

over 1s. for railage alone, without computing the cost of buying and driving to the railway-station. The difference in value between fine and coarse cross-bred wool as applied to the sheep-skin necessarily varies from the bare pelt until the full fleece is grown again. At the present time the estimates from the best experts put the difference at 1s. 6d. per skin, as between an average coarse crossbred North Island skin and the average Canterbury sheepskin. The difference in weight of fat per sheep is put down by the best authorities at 35 per cent. in favour of Canterbury. I heard it stated here yesterday that the difference was three times as much, but of course that is all nonsense.

74. I think it would be the wish of the Committee that in your evidence you should not traverse any statements made here by witnesses yesterday, as you were here merely as an act of courtesy?—Very well. With regard to the cables every week quoting the Meat-export Company's brand on the one hand and the Canterbury brand on the other, showing a difference of perhaps only $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per pound, that is very easily explained. Taking the Meat-export Company's purchases for the year ending 30th June last—purchases I mean of prime wethers and maiden ewes—the rejections of sheep unfit for freezing totalled $19\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., made up as follows: bruised, a little under $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; yellow and grown lungs, about 6 per cent.; unsuitable for various other reasons, such as gross, coarse, three-cornered sheep, and patchy in various ways—that could not be put under the Wellington Meat-export Company's brand without seriously injuring it—11 per cent. In addition to that we have a second class branded "NGA," on which the Wellington Meat-export Company's brand is not put. The number of this second class amounted to 8 per cent. If the Committee will look at the statistics from the Shaw-Savill Company, they will see exports from all the North Island ports of large numbers of "legs and pieces," which are conspicuous by their absence from South Island shipments—in fact there are practically none at all. For the year ending the 30th June the shipments from the North Island, as shown by this table, were 697,000 legs and 394,000 pieces. Let me explain that some of these legs and pieces are not from rejections for freezing, but from ewes unfit for freezing purposes. These figures clearly show the large number of rejections from North Island sheep that are not fit for freezing purposes. Now, how does this difference arise between the North Island and the South Island? It can be put practically under three headings—breed, climate, and artificial food, represented mainly by rape and turnip. In the North Island you have little but Lincoln and Romney sheep, and if you refer to the Home-market prices you will find that these two breeds of sheep are at the bottom of the list as to quality of mutton. In Canterbury, on the other hand, these breeds are practically conspicuous by their absence. You will see them occasionally, but in very small numbers, the principal breed being Merino crossed with the Leicester and Down breeds. It would be foolish to expect that mutton grown from the lowest-priced breeds in England would become equal to the best because it happens to be grown in New Zealand. Owing to the wetter climate in the North Island the losses in young stock are very much greater than in the South. Canterbury exports a far greater percentage of her live-sheep stock per annum than the North Island for two reasons: one is the lower rate of deaths, the other is that instead of sending away the main portion as four-tooth, as is done in the North Island, they are sent away as lambs, and the whole of the balance practically as two-tooth. This enables Canterbury to carry a much bigger percentage of ewes in the general stock. Artificial feeding obviously has a great deal to do with early maturity. The greater part of Canterbury, speaking broadly, is cultivable, and the statistics will show the enormous difference between the North Island and Canterbury in the quantity of turnip and rape grown. But that does not cover all the difference. Owing to the wetter winter in the North it is impossible to feed turnips with such successful results as in Canterbury.

75. *Mr. McLachlan.*] Would you not substitute "South Island" for "Canterbury"?—No, because when you get to Invercargill you get very different climatic conditions from Canterbury altogether. The freezing weights of a few lots of sheep bought recently by the Meat-export Company, some off turnips and some off grass, are as follows:—52 lb., 51 lb., 51 lb., 53 lb., 52 lb., 50 lb., 51 lb., 50 lb., 44 lb. These weights are taken consecutively from the books of the company.

76. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Were they in any number?—Here are the numbers of the lots: 75, 116, 89, 118, 300, 164.

77. *The Chairman.*] Were those off turnips?—Some of them were.

78. *Mr. McLachlan.* You do not indicate which were off turnips and which were off grass?—I have not got that. I know of an instance of a lot of a little under five thousand wethers put upon turnips and looked after by one of the best men I know in charge of sheep. They were on from early winter until late in August, and all that could be got out of the five thousand full-grown wethers by the latter end of August was eleven hundred fat sheep, because they were wading up to their bellies in mud a large proportion of the time. It is well known that in the west of Scotland three turnips are of less feeding-value than two in Aberdeenshire because of the difference in the climate. I have here an article written in England, republished in the Christchurch weekly *Press*, stating that the three freezing companies in the Argentine absolutely refused to buy for freezing purposes a lot of from two to three thousand prime Lincoln wethers for freezing purposes, stating that they were too gross and coarse for the English market. The climate is undoubtedly responsible for the smaller quantity of fat in our North Island sheep. I am told by the southern buyers who come up here that in many cases the Canterbury lambs give double the fat furnished by those in the North Island. We have been told—I am not referring now to what took place before this Committee, although it did come up here—that the freezing companies here have stopped the southern buyers from coming here as far as they could. Here is a letter from Mr. Hulse, who gave evidence yesterday, and who wrote as follows to our general manager: "Dear sir,—*Re* your letter as to obstacles having been placed in the way of southern buyers purchasing stock in your province by your company: all I can say is I am not conscious of the fact, and any idle statements of the kind are without foundation and