

183. I think you said before that the farmers in Marton are able to reduce the cost of their cartage by arranging for a man to do the loading for them?—Yes, for short distances. For a distance up to a mile it would pay. Then practically you have a man loading at the carts so that the horses are not kept idle. It would not suit for carting ten miles.

184. But if motor-wagons were practicable a number of trips could be made in a day, even although the distance were ten miles?—But you would have the handling.

185. But motor-wagons would travel much faster than horse-drawn wagons?—Yes, but then you would have the teams carting on to the road from the stack all the time, so that the motor-wagons could pick it up from the metalled road. You would not do that under 2s. 6d. per ton to start with.

186. Whom are you going to pay the 2s. 6d. per ton to?—The man who carted it.

187. I am assuming the farmer would do it?—Then he would debit himself. Instead of carting, it would pay him better to go on with his autumn sowing.

188. How long does the autumn sowing take him?—Possibly ten weeks.

189. Sir James Wilson said that you could tell us something about the Canterbury steam-vessel which brought oats from the South Island to Foxton on one occasion. What was that vessel, can you tell us?—No, but I know a Canterbury boat did come in.

190. Can you say when it was?—It was when I was residing at Sandon, so it would be ten years ago. We have had no shipments personally during the last eight years. Prior to that we had shipments via Foxton to Halcombe.

191. Is there any exchange in sheep now between what you call the lower and higher districts?—Yes.

192. Then the sheep that are brought down from the higher districts are detained where?—Marton or Greatford.

193. And driven a few miles?—Yes, up to fifteen. If they were simply going to Sandon it would not be a long drive, and they would not be put on the tram again.

194. And sheep sent from the lower district are driven to Greatford and Marton and put on the trucks?—Yes.

195. Well, does not that suit pretty well?—No, because it is capable of still further expansion. I explained the knocking-about the sheep got on the road—whether fat sheep or stores.

196. Do you not know that store sheep are brought down from Napier to Palmerston constantly by road?—What are they driven for—for what purpose? I know that has been done for cheap grazing purposes.

197. Are you speaking of recent times?—Yes. I do not know that any have come except during a drought year. In the drought year a lot came through the Gorge.

198. Do you know of any having been driven from Marton up to the King-country?—No, not in recent years. I know that cattle have been driven up, and poisoned with tutu on the way. It is the practice, however, to use the rail whenever possible both for fat and store sheep.

199. *Mr. Innes.*] You spoke about Sandon farmers burning their straw because they could not get it to a market?—Yes, that is one of the reasons.

200. Is not the chief reason this, that there is no market for straw chaff—say, last year?—Yes, it was saleable.

201. And the year before?—Not to such a large degree.

202. It was burned not only in the Sandon district, but in other districts where they threshed the oats?—No, there was very little burnt in the Marton district—practically none. They threshed some, but the bulk was cut into chaff.

203. Was not this burning of straw peculiar to the Sandon district?—It must have been, because we can place all the oaten straw in the Marton district.

204. I suppose the burning of straw in the Sandon district was pretty well universal amongst those who grew it?—Yes.

205. Even those upon the present line of tramway?—Yes.

206. Although they could have put it on the tramway and got it quite as cheap to Himatangi or Marton?—Oh, no.

207. Last year there were very little crops grown in Sandon—oats?—About the same as this year, I think.

208. But not up to normal conditions?—I suppose the present conditions are normal now.

209. There has been no substantial alteration for some years?—Speaking for four or five years, they have been comparatively normal.

210. Did the introduction of rust into the oats have anything to do with the quantity sown—it meant they could only sow Algerian?—Yes, and the same applies at Marton.

211. The price of oaten chaff was £9 per ton last year?—Yes, I suppose the average would be £7 10s.

212. What was the price the year before?—Normal; I think, about £4, or perhaps £3 10s.; but had the people known that the price would be £7 10s. a lot more would have been grown.

213. When you spoke about baled hay, I suppose that is something like pressed hay—it is done up in the same way?—Yes.

214. If the Sandon farmer was not so fat and wealthy he would make some use of his straw instead of burning it?—When I heard Mr. Penny giving evidence I dotted down some figures. The pressing would be 17s. 6d. per ton, and the extra tram charge 7s. 6d.; there is less in a truck of baled straw—possibly only 4 tons to a truck—as compared with oaten chaff; and say the average price of cartage 3s. 6d.: it would run into about £1 8s. 6d. per ton.

215. It would not produce anything more if cut into chaff?—No, I do not think there is very much sale for wheat-straw chaff. There would be only a margin of 3s. per ton for the Sandon farmer.