

46. Should we not get some thoroughly practical results by that method?—You would require to send a man along with it.

47. For what reason?—To see that the temperature was kept at the same degree, and that the freezing was not stopped.

48. Would it not be possible to arrange with the pursers in the ships to take charge of it?—I would not trust one of them.

49. *Mr. Walker.*] I regret I was unable to be present when you made a general statement. Have you gone into the question of absolutely rejecting or preventing the shipment of samples that are not up to a fair standard?—No, I did not say anything about that.

50. Do you think it would be advisable to consider that point?—I think it would be very difficult to prevent a man shipping his butter supposing it was considered by the Inspector to be inferior. He would say, "I want to ship it to London; you have nothing to do with it; if you prevent it being shipped in this steamer direct I will send it to Australia or anywhere else and have it shipped." It is just the same as sending inferior sheep Home. There are a large quantity of ewes, second and third rate, sent Home, and they pay as well as first-class sheep in proportion. I think it is very difficult to stop a man from shipping anything he wants to. I do not see how you can do it.

51. But inspection is to secure the Government stamp being placed only on what is a good article?—You could put your Government stamp on.

52. You might refuse to brand what does not come up to the standard?—Yes, even with the Government stamp on it may arrive in London in bad order.

53. But daily experience goes to prove that a certain amount of equality may be secured by inspection?—Yes, I believe so.

WEDNESDAY, 13TH AUGUST, 1890.

Mr. W. FERGUSON, Secretary and Engineer to the Wellington Harbour Board, examined.

54. *The Chairman.*] It is stated that a great deal of the damage that takes place to butter is mainly owing to faulty storage—not here particularly, but in the different ports of New Zealand. Can you give us any information as to butter-storage?—So far as we are concerned, we have only provided ordinary stores. The question cropped up some two years ago as to our providing cold storage. We then asked for statistics to see whether it could be done. No statistics were produced which would warrant the Board in doing it. There was no certainty that it was really required. At that time I started taking the temperature of one of the sheds, and I have taken the temperature ever since. I have not these records with me, but I can produce them for you.

55. Can you give us approximately?—I cannot trust my memory. The last six months I have not been taking the records myself; my assistant has been doing so. [Table giving temperatures appended.]

56. Is the matter of cool storage now under consideration?—The Board are having plans prepared at the present moment for a new office and bond. They have not gone so far as to decide upon having the buildings erected; but I fancy that in two months we shall be calling for tenders for them. They will contain a small amount of cellar storage.

57. What space do you expect to provide?—There may be 1,200 square feet of floor-area. I am just speaking approximately. The cellarage is about 7ft. high. That would be available for cool storage. There is, I may say, private cellar storage in Wellington.

58. But there is not refrigeration?—Except at the Meat Company's works, and their charges are stated to be too high. They find it better to freeze meat instead of butter. The amount of storage they have available for butter is small, and they find difficulties in dealing with it. *Mr. Sladden* would be better able to give you information on that matter.

59. Would it be practicable to include in your proposals some system of refrigeration?—I do not think the amount we would get to store would at all warrant it. I imagine also the price would, for that reason, be prohibitive. I do not think the Board can at all compete with freezing-works because they are without plant. If we had to procure a large and expensive plant I think our price would be prohibitive. We need not for simply a few cases of butter run into the expense of providing freezing-plant and competing with freezing-works. I think that is quite patent. When the matter came before me I did not go into the question of cost at all because it seemed to be so patent.

60. Would you take into consideration the possibility of refrigeration by ammonia machines?—In the plans for the building I have provided a couple of flues, in case we had to go in for any such thing. I did it, however, as much for ventilation as anything else. I do not think it will ever come to anything. The cheapest method of storing would be for the Meat Export Company, or some person owning frontage on the line of rails, to make such provision. The stuff could then come down and go directly into the freezing-chamber. If it were to come down to us it would have to be received by rail at the store, and then carted to the chamber, and from the chamber to the ship; and it appears to me it would entail unnecessary expense.

61. It would be absolutely impossible to provide refrigeration on the wharf?—Well, the question is, where can it be put? We cannot spare the accommodation.

62. The expense of insulation would be altogether too high?—The expense would be altogether too high. Of course, if the trade was a constant trade—if we were certain of a considerable amount continually—it would be desirable to consider the matter; but, as far as I can see, the trade is very irregular.

63. Would it not be worth your while to consider in this way: the trade is irregular because prices are so irregular, owing to the defective accommodation?—That is speculative, and I do not think any public Board should go into speculation. That would be legitimate only for private