

to whether the Harbour Board could see their way to provide accommodation, and I understood his answer to be that they could not see their way to provide any special cool-accommodation to keep the butter at a low temperature. If they could not see their way to do it, could not the Railway Commissioners come to the assistance of the dairy-farmers by undertaking what appears to me a very essential duty?—It would be quite possible for us to do so.

139. And without any very great expense I should imagine?—I could not say about that. I did not contemplate our being required to do that. All the available land close to the refrigerating company's works is occupied by the Harbour Board, and if we wanted cool air from the refrigerator it would have to be conducted a considerable distance, and it might lose its coldness in the passage. I think it is a very essential thing to provide cool-stores, whoever does it.

140. *The Chairman.*] The Commissioners are prepared to give that matter their consideration?—Yes.

141. *Mr. Walker.*] We had it in evidence yesterday from Mr. Scales that what was required were night-trains to bring down produce to meet the large steamers, so as to avoid storage in Wellington at all. That was his experience of the trade, and he stated that the shipments in which he had been most successful for his clients had been shipments where the clients never sent produce down to Wellington until the steamer was ready to sail, and it was put on board immediately. He thinks the department should run special trains to fit the steamers sailing, and that cool-chambers here would then be unnecessary?—If the trade developed into a very large thing that might be done—if all things worked together. At the present time the large steamers lie at the Queen's Wharf, and you must cart the produce from the railway-station round to the Queen's Wharf. I think the important thing is to get it from the railway-wagon into the cool-chamber at once, so as to save the risk that arises from its being transferred from one vehicle to another, and to the ship. The Gear Company's hulk "Jubilee" lies alongside to discharge mutton, and it is possible that butter would sometimes have to wait a day before it could be got in.

142. Do you not think there could be an arrangement by which the butter should only come down when the steamer was ready to take it in?—It would be difficult to arrange these things, especially for each steamer. There are so many people to communicate with in order to arrange matters.

143. *Mr. Marchant.*] Could you not meet the time when the boats leave?—They are somewhat irregular as to times of leaving, and, in the hurry and bustle of loading, contingencies would sometimes arise preventing prompt delivery from the railway train-service. The steamers might say, we will take your stuff on a certain day, and at the last moment not be able to do so.

144. *Mr. Walker.*] The steamers run from here punctually every second Thursday in the month?—Yes, if they leave here for England direct; but on some other uncertain day if the steamer departs from Lyttelton direct.

145. After the lines were cleared some time there would not be much difficulty in getting a special train?—I wish to emphasize the importance of having a cool-store in Wellington, to guard against mishaps. I have already stated that the Harbour Board is in possession of the ground adjacent to the refrigerating company's works.

146. *Mr. Marchant.*] But probably you would be able to arrange with the Harbour Board for a site?—The land is all occupied by the Harbour Board buildings. On the spur of the moment, I should say that a small portion of the large shed might be partitioned off for this purpose. We could run our wagons into it, so that every despatch would be given to the handling of the butter.

147. *Mr. Walker.*] Has the Wellington Harbour Board got limited powers as compared with other Harbour Boards?—The Secretary knows the powers better than I do. I should say that there is nothing to deter them from doing it if they are willing. They have now large stores, and it is part of their business. It quite falls within the scope of their powers, I should say, to provide suitable accommodation for the goods they store and handle.

148. He (Mr. Ferguson) expressed the opinion that the Board had gone beyond their powers already?—I know nothing of that. I know nothing special to stop them from giving facilities.

149. *The Chairman.*] In the event of refrigerating cars with ice being found necessary, what time would you give the manufacturers to take their goods out of the cars here?—Four working-hours from arrival. After that, cars standing for unloading would be liable to demurrage.

150. And, in the event of it being necessary, further time can be given by paying certain demurrage?—Yes; 5s. for the part of the first working-day over four hours, and 10s. each day or part of a day, over the first working-day.

151. You would have sufficient vans to allow them to do that by paying demurrage?—I would not like to say that. I may mention that, as we do not care to use the ventilated cars for general transit purposes, and keep them specially for this business, we do not wish to have a very large stock of these vans—a dead stock.

Witness: With regard to railway charges, the Railway Commissioners succeeded in arranging with the Manawatu Railway Company for a through rate from New Plymouth to Wellington at £2 8s. a ton, as from the 1st of January last. Formerly the rate was much higher. That rate is for a minimum of 4-ton lots. It comes as near as may be to $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a pound on the butter. I may state that, if we include wharfage, and allow for the fact that the steamers charge by measurement and not by weight, the cost by the steamers is about £1 10s. a ton weight. It is within the knowledge of the department that butter-makers much prefer railway-transit, as being much less likely to damage the butter. There have been well-known cases where the butter was very seriously damaged in its transit by steamer from New Plymouth to Wellington.

152. *The Chairman.*] Assuming that you could arrange special trains for the carriage of 50-ton lots, would it be possible for the department to make some concession?—Yes, we might reduce the minimum.

153. I mean as to the charge. You say that £2 8s. is the rate per ton for 4-ton lots. If you