

say that a South Island sheep would return 15 lb. of fat, because that would be absurd. But I would say this: that the artificial feeding in the South Island causes sheep there in certain seasons to have more fat than those in the North Island. In certain seasons the sheep here have just as much fat—say, in a dry summer.

199. If you were told that a statement was made to this Committee that a prime Canterbury sheep has three times as much fat as a North Island sheep, would you say that that is incorrect?—It is absolutely absurd. You may get a special sheep which might have 15 lb. of fat, but I never saw it except in exceptional circumstances.

200. I mean generally a prime South Island sheep?—15 lb. is absurd.

201. I would not like the Committee to think that the statement was made that a South Island sheep would have 15 lb. of fat; but a statement was made that, supposing a prime South Island sheep had 12 lb. of fat, then a prime North Island sheep would only have 4 lb.: would you say that is absurd?—Yes; because, taking the average of sheep killed—the wethers—I think I am quite within the mark in saying that the average is 5 lb.

202. With regard to the average of lamb, when the question was put to a witness before this Committee that buyers insisted on having 40 lb. lamb the statement was characterized as ridiculous, and it was said that nobody but a fool would have made such a statement: what is your experience in regard to buyers in connection with the weights of lamb?—If a buyer is buying for freezing purposes only he wants a sheep from 36 lb. up to 40 lb. or 42 lb.; if he is buying for shop, and not for freezing, he will take lamb down to 32 lb.

203. And he prefers what?—He will take the biggest lamb you have; it does not matter if he weighs up to 50 lb. That is my experience.

204. Then, it is not an absurd thing to say that the buyers prefer the 40 lb. lamb?—I think they prefer to get an even weight—an even quality of sheep—if they are all 40 lb. even. They would like them rather than unequal sheep, some of which were going up to 50 lb.

205. *Mr. G. W. Russell.* I suppose the summing-up of your case is that there are not enough freezing-works in the North Island?—Yes, that is about it, although, so far as the number of works is concerned, they are adequate for the business if they were properly handled. I think the companies would be equal to the work if they were to enlarge their premises to meet the requirements. But the companies have got their own game to play on behalf of their shareholders.

206. Can you say, from your own knowledge of the farming community, whether there is any prospect of the farmers establishing freezing-works for themselves?—I have recently attended meetings at Woodville and Palmerston North for the purpose of going into this question, and it resolves itself into this: that the provisional directors realise that it is necessary to put up two freezing-works, one on the east coast and one on the west coast of this Island, in order to give the farmers fair play.

207. How do you think the country would take it if a proposal were made that the Government should guarantee 5 per cent. interest on a loan raised for that purpose?—I think the country would jump at it.

208. And you think that providing additional freezing-works would guarantee to the southern buyers freezing-space for the manipulation of their purchases, and that that would settle the whole of the difficulties?—I think so, because you would then have the same condition of things that obtain at Belfast: they would be freezing in the interests of the farmers, and not in the interests of a company.

209. Are you not aware that when Nelson Bros. started their freezing-works they did so to freeze solely on owners' account, but found that they could not keep their works fully employed, and were compelled to go into the market and buy in order to keep their works going?—Yes.

210. Do you not think that would obtain if other works were put up on the same principle?—The question is whether the farmer is not more enlightened now than he was ten or twelve years ago.

211. Do you not think that if that were done it would be absolutely necessary for the State to set up an additional Department, and to advance more to farmers on account of their stock than they can get in the ordinary course of commerce?—The question would be whether the Government would be justified in running it only on business lines.

212. Would you suggest, if the Government set up a Department such as has been done in Adelaide in connection with advances in wheat, that the Government should be restricted to making advances on frozen mutton similar in value to those made by the freezing companies and banks?—That is a difficult question to answer. If you begin to depart from business lines a dangerous element is introduced.

213. Then, would you not get back to your original difficulty, because the average settler would have to get cash for his stock, as by that means he would be able to turn it over?—If the settler is a good sound man he can get advances up to the full value of his shipment, because the banks know that he has something behind him. It is just the same as with wool. I can go to a banker and get a greater advance on wool than it will bring in the market.

214. But you would not say that you are a typical settler, for the average farmer who has to get an advance on his meat is not in so strong a financial position as you are if he is a Government leaseholder. Is it not a fact that the average man in a new piece of country is compelled to sell for cash, and get the best price he can?—Yes.

215. Of course, you know that the South Island method is to keep the sheep growing and fattening all the time?—Yes.

216. Do you not think that is better than the North Island method of letting them take care of themselves in the winter, and letting them eat as much as they can when there is a flush of feed?—Yes.