

know what the price is in the market?—Yes, exactly; if they have an order for a hundred thousand sheep they know what they are going to get.

158. Supposing you were going to sell oats and you had a quantity of prime milling-oats, and your neighbour was selling prime milling-oats, do you not think buyers would offer the same price for both?—Most likely they would.

159. Now, with regard to heavy-weight lambs, you say the buyers prefer 40 lb. lambs and upwards?—Yes, they prefer them to the light ones.

160. But would they prefer them to an average of 36 lb.?—They do not care to take 36 lb. lambs unless they can get them for a much lower price.

161. What do you consider to be prime lamb on the London market?—38 lb., I think.

162. Can you account for these people taking these overweights?—They get more out of the overweights. If there are 50 lb. lambs they will take them.

163. What will they sell for at Home?—They will sell them as tegs.

164. Have you had any experience in that line?—Yes.

165. Can you get within $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for a 50 lb. teg as you can get for a 38 lb. lamb in London?—Yes, it has been done lots of times. I had some at Home this year of 50 lb., and got the same price as for the others.

166. If prime mutton is 2s. 6d. a stone and prime lamb is 2s. 6d. a stone, what position would you put the teg in?—The teg is about the same price as the lamb.

167. And if people told you that a teg was very little above the price of mutton would you believe them?—It would bring a better price than mutton. I have seen lots of them bring within $\frac{1}{2}$ d. of lamb. I sent 1,550 lambs away this year, and some of them went as high as 50 lb.

168. What did you get for your lambs?—I got a satisfactory price, anyhow. The price of tegs is within $\frac{1}{2}$ d. of lamb.

169. What did you get for the lamb—what did you get per stone? Did you get 5d. a pound for your lamb?—I got 5d. for some of it, but it did not average 5d.

170. Would it average $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound?—Yes.

171. And you got that from tegs?—Yes.

172. Who is your agent at Home?—I sent them through the Meat-export Company.

173. But who is your agent?—I do not know.

174. You do not know whether they sold them at the stalls or to the butchers direct?—No.

175. In the shipments you sent Home had the markets gone up or gone back?—They had gone back during the time I sent them away from here.

176. You consider the 4-per-cent. commission too high?—Yes, that is something exorbitant. You pay all the storage and cartage besides the commission: 4 per cent. is for this commission alone.

JOHN DAVIES, Farmer, of Koputoroa, examined. (No. 8.)

177. *The Chairman.*] You are aware of the intentions of this Committee and the line of evidence we desire to proceed on: would you care to make a statement or prefer to answer questions?—I would prefer to answer questions, and if I find there is anything wanted to fill up with I will supply it.

178. *Mr. Haselden.*] Do you find the buyers who come to you pick out the heaviest sheep they can get and reject the light weights and crossbreds?—They make no mistake about picking out the heavy sheep. If a sheep weighed 150 lb. they will have him.

179. And give no more for him?—No.

180. You think there is a fixed price?—Apparently there is a combination between the Wellington buyers. They evidently fix the price, because if you grumble and you shift, and get the other buyer to come to you, you get no better price, and are treated in such a way that you are glad to go back to the original man. Apparently to me that is part of the game.

181. What class of sheep do you find to sell best?—If you have got a big Lincoln sheep the company will have him if he is fat. My breed is crossbred, Lincoln and Romney.

182. I suppose they tell you that a 65 lb. sheep is the best freezer, but they do not take it?—Not if they can fill up their truck-space with 70 lb. sheep. If they can only fill up their truck with 65 lb. sheep they tell you they are only fit for shop mutton.

183. Will they come again?—Yes; perhaps they get a little more fattening, and after a time, when sheep is getting light in the market, they must come again to keep the ball rolling.

184. If your sheep were worth more than your neighbour's they would not give you any more for them?—No. The companies give the farmers no encouragement whatever to go in for proper sheep for freezing purposes. It does not matter if you go in for breeding the very best sheep, they will give a man who allows his sheep to go anywhere they like the same price. I have complained to the companies about the same thing. Two years ago I complained to the Gear Company, and wanted some encouragement to breed a better class of sheep to suit the market, but the manager said, "How can we do it? If we buy from you and give you 9s. or 10s., and your neighbour, who does not breed the same class of sheep, gets less, he expects the same, and if he does not get it there is a row."

185. *Mr. Field.*] Have you got any idea of what will be the best means of improving the condition of things here? Do you think a fat-stock market at Levin, and another, say, at Masterton, would induce more buyers to come here?—Provided a condition was made to that. Some time in July last I wrote a letter to the *New Zealand Times* here on the c.i.f. business. But what is the good of c.i.f. buyers coming here if the companies bluff them? They are driving the c.i.f. buyers out of the market, because they are continually interfering with their business. You have only to look at the balance-sheet of the Meat-export Company to see that it is a profitable thing for their shareholders. And it is their business to bluff the South Island buyers. It is to their interests to