

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 13TH AUGUST, 1890. (Hon. G. R. JOHNSON, Chairman.)

Rev. H. VON STAVEREN examined.

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] This Committee is desirous of getting information from you regarding the prevalence of disease amongst cattle sent to the slaughter-yards, and being sold for human food? I am informed that you have exceptional opportunities of obtaining information. The Committee will be glad to receive any evidence you can give on the subject?—My experience has been, since I have been in the colony, that disease in cattle is not so prevalent here as at Home. Of outside disease there is very little indeed. By "outside disease" I mean disease that is discernible to the naked eye: such for instance as outside cancer; that is not prevalent in this colony. But inside diseases are very prevalent—indeed much more in sheep and cattle on one coast than the other. On the west coast of this Island—I mean sheep and cattle coming from Wanganui and the surrounding districts—diseases are more prevalent, such diseases as pleurisy and tuberculosis, than on the East Coast. Cancers are very prevalent in sheep, especially in the livers. Last Thursday was the first time it happened that I had seen anything like cancer on the back of a sheep. When I first saw the sheep I did not notice it for the moment, but a young fellow called my attention to it. I then saw that there was a fearful cancer, caused by the shears, which had cut into the skin; the wound, apparently, had festered, and cancer set in there. That is how cancer often occurs. In cows, when they are horned by the oxen, cancer sets in in the jaws. I should imagine that there would be fully 7 per cent. of the slaughtered sheep and cattle sold here to the public for consumption more or less diseased. Of course in one year disease is not so prevalent as in another. The worst diseases that rage here are tuberculosis and consumption.

2. If I understand you rightly, this is chiefly discovered after death of the animals?—Yes. I could not tell you anything about it before then. Sometimes you might see from symptoms that disease was present. Sometimes you will see very good-looking meat in the butcher's shop, but it is diseased. You may select a particular rib of beef or a leg of mutton because it looks better than another, but it may be diseased. As a rule, in examining the carcass I never allow anything to pass me. I go thoroughly inside and examine the lungs, liver, heart, and kidneys. I had, not long ago, examined the carcass of a bullock which had a heart you could not tell from your hat.

3. *Mr. Lance.*] What is that?—You could not tell it was a heart.

4. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] Do you mean as to colour?—No; as to shape.

5. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] What was that?—It was so from disease—it was a diseased heart.

5A. Disease of the heart would not necessarily affect the rest of the flesh of a beast, would it?—Most decidedly it would. A disease of that nature always affects the flesh.

6. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Can you suggest to the Committee any means to check the sale of diseased meat?—There is certainly a way out of the difficulty: that is to have public abattoirs, and inspectors of slaughter-houses. That is the only way that I can see. Very often you can see as you pass diseased meat hanging up.

7. In the shops in town?—Yes, in all the shops in town. I can see it when others do not know anything about it. You say you would like that fine rib of beef, or that nice leg of mutton, yet the carcass from which it was cut is thoroughly diseased and the meat unfit for human food.

8. Is there at present any inspection of slaughter-yards?—Not here. There is not.

9. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] Would not the inspection of diseased animals in the way you state require a person of considerable experience, like yourself?—Yes, most decidedly.

10. Would there not be a difficulty in obtaining the services of such persons?—Yes, a great difficulty, even in regard to experience. But there would be a greater difficulty in respect to what always happens, the case of bribery. I have known, even among ourselves, that people have been corrupted by bribery, and would allow diseases that were not very bad to pass. You know what the "almighty dollar" will do.

11. Especially when the remuneration is cut down to the utmost point?—Especially where under a couple of hundred pounds a man cannot live. Even if you got the House to vote the salary, you would not get good men for a few pounds. But there is still another difficulty. Public abattoirs and inspection might be established in the large towns, such as Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin; but in Napier, Wanganui, New Plymouth, Nelson, and all the smaller towns, it would be impossible to pay men, who would, of course, want the same pay and privileges as in the large towns.

12. Then, practically, your proposal would merely profit the large towns, and leave the smaller towns to take their own course?—My proposal would not do so; it is for you to say how the difficulty should be met.

13. Practically that would be the outcome of it?—Yes.

14. *Hon. Mr. Peter.*] Do you travel from place to place, or do you confine yourself to Wellington?—I confine myself to Wellington.

15. *Hon. Mr. Pharazyn.*] Does it not take up a great deal of your time performing this duty?—Certainly it does; three times a week I go out there, and I am out there three hours: that is, in winter. In summer I am there every morning, except Saturday and Sunday.

16. Do you get any special salary for this work, or is it a labour of love?—It is not a labour of love; I get well paid for it. My community pay me well for it.

17. Is it a part of your ordinary duty?—Not a part of my ordinary duty. There are gentlemen in London who get £300 a-year for this work alone; but they are not ministers.