

14. Did you notice any remark by Mr. Graham Gow, New Zealand Government Commissioner, about the difficulty of obtaining New Zealand meat in Cardiff?—Yes, much to my astonishment, I did. Cardiff is one of the places we have had a store at for years. I do not know that it is our own store, but it is a depot.

15. Outside your company is New Zealand represented there by any other company?—There are, of course, a great many people selling meat all over England, but not to the same extent probably.

16. Have you heard that the Christchurch Meat Company was specially represented there by a shop?—I do not know that I have.

17. What do you think of that remark made by the trade representative actually hired by the Government to report on the distribution of meat at home?—Well, I think somehow that when anybody—the ordinary onlooker—talks about meat he seems to talk at random. England is full of frozen meat all over it. The fact that seven million carcasses are sold there is evidence that it must be so.

18. With regard to sale, you have a fixed charge covering all costs?—Yes.

19. Do you mind saying what that is?—Speaking of the Colonial Consignment Company, they have a standard charge for selling meat of 0·35d. without insurance and 0·45d. with it. It has been a great bone of contention that the Colonial Consignment Company's charge is too high; but we believe ours is the proper method of conducting the trade, and that is treating every one alike. Now, if a man sends his meat into the Colonial Consignment Company's store the charge is uniform whether it is there for a week or for three months, unless anybody interferes and says his meat must not be sold when we think it ought to be sold, and then we make an additional charge. But so long as the meat is there to sell at our discretion the owner of it is not charged for any additional storage. The point is that there is no inducement to sell in a hurry in order to prevent charges. I have known cases where the nominal charge was $\frac{1}{4}$ d., and it went up to 1d. a pound. That is in cases where the nominal charge is $\frac{1}{4}$ d., but with storage at per week after a certain period.

20. Then the Colonial Consignment Company, I understand, are not buyers of meat, but sell on commission?—They are not allowed to buy. I might say that the company was formed at my own request, because I found that Nelson Bros. as sellers and purchasers of meat were looked upon with disfavour. The whole concern is run entirely independently of Nelson Bros.

21. A good deal was said about the heavy profits of freezing companies, and you remarked that you had only received moderate dividends for twenty years: do you mind telling the Committee what your dividends have averaged during the twenty years?—I do not think I can. I know that on account of our losses on meat we had to write off £2 a share to enable us to get into the position of paying dividends again.

22. What are your shares?—£10. We wrote off £2 in one lump to meet losses on meat. For four or five years we paid no dividend at all, but since we knocked that £2 off our capital we have been paying 5 and 6 per cent.—never more than that.

23. It has not averaged more?—No. When we froze on owners' account we made money. We paid dividends of 10 per cent. for several years, but then they ceased.

24. Do you know the Army and Navy Stores of London?—They are one of our clients we supply meat to.

25. Referring to the question of distribution again in connection with what has been said by the Trade Commissioner, I may say that I have been fortunate in getting a report of your Blackfriars store. [Produced.] This covers about fifty-seven pages, and there are about forty lines in each page. I suppose it is fair to assume it is made for distribution among a thousand people. It is called "The Country Delivery." As far as I can see you do not actually reach the retail buyers, but you supply small shopkeepers and hotels?—We supply small shopkeepers, but I do not know about hotels. We have set ourselves against doing anything that will interfere with the trade. If we begin to fall foul of the butchers, and they come to combine against us to do battle with us, we should simply have to collapse. That means that the man who wildly suggests that we ought to turn retail butchers does not know what it would mean. It would mean attempting to displace the butchers all over England. What commercial man would think of starting out one fine morning to do that? It is simply impossible.

26. You believe in using the existing channels?—They must be used; you cannot do without them.

27. I see on page 13 of this report that it has a wide distribution. For instance, there are fifteen sheep divided out to thirteen people, going to Bromley, Belfast, and so on. With regard to beef—page 27—I notice that fourteen fore-quarters are distributed amongst ten persons. Then on page 43 I notice that as low as one haunch of mutton of 20 lb. is sent to a person and half a sheep to another person?—If they write for it they get it forwarded.

28. In sending away small quantities like these, are you able to get better prices than by selling in bulk in the market?—Yes.

29. Is a small consignor charged the same rate as a large one?—Yes; a small owner is charged exactly the same as the man with six thousand sheep.

30. The 0·35d. covers everybody?—Yes.

31. And you consider that, as nearly as possible, you reach all the people that can be reached under the present arrangements of your system?—Yes, certainly.

32. *Mr. G. W. Russell.* You spoke of "selling to shops": These are not butcher's shops, but ordinary shops which might want a leg of mutton?—They are butcher's shops generally, but we supply to anybody. We do not interfere with the trade.

33. *Mr. T. Mackenzie.* You urged yesterday concentration in the handling of consignments?—I began to urge concentration twenty years ago, and persisted in it for twelve years without success, and then gave it up. Now other people are taking it up.