity. We are not prepared to go on at that price. We raised our price to protect ourselves because we have to supply regular customers for the whole year. Then if they start ordering at the higher price it means we would have to raise it again.

59. *The Chairman.*] What do you say about being profitable or not profitable? What goes into profit: do you not have to consider the cost of labour and rent? Does not everything depend upon rent?—Yes.

60. Therefore, if you have land at Sandon £10 per acre cheaper than land at Marton, would not that make up for the difference in cartage?—No, I think not.

61. It would be 10s. per acre?—No, you might want 25s. an acre, because you would want about two tons at 10s. per ton.

62. It would not cost you 10s. per ton to cart from Sandon to Greatford?—Yes, more than that.

63. Does not the whole point about the profits depend upon the rental?—No, not altogether.

64. The result is this: the reason why the Sandon people will not grow oats if they can only get £3 10s. for a ton of chaff is because there is something else more profitable to grow?—It is something else that requires less carting.

65. Something else more profitable?—Yes, but not altogether: there is the trouble. For instance, if any one had to cart chaff this distance irrespective of price there are other disabilities, such as labour. A chaffcutter would cut seven hundred sacks of chaff per day; one team of four horses would take perhaps from seventy to ninety sacks; you would have to have eight full four-horse teams to take the produce away from the chaffcutter in one day, otherwise you would have six hundred sacks out the first day, one thousand two hundred sacks the second day, and four days of cutting one paddockful, and if you had rain like we have to-day—