

52. Now, about the local trade: you say there are only four or five butchers who are outside the control of the two companies?—Yes.

53. Do both of the companies supply meat to the butchers here?—Yes; the Gear Company have carts, and I believe the arrangement is that the men who take the carts round buy so much meat from the Gear Company. The Meat-export Company actually supply the meat themselves to their own butchers' shops.

54. Is not that a great advantage to the small butcher: is he not able to finance himself better by being able to get meat as he wants it instead of having to buy it at the yards?—It suits some of them, but many of the sheep are rejects.

55. What remedy do you propose for the state of things which you say is one of your grievances?—I do not know that the Government can alter that portion of the thing, but I think the mere fact of the Government assisting us at the other end would do away largely with the necessity of the retail market. They would have better means at the other end than we could. We could ship our meat, and that would do away with these two particular companies, and should not feel the want of the retail market at Johnsonville.

56. Your whole remedy means this: that the Government should establish a number of agencies in Great Britain, and you should be able to ship to those agencies?—I do not suggest that the Government should have a large number. I think if they appointed a consignee to act as salesman in some of the large centres that we should simply sell to them instead of to the present large number of consignees.

57. *Mr. T. Mackenzie.*] You say that there are two companies, and that A, B, and C may sell and each receive the same price from the freezing companies?—Yes.

58. Although there may be some difference in the value?—Yes.

59. And that the buyers prefer an average of 80 lb. sheep to 65 lb. sheep?—If I have got 150 sheep, out of which they want 120, they invariably take the 120 largest, and leave me the little ones.

60. You said they would not take the 65 lb. sheep at all?—I said they would take some objection to them, and take the big ones.

61. Is not that because the light sheep are not so well finished?—No; they might be as well primed as the other ones, and yet they will not take them if they can get the big ones.

62. Will they not give you one price for the big sheep and another price for the small ones?—No; they have the same price. They opened this season with 10s.

63. Then it is weight and not quality that they want?—Yes.

64. And they will reject a 65 lb. freezer and not give you an offer for it?—They will not budge an inch in the prices in any of the instances I have known.

65. They will not give you an offer for a freezer of from 60 lb. to 65 lb.?—I cannot say that I have actually gone and asked them to take the balance at a less figure.

66. Do you think they would take the balance at a less figure?—I do not say that if you offered them at three half-crowns they might not take them.

67. What is your idea of the value of the sheep they might take for three half-crowns?—If their idea as to weight is the principal one, they would give you 10s. They tell you they want sheep at 65 lb. and do not want the heavy ones, and you are asked to breed sheep of 65 lb. weight; but when they come to your yard they take the big ones at a standard price of 10s., and if you wanted them to take the other ones they would want a reduction. Two or three years ago I had about eighty or ninety wethers in the yard, and the company's buyer came and took half a truck out of them, and he took in every instance sheep of about 80 lb., and some of them over. They were very heavy wethers, and the sheep he left were smaller-grown, but prime; they were shorn in September, and the company took them the week before Christmas.

68. Suppose you went to the yard under normal conditions with a flock of 500 sheep, 250 of which would average from 60 lb. to 65 lb. and the balance were heavy weights?—Yes.

69. Could you sell both lots, or only one?—I think they would take the primest ones, and then the small ones at a reduced figure. I think it is probable they would.

70. That admits the fact that they will take the 65 lb. wethers?—Yes; but it is a question of price.

71. Will they take sheep of that weight at that price?—I have never known any difference in price. They might take them if I chose to give them away at a less figure.

72. But not at the fair market price?—Not at the fair market price.

73. What weight do you think they want in lambs?—The same thing applies. They prefer to take the large ones.

74. Over what weight?—They tell you about 36 lb. or 38 lb.; but if you have lambs going to 50 lb. they will pick them out, and prefer them.

75. If you had a parcel of, say, four hundred lambs, and a buyer wanted to select from those, what would he take?—Those of about 50 lb.

76. Beginning at what weight?—Over 40 lb.

77. Do you know of any instruction given here by the meat companies not to take any lambs under 40 lb.?—No; I do not know what instructions they have.

78. You said you preferred to freeze for yourself, and ship for yourself: why?—I did not say that. We have only two buyers, and the only other alternative would be to ship ourselves.

79. What is the objection to that?—I do not think a small man has the chance of favourable treatment with the large consignments going Home from the companies and from the larger private owners.

80. Do you think they have not the same treatment at the works here, or that they cannot get the same treatment in the Home market?—I do not think these small parcels would be likely to be handled to the best advantage at Home, or here for instance. If you take a truck of sheep to