

161. That they might, in fact, give you whatever they liked for fat and offal, for instance?—Yes, that is so.

162. You heard Mr. Rod say he gave his offal away. Do you imagine that a municipal abattoir would possibly put up a plant to turn into money all the by-products so successfully dealt with now by the freezing companies?—Well, it all creates competition.

163. Are you aware that there would frequently be a difference of 5s. or so per head between the value of a sheep's carcass for the pot and its value for preserving?—Yes.

164. Would you expect a city abattoir to have preserving appliances also?—No.

165. What, then, would become of the 5s.? It would be lost, would it not?—Well, all I can say is, if the meat is not fit to be sent into the towns it is not fit for preserving and sending away.

166. Are you aware that there are sometimes plenty of carcasses to which no exception can be taken for preserving that would not pay to take into the town for ordinary consumption?—I know that.

THURSDAY, 6TH OCTOBER, 1898.

JOHN GRAHAM, M.H.R. for Nelson, examined.

*Hon. the Chairman* : We are taking evidence on the Bill now before the House, Mr. Graham. We understand you would like to give evidence?

*Witness* : I am not a butcher, nor am I connected with any establishment of that kind. I am not connected with any meat-preserving works, nor am I an owner of stock. A fellow-member has asked what did I know about the subject. Well, I simply explain that I am not connected with the trade, but I appear here as the representative of the Nelson butchers, who are not able, for various reasons, to attend before the Committee. I received a telegram from them a short time since, informing me that they were fully aware of the position taken up towards the Bill by their fellow-tradesmen in Wellington, and they asked me to see if I could support them in the same direction. They stated that they were thoroughly in accord with the attitude taken by the Wellington butchers. I might say that all the butchers in Nelson, with the exception of, I think, one, met me there recently, and they were unanimous that in the interests of public health it was desirable that public abattoirs should be established, and that there should be careful and rigid inspection of all meat intended for human consumption. They object, however, to the provision in the Bill that the local bodies might delegate their authority. They are entirely in accord with the idea of the local bodies providing public abattoirs, but they are unanimous in their objection to the delegation of that authority to any one else. I wish to be clear upon that point. A section of the Bill also provides that the licensee might appoint certain persons to kill and dress meat. Now, the Nelson butchers object to that. They have their own men, and could do the work perfectly well themselves. They asked me to state their opinion before the Committee, and also to oppose that provision if the Bill came before the House, and I promised to do so. They want to see public abattoirs established, so that each butcher should be able to kill his own meat there under proper public inspection. Another thing the Nelson men objected to was the provision which gave meat-preserving companies special facilities to kill meat on their own premises—that is, meat which is intended to be consumed in the colony. One reason was that these companies kill for other butchers as well as for themselves. If abattoirs were established in the colony a certain number of butchers would start at first to kill at the public abattoirs and comply with specified conditions, but these, if the companies were allowed the privilege which the Bill now proposes, might be gradually absorbed by the companies, and thus throw the cost of maintaining the abattoirs on a reduced number. The Nelson butchers think that these meat companies should have to do their killing for consumption within the colony at the public abattoirs established by the local bodies, and that they should be under exactly the same conditions as the butchers outside. Another point of hardship is that some of these butchers have at present—erected at much cost to themselves—excellent slaughterhouses. They have made every provision there for killing and dressing their meat, and they consider it would be a very great hardship if they were compelled under the provisions of this Bill to vacate those premises without receiving any compensation. There is no doubt that it would result in a very considerable loss to them, after providing everything that is possibly required for trade purposes. Another point I wish to mention : In clause 48 it is made unlawful for any person to subject any meat to the process which is commonly known as blowing or spouting. Well, the Nelson butchers think this clause objectionable. There are proper machines now provided for this process, and if a penalty clause were provided in the Bill to the effect that the blowing and spouting shall be done with the machines and not by objectionable methods the appearance of the lambs would be vastly improved, and the process would not be in the slightest degree deleterious. I think that is all I was asked to mention. The principal point the Nelson butchers wished me to urge upon the Committee was that they are totally opposed to the delegation by the local bodies of the powers conferred upon them by the Bill to other persons.

1. *Hon. the Chairman*.] What amount of inspection is there in Nelson at the present time?—They are subject to inspection, I believe, under the Municipal Corporations Act; they are liable to inspection under that Act in the same way as dairies are; but, generally speaking, the inspection is, I think, incomplete and unsatisfactory.

2. What is the condition of the slaughterhouses in Nelson?—Generally they are kept clean. I have made it my business at times to view them, and I have found them in good order.

3. What is the feeling in Nelson upon the subject of these public abattoirs?—I think the public feeling is distinctly in favour of the establishment of public abattoirs, and of a system of proper and perfect inspection of meat. The butchers themselves are quite in accord with this feeling.

4. The butchers did not ask you about the competition by farmers in selling meat, did they?—Yes, they did say something about that. Their general feeling, I know, is that if private persons