

Lincoln basis on the other, would show a difference of 4s. or 5s. per head. It is not only the carcass that goes to London; you have to add the amount of wool, and the amount of tallow, which are enormous factors in the whole thing, and will make up a difference of 4s. or 5s. per head.

82. As to the attention that the sheep get in the North Island as compared with that in the South: You know, of course, that the farmer in the South Island is much more scientific with regard to bringing lambs on than he is in the North. Is it not a fact that in the North Island nature has done so much in the way of climate that the farmers do not farm so scientifically as in the South, and therefore do not produce the same quality of sheep?—The most serious item is that we can struggle through the winter without artificial food; but during most of our winters the sheep suffer, and that suffering leaves an indelible mark on the mutton. The sheep that go back in my own district suffer much from lung-disease, caught during the cold winter; and then we get an enormous amount of feed in the spring and the sheep are fattened with great rapidity, with the result that I have seen really good fat sheep outwardly with practically nothing inside in the way of fat, and the kidneys are simply lying in a bag of skin.

83. If your North Island farmers adopted the Southern plan of using oats, Cape barley, and so on, the feed would be a great deal better for the North Island sheep?—With all his fuss and fume, the North Island man probably makes just as much money out of his sheep as the South Island man. If more artificial feeding were done the sheep would come out better, but they would not make fine instead of coarse wool come out, and feeding would not make a shapely sheep out of an unshapely one.

84. You say that the farmers do not ask you to freeze for them?—I cannot induce them to. I have many times tried to induce them, but they will not do it. We have frozen only seven thousand in three years.

85. I suppose it would suit you better if some large organization such as the Farmers' Union were set up and employed you to freeze for them, the same as at Belfast?—Certainly.

86. And you are prepared to meet the organization, take the whole financial obligations, and act as freezers for them?—Certainly, freezers and shippers.

87. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] And if that were the case you would freeze at a lower price, on account of the numbers?—I do not know that we would do that, because we are freezing at so low a charge now. I do not know that we could freeze lower. I explained that we made less money by freezing than any company in the colony, by reason of the shortage. We are freezing in a much hotter climate, and we get all our sheep practically delivered in about five months in the year instead of ten. All these elements enormously increase the cost, and the fact of our having to freeze our sheep in such a hurry involves works as large as those at Belfast.

88. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] You spoke yesterday of the desirability of the Merino basis being introduced into the North Island for the purpose of improving the quality of the sheep, so as to bring it up to prime Canterbury. Do you think the North Island sheep-farming country is adapted to carrying Merino?—I do not think I said that, because one of the things I deplore more than another is putting a Merino ram on anything, and it would be to my view disastrous. The Merino ram seems to produce every bad feature of the Merino, but reverse it with the ewe and the good points seem to be developed.

89. In the event of North Island farmers seeking to purchase Merino ewes in the South Island, or obtaining them in the interior of the North, do you think the North Island is adapted to carry them so as to build up a suitable sheep?—No. A great many parts of the North Island could not carry the Merino. There is no rule that you could lay down for every part of the North Island. We could not carry Merino down on the flats at Hastings.

90. You spoke of the possibility of prices for meat going lower?—I look upon that as certain.

91. On account of the competition of other countries, and so on?—Yes.

92. Is there a margin left if there should be an appreciable reduction?—You can only answer that as a sheep-farmer. It is a sheep-farmer's question, pure and simple. The best evidence one can give of that is that when I commenced in the freezing business—exactly twenty years ago—for the two previous years I had been boiling sheep down. I was buying sheep part of that period at 5s. and 6s. each, for which at any time during the last few years I have been giving 10s. or 12s.

93. But you would not say that sheep-growing paid at the old boiling-down rates?—The sheep-growers did not go astray. People who have bought lands at too high a price and have got plasters on them, if sheep go down in price, will not like it; but sheep at 8s. and lambs at 9s., except where the land has been bought at too high a price, might still pay. I do not think it is a question of whether we can or whether we cannot raise sheep at this price; it is a question of having to do it. Frozen mutton has reached the point of seven million carcasses, and the general belief that the demand for meat is unlimited is quite true up to a point, and that is that it is unlimited up to a certain figure. The spending-power of an enormous number of people in Great Britain is so limited that frozen meat going beyond 3d. limits its sale.

94. Do you think it desirable to put lower grades of meat on the London market with a view to reaching the lower strata of population?—No. I think the lower grades of sheep should be kept out of the market. I have cut up sheep which I have not considered fit for freezing purposes and put them into the pot, the principle being that if inferior mutton goes into the market it fills a gap, and the more the best quality can be sent there the better.

95. You are speaking of what are called "rejects"?—They are not what are commonly called "rejects," but call them "rejects." It may be that they are big sheep and are not worth sending Home. A sheep bred from the Merino might not be too fat at 75 lb., but we might have a sheep which might be too fat at 65 lb.

96. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] It has been stated that the companies in the North Island have refused to freeze for southern speculators, and yet you say you freeze at a lower price for speculators to encourage them: is that so?—My company has never refused to freeze for speculators, and the