

*Witness* : Here is another [reading clause 26]. It is the license of a meat-export slaughter-house. It is nearly time to upset that. We ask that, if they do slaughter at all, it should only be slaughter for export. The last affair I have to speak to is a clause that affects us very particularly. We do not wish to affect the Government in this matter. It refers to the question of compensation. It is not in the Bill. This is a question we want introduced. It will be, and there is not the slightest doubt it is, far and away the best way to inspect meat after it has been killed. We know already that lots of cattle may pass the Inspector alive all right, but when they get to the slaughter-yard there is something radically wrong with them. I wish to bring before you that, although ours is the most likely place where the Inspector will have to stay, seeing that is where the meat will be slaughtered, the fault will be found after the butcher has paid for it and it is condemned. It will be a severe hardship, not only once or twice, but for ever. We feel it a severe hardship on us. We do not say what should be done, but we bring this matter before you showing you that, if this is the case, we have to pay the piper. We would very much prefer for you to put your Inspector in front of us. But we know that cannot be. I wish to draw your attention to one of our reasons—to the fact that if a butcher goes into a public market, and he has his cattle penned before him to see if the bullocks or sheep please, and after he has weighed and gauged their values, then he tries to buy them for what is as near a value he can get; and, consequently, the question of tuberculosis does not crop up, though it may occur. But something may happen even worse than that. When he goes on to one of these large runs, and when he sees a mob of cattle, what chance has he of seeing tuberculosis? When one of this kind of cattle is brought in and opened, then we say it seems very hard for us to stand the expense, whereas the grazier may be more to blame. He may have had it for a year or two, and he has far more leisure and opportunity of seeing whether his cattle are in a fit state for the market or not. Therefore, with regard to compensation, we feel that we may leave the question of compensation very safely in your hands, because, although we feel we are the people who ought to be inspected, we are not the people who ought to pay the piper. Some evenings ago Mr. Taylor, member for Christchurch, asked the Government to appoint a veterinary surgeon to inspect the Christchurch meat-factory. The reply was to the effect, I think, that, should the Slaughtering Bill be not passed, the question would be favourably considered. That is a very serious wrong. The Dunedin factory has proved such a success that it has set people asking that more public inspection places and abattoirs should be put up. Several people would not go to the abattoirs, and fought the question out in Court. Owing to those people who have been slaughtering in the abattoirs having their meat properly inspected, those people who had stood out have been glad to have their meat slaughtered in the abattoirs without further coercion. Not long ago the Christchurch Meat Company, following on the steps of these, advertised that their meat was all inspected. We are unable to find that ever there was a veterinary surgeon or an inspector there. It is possible enough that their butchers or their meat-grader there—the latter especially—might have inspected the meat, and seen it all right. But, you see, it is the little straws that show where the wind blows, and if they could follow on, and get even one day's advantage, they would have the privilege of having a veterinary surgeon. Their meat would be inspected, and our meat would be tied up, and we should not get the benefit of inspection. Therefore I wish to put that very plainly—that if we are to be inspected, no matter when it is, we should be all equally and favourably inspected by an unbiassed person. I wish, however, to state that, although it is possible that the Government might not allow the meat company to engage a veterinary surgeon as an inspector, they might not do that, but they might contribute towards the inspection. But we all know that the man would have to do what he is wanted to, or else he would get a walking-ticket. The Inspector would not be a free person if he were under a company which was paying his wages. We also know that smaller animals, such as sheep, &c., do not all go to pot; and, without telling secrets, I may say that a lot of meat is sold and eaten in Christchurch that it would be impossible to go through inspection with. One veterinary surgeon would have to be on the spot. We wish the meat company would have to kill for local consumption in the abattoirs like ourselves, so that the Meat Inspector could carry the key, open the slaughterhouse, and afterwards shut it, so that we should have inspection, and it should be real. That is all we have to ask.

4. *Mr. Wason.*] With reference to that question you raised about the inspection of meat after killing—the question of compensation. The same difficulty arose in the Homebush yards, in New South Wales, eight or ten years ago. Can you tell the Committee how it was settled there?—I cannot.

5. But it has been settled there. There are three distinct parties in question—the butcher, the breeder, and the grazier—and I understand that there they all contribute?—I do not know.

6. Are you of opinion that the money should be paid between those three parties, divided in some equitable manner?—Well, we have gone perhaps a point further than you have gone. We say this inspection of meat is entirely for the public good, and we say the public ought to pay for this in some manner or form. It is not for the good of the grazier. We thought the butcher should pay one-third, the public one-third, and the grazier or dealer one-third, whichever it might happen to be.

7. The man who directly sells the stock?—We should have to go back to him—there is no doubt about it. He might sell through a dealer.

8. Then you object to the various meat companies slaughtering and selling meat in the various towns?—Unless through the abattoirs.

9. Even although their places are inspected?—Yes, I said that just now. You can scarcely keep the export companies from being more or less biassed.

10. You think that any rejects the meat companies are going to dispose of should be sent to the abattoirs and killed?—I do. It would be no greater hardship for them than it would be for any other large butcher to have to kill at the abattoir, where the one Inspector could do the whole work.