

encouragement given to breed this small class of sheep. Inferior breeds are sold to the companies at the current price, and bring as much as the better-class sheep. On an ordinary-sized sheep-farm there is not a sufficient number of these first-class sheep bred, and there is no encouragement given to the farmer to breed them at the present time.

8. What is the difference in the price, to your mind, of a prime North Island wether as against a first-class sheep of the same class in Canterbury?—I should be very sorry to think that we could not breed as good sheep in the Wairarapa as are bred in Canterbury, and I believe we can. We have had a sheep test in the Wairarapa, and they commanded the highest price in London; and if a few can be bred in that way I do not see why a large number cannot be bred.

9. Do you know the same quality of sheep bred in the Wairarapa and sold to the companies for 12s. have brought 15s. 9d. and 16s. 7d. in the yards at Addington?—I believe that is so. I do not know that they were freezing-sheep.

10. If you saw a statement in the commercial columns of the *Lyttelton Times* to the effect that a line of freezing-stores were sold at from 15s. 9d. to 16s. 7d., would you consider that a fair average price?—If one has not seen the sheep, one is at a great disadvantage. But reporters should know what they are talking about.

11. When buyers go to the sheep-farmer they invariably take the largest sheep?—Yes.

12. Now about the weight of lamb: Is it not a fact that the buyers from the companies prefer the heavy weights in lamb—say, from 40 lb. upwards—if they can get them?—They always take the heavier weights.

13. The statement was characterized before this Committee as stupid, I may inform you, and it was said that anybody in the trade making the statement would be a fool. Now, I want to make it very plain as regards the Wairarapa, because of my own knowledge it has taken place there, that buyers buying lamb always take the heaviest they can get: is that not a fact?—I have always found them to take the heaviest lambs.

14. How do you view the branding of New Zealand meat, supposing we could get a suitable brand which would not disfigure the carcase?—I say it would be a good thing.

15. With regard to the prosecution of Argentine meat agents in London for selling Argentine meat as New Zealand, would you regard the prosecution of those gentlemen as a waste of time?—Oh, certainly not.

16. You think it a righteous thing that they should be punished for representing Argentine meat as New Zealand meat?—Yes.

17. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] Do you sell to the companies or do you export on your own account?—Of late years I have been selling.

18. Which do you find the more profitable course to take?—It is some years since I froze on my own account, and the frozen-meat trade was then in its infancy. It was more of an experiment in shipping, and my experience was a considerable loss.

19. You have not had a recent experience of shipping on your own account?—No.

20. May I ask what is your output of fat stock?—About two thousand.

21. You said just now that you would be sorry to think you could not breed as good sheep in the North Island as the Canterbury people can: do you adopt the same method of winter feeding as is adopted down South?—To breed the same sheep we should have to adopt the same methods as closely as possible.

22. I presume, then, that you do not now produce artificial food for your sheep during the winter?—Personally, I do; but it is not so general as it might be.

23. Do you find that adopting that course materially increases the value of your sheep over the value of those who do not?—No doubt that is so.

24. And you believe you command a higher price than the average of values in the Wairarapa?—I am sorry to say the prices are uniform.

25. Do you find this: that, although you breed a better class of sheep, and feed them on a more scientific principle than the others do, you are unable to command a higher price than those who do not take the same steps?—The price is a uniform price invariably.

26. Are you unable to get a higher price for your better class of sheep than your neighbours whose sheep are not so good?—No, I am not able to get a better price.

27. You say that in buying lambs the buyers always take the heavy weights first: are those lambs from 40 lb. upwards?—They would be under 40 lb. for lamb. Of course, later on in the season I should not call them lambs at all—they would be young sheep.

28. Do the buyers make it a practice to buy lambs of over 40 lb.?—No; I have not sold them over 40 lb. When they go beyond that weight I have generally kept them.

29. Do the buyers offer to buy them?—Yes; but I have not sold them.

30. Of course, you know this inquiry has arisen largely owing to the difference in values between North and South Island sheep: what methods have you in your district for bringing the buyers of sheep together, in the way of markets, so as to get the benefit of competition?—Well, we have no method at all, and I think a great improvement could be made in that respect. At the present time the market, in my opinion, is suppressed by the companies owing to their system of buying. We have no open markets the same as Canterbury has. It is impossible to tell sometimes what the companies are giving. They may be giving 9s. during one month, and then a rise takes place, but it is not always easy to ascertain when a rise has taken place. If I might suggest it to the Committee, I think something should be done to compel registered companies to register their purchases. I do not think it would be any hardship or injustice to the companies, and it would be much fairer to the sheep-farmers. The companies might register their purchases weekly. It is almost ridiculous to think of establishing markets such as they have in the South.

31. Do you not think that in a large district like the Wairarapa it would be possible to get a central market to take the place, say, of Addington and Burnside, where the sheep-breeders would