

is in the best interests of the auction business. As you are no doubt aware, the "trotting" system, as at present practised, is very detrimental to the auction business, and my opinion is that the system could and should be abolished. I consider, myself, that if this system were abolished it would be in the best interests of the auction business, and this Bill seems to meet the case, with the exception of clause 3, line 20. It says, "Provided that this section shall not apply in any case where the auctioneer publicly announces, at the beginning of the sale, that the vendor reserves the right to make one bid, and the vendor or his agent makes such bid accordingly, and at the time when the bid is made the auctioneer publicly announces that it is made by and on behalf of the vendor." That, I maintain, Mr. Chairman, would ruin the Bill altogether. Now, I maintain I do not like that for the reason that the auctioneer might be bidding for more than one person, and I would propose to substitute for this clause that a valuator's reserve should be put on. The reserve could simply be put on, and if the bidding does not come up to the reserve the stock is passed to the highest bidder, and this would prevent any doubt about the matter altogether.

1. *Hon. Mr. Duncan.*] Is that the case in wool auctions?—Yes, that is the case. It is the same with wool as with stock, and if the bidding does not come up to the owner's reserve it is passed to the highest bidder, and the bidder's name is named, together with the price. For instance, say the reserve is 8d., and the highest bid is 7½d., under the present "trotting" system the auctioneer might run it, as I am aware they all do; and I am quite certain, Mr. Chairman, that it is not in the public interest, and my firm opinion is that the vendor is often—in fact, generally—the loser.

2. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What do you call "trotting"?—What I might call "trotting" is where the auctioneer or the vendor, or the latter through some friend of his, increases the price supposed to be fixed for the stock when it is offered.

3. Then, you are aware that this "trotting" is very general?—I did not say that.

4. *Mr. Lawry.*] I would like to ask if you represent the auctioneers generally of the South Island?—I cannot answer that question. We had a meeting of auctioneers, and I might say, with the exception of some side-issues, we were all unanimous on the question of "trotting" that the system was injurious to the auction business.

5. Are you aware that nearly all the auctioneers in this colony condemn this Bill?—I am not aware of that.

6. I understood you to say that at a meeting of auctioneers this system of "trotting" was denounced: did you advance any means whereby to stop it?—I told you that we mutually agreed to stop it, and we found it a failure. We then endeavoured to get the present Bill introduced, and Mr. Mitchell and myself were appointed to wait upon this Committee, and state the views of the meeting.

7. And do you wish the Committee to understand that this association at Timaru was the cause of the introduction of this Bill?—I believe it emanated from Timaru.

8. Then, you must admit that your meeting resulted in absolute failure?—The meeting was not called by me. Its agreement was not adhered to.

9. What difference does it make to them? It does not matter to whom the stock are sold. Supposing you named your lowest bidder, and his drover who took his stock is the lowest bidder, what would you do?—Let him have them if he could pay for them.

10. Then, supposing he was there on behalf of the vendor?—Speaking for the auctioneers of my district, they would take good care that the vendor's interests were not sacrificed, and that is to a great extent why we sympathize with this measure.

11. Oh, you think it can be met with legislation?

12. *Hon. Major Steward.*] How would you propose to place a reserve on such stock?—I would value the sheep myself, and if I did not get that value I would withdraw the sheep until a better sale.

13. *Mr. Rhodes.*] What was the nature of the representation at this meeting which you held in Timaru?—There were eighteen associations which replied approving of the business of this measure. Some of them did not return the petition at all. We had eighteen expressing their approval, and this was taken right through the Islands.

14. *Mr. Massey.*] Following up what has been said by Mr. Rhodes, do you know how many agricultural associations you communicated with?—I cannot accurately say.

15. I think you told us in your opening statement that friends of the vendor were used for stiffening the bidding: is there anything in the Bill to prevent that?—Yes; clause 3.

16. *Mr. Symes.*] How long have you been in the auction business?—Well, I think, about twenty-two or twenty-three years.

17. And you say that during the whole of that time unreserved sales have been more successful than reserved sales?—I said sales the public had confidence in.

18. Well, what worse off are you now? You know the sales that are being held?—Yes, that is so.

19. You must have seen in your business time and again when the vendor has bid for his own stock?—Oh, yes.

20. You do not consider that equivalent to a bid?—No, I do not see how you consider it as a bid.

21. You communicated with the committees of the agricultural associations as to the utility of this Bill or otherwise: have you got the replies?—The association has got the replies.

22. You were the only one asked to come here and give evidence?—Yes, with Mr. Mitchell.

23. Well, if you had been requested to bring this documentary evidence with you, would you have supplied it?—Yes.

24. You cannot tell us whether these replies were from the whole of the colony or merely from the South Island?—Some were from the South and some were from the North Island. They were pretty general.