

stated that in order to be successful the production of not less than 50,000 tons of beet is necessary for the proper running of a modern factory. (The Victorian undertaking at Maffra, however, has shown that less than 20,000 tons, even with an antiquated plant, would easily allow £2 per ton to be paid for beets, with refined sugar at £40 per ton—that is, under the conditions obtaining at Maffra.) If one allows an average yield of washed beets of 15 tons per acre, which is rather higher than is obtained on any non-irrigated sugar-beet area, then a minimum area of approximately 3,500 acres annually is necessary. This would mean that on the estimate given it might be possible to get 3,500 acres of beet grown over an approximate area of 70,000 acres, or, roughly, 100 square miles. This would mean that many of the crops would be grown at distances too far from the factory to make haulage attractive. The difficulty of the wide separation of the crops from the factory might be partly got over by growing them close to a railway station or siding, as has been done at Maffra, but the double handling necessary through railway transport would be a distinct disadvantage.

At Maffra an adequate supply of beets has never been attained, and in this instance only 22,000 tons was required to run the factory at capacity. Numerous reasons are given why they cannot secure an adequate tonnage, but the real one—namely, that only a small proportion of the farmers of the district are desirous of growing beets—is never stressed. If any company relied simply on the farmers of the district to grow the necessary beets it would almost certainly prove a failure in its first years, unless the price of sugar were enormously high and the price offered for beets much above that ever paid before.

It thus appears essential that some other means than merely erecting a factory and offering a certain price for beets be employed. The course open to success appears to lie in the company growing its own beets until such time as was demonstrated that the growing of the crop can be relied on in preference to any other. Even at Maffra, where sugar-beet-growing has paid the growers excellently in the majority of cases, it has not become universal, and on beet-growing land lucerne and maize appear to be crops that appeal to the farmer in preference. What is occurring at Maffra, however, is that many people who during the past few years have gained an insight into the growing and management of the crop by employment in the beet-fields are anxious to rent areas for the purpose of growing crops. In many cases they are quite unsuccessful in securing suitable land, or else are charged a rent in excess of the value of the land. It is this class of person that the Maffra manager particularly desires to encourage, and for that reason he stresses the necessity for a factory having control of a large area of ground that can be let to experienced growers, thus guaranteeing an adequate supply of beets. This idea is no doubt quite sound so far as Maffra is concerned, where the crop has been grown for over a decade. In New Zealand, however, if a company had blocks of land to rent it may be doubted if any one would take them for sugar-beet-growing. This only emphasizes the opinion that in the early years of establishment the major supply of beets must be grown by the factory. Later on, when once the success of the enterprise had been established, without doubt the land could be rented to their employees. The main