

61. Could you give me the name of any one to whom you do sell?—No. All I know is that they do sell to country buyers.

62. Do you reach the people with the c.i.f. lines?—I could not tell. I have nothing to do with the selling. Our managers do their level best and get a salary.

63. My object is to find out how near they reach the consumer at Home?—I could not tell you.

64. That which is not sold c.i.f. is put into the hands of the salesmen?—Yes.

65. And their commission is 2 per cent.?—I think so, but could not say.

66. Does your agent go to the London market every morning to see what is realised for your meat?—Yes.

67. Do you think these men sell honestly?—Yes.

68. Do you think the 2 per cent. is all they get for the sale of the meat?—We do not do it in that way. We pay the broker. It used to be three-eighths, taking delivery, storage so long as we liked, and sale charges to cover everything.

69. It is something like the consolidated rate the Colonial Consignment Company charge, which it has been given in evidence is 0.35d.?—Yes. Our stuff may be kept in the stores in London as long as we like.

70. Do you know the charges for storage in London?—No. We just pay on that basis, and they store as long as they like.

71. You pay a consolidated rate and they can place the meat as they like?—Yes. We have the advantage of holding it over when it is thought desirable.

72. But what is the effect of holding over the stuff?—It deteriorates, of course, by being kept too long; but at the same time we have saved our bacon by holding it over.

73. Have your people ever reported about a better method of distribution at Home?—No.

74. You have not considered the question of the Government taking over the whole trade at Home?—In a measure I have; but I think it would lead to less friendly relations with other people, like the River Plate people, if it were turned into the form of a monopoly and other people did not get their whack at it.

75. Do you not know that the River Plate trade is a monopoly now at Home?—It may be, but they are doing very well. They have raised the price not only of their own meat, but of that of New Zealand.

76. You are aware, perhaps, that the three companies trading with the Argentine are working in harmony?—Yes.

77. Does that harmony prevail among the New Zealand salesmen?—No.

78. Is it not the fact that so many people having control of the meat is a frequent cause of depression?—No doubt it is, to some extent, because it is a question of supply and demand.

79. Is it not a fact that one holder has reduced the price in the market by 1½d. per pound?—I could not say that.

80. Could that happen if the Government took control of the whole lot?—I do not know but what it would; but it might irritate these other people, and they would drop things down.

81. Surely you would not say the Argentine companies would be more antagonistic to our interests if we combined than they are now?—I do.

82. In what way could they show it?—They would discredit our meat throughout their places. At present they buy New Zealand meat for their own shops. When I left Home in 1890 they had six hundred shops in the Midland Counties of England. That is, the James Nelson and Son Company, who are the oldest people in England in that trade.

83. Why do they buy our meat?—One of them is a director of our company.

84. Is it not because of the demand among their customers who would not take Argentine meat?—No; they simply cater for a higher class of trade.

85. Do you mean to say they would not continue to do that if we combined?—I do not think so. There would not be the same friendly feeling towards us.

86. Regarding the purchase of sheep in the North Island: It has been given in evidence that buyers here will not buy 60 lb. to 70 lb. prime sheep. Is there any truth in that statement?—I only wish we could have got them last season, we would have bought them quickly enough.

87. It was said that was so unless they gave them to you at throw-away prices?—No; we simply could not get them last year.

88. In reference to the question of combination, it has been given in evidence by a farmer that there was a fixed price, and the buyer would go to A, B, and C, representing different farmers who had sheep of different quality, and would offer them a fixed price for all three qualities?—Yes, I quite believe that. If a farmer up our way got 6d. more than another there would be a rare storm. In our position we do not get a sufficient supply to keep us going. We have to buy everything that comes in our way, and we have to average the thing out.

89. What weights do you prefer to buy when all things are normal—at a time when there is no extra demand for all?—We prefer 60 lb. to 70 lb. sheep. We do not freeze anything over 70 lb.

90. What are your favourite weights of well-finished lamb?—35 lb.

91. If a statement of this sort was made, that your buyers were instructed to take no weights under 40 lb., what would you say?—I should not think that would be the case. I know our weights are terribly light in lamb. I do not think they averaged 31 lb. last year. We paid too much for them: we gave 11s. and I see that we got 4d. a pound lately.

92. At any rate, your statement is that your average is about 31 lb.?—Yes.

93. *Mr. Haselden.*] What class of sheep have you mostly on your side? We have mostly Lincoln on our side?—It is pretty well the same with us—Lincoln and Romney. Perhaps I have had more experience with Romneys than most of the farmers, because I have been freezing them for the last fifteen years.