

107. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] How many brands do you send out of your factory?—Six brands for wethers alone. We have three grades of what we term heavy weights and three grades of light weights. We put them over the scales and the weight goes on them. Then we put them into six different grades for quality.

108. Then you have, of course, the one uniform Government tag, and at the back the particular class to which it belongs by its distinguishing mark?—Yes; and the label is branded with the company's brand and the class brand as well.

109. *Mr. Haselden.*] Do you always get six different prices for those sheep?—No. Sometimes, for whatever reason I do not know, we find our second grade of light weights will fetch as much as our best grade of heavy weights.

110. How do you account for the fact that our sheep sent to the South Island have brought a great deal more than they would fetch here?—If you sent your sheep down in quantity, as they are sent to the works here, they would not fetch more, but if you pick a line of heavy sheep it would be different. The butchers compete for them because they are worth more to them.

111. That would apply in the case of fat sheep, but we had evidence that it applied to lambs and store sheep?—There are climatic reasons, and difference in the feed.

112. Do you mean to say that our sheep would turn out a better class there than here?—Yes, there is no doubt about it. The Canterbury sheep are a better sheep than those in the North Island. I have had experience, and I say that your sheep would do better down there than here. If you sent down a well-bred line of sheep from the North, cutting a big line in two and keeping half of it here, they would have their half fattened first, while your half, when fat, would not be so good.

113. Is that on account of the grass?—I do not know, but there is something altogether different in favour of Canterbury.

114. *Mr. Field.*] What is your company paying at the present time for, say, 60 lb. fat wethers for freezing?—We are not operating just now. We are closed down for our annual overhaul. We have not purchased lately.

115. When you last purchased, what were you paying?—I think it was 14s. to 15s. for wethers. The latter price for a special line.

116. That was a month ago?—Yes.

117.—Are you aware that that is a better price than men are getting in Wellington here?—No. I might say that it was just before we closed down that we gave that price.

118. A month ago what price was being paid for your mutton on the London market?—If I remember rightly, 3½d.

119. That means that for a 60 lb. sheep you would be getting 17s. 6d.?—Yes.

120. The by-products you said just now would be worth 5s.?—No; that is for a full-woolled sheep. The skin was worth less then. It is worth more now.

121. A month ago were the by-products worth 4s. 6d.?—Yes, reckoning everything.

122. That would be £1 2s. altogether as the gross amount you would get?—Yes.

123. Do you think the difference between the 14s. you paid and the amount you received is necessary to cover everything and enable you to get a profit?—Yes.

Re Regular and Proper Handling of Frozen Meat.

Great improvement might, I think, be made if shippers would combine and insist on their meat being properly and carefully handled from the time it leaves the works until it reaches the consumer. Generally speaking meat is handled with the greatest care at the various works, and every effort is made to turn it out as sound and clean as possible, I understand that it is often delivered from the stores at Home not only in a dirty state, but with shanks broken and large pieces knocked off. Meat moved twenty times carefully should not be in this battered condition. The only way, in my opinion, would be for some one with necessary authority and power to go round with each steamer, see that meat was properly handled in loading, go Home with it, checking temperature on the voyage, and see that it is carefully handled there. I am sure if this were done there would be a big difference in the appearance of New Zealand meat as received by the consumer.

Re More Regular Supplies by Winter Feeding.

A great deal might, I think, be done by the farmer in the North Island towards securing a price for his sheep more in accord with the price ruling in Canterbury—firstly, by breeding sheep more suitable for freezing, and, secondly, by more systematic feeding in winter. At present sheep are allowed to get very poor in winter, and the companies receive very few for freezing during six months of the year, and only for three or four months are their works kept going to their full capacity. Let the farmers do what they will, I am of the opinion that there will still be a difference owing to conditions, "climatic and otherwise," over which they have no control, but that they can do a lot in the manner mentioned above I am sure.

Re Government Grading.

I am not in favour of Government grading, because the various companies have learnt by experience how to grade the particular sheep treated at their respective works. The bulk of the sheep treated in one part of New Zealand are of a very different class to those treated at works in another part. Each company has graders who have been educated up to deal with the particular sheep passing through their works, and I am of opinion that an attempt to grade the whole of the sheep in different parts on the same lines would prove disastrous.

C. M. CRESSWELL.