

152. Do you think there would be an opportunity at the present date of establishing a market?—I hope so.

153. I mean on the lines of Addington, to establish a standard?—It is difficult now to do it, but it depends entirely on the farmers. It is so difficult to get men to alter from their regular habits. They have been so used to the company's buyers coming to their farms and drafting their sheep that it is very hard to make them say they will go to the trouble of sending their sheep into the market.

154. But, still, if you got over this initial stage you are of opinion that a fat-stock market on this Coast would be an advantage to the consumer?—Yes.

155. *Mr. Hornsby.*] With regard to the increased expense of 3s. 6d. which you had to pay to send a lot of your sheep to Picton, did that result in a profit or a loss?—It resulted in loss. I had contracted for so many fat sheep at such-and-such a price up to a certain weight. That is the way we do our business. I only got the same price, but it cost me 3s. 6d. more to get them. In any case I was losing money if the company had frozen them, because the block made me pay 12s., which I had bought to lift at 10s. 3d. Having got the men to hold them I had to pay the current price when I lifted them.

156. Do you know of any shipments from the North Island to the South Island?—Yes, I have shipped a good many lots.

157. Do you know whether your own shipments have resulted in profit to those who sent them down?—They have mainly resulted in profit to me.

158. That is to say that, notwithstanding the heavy cost of sending them to Addington and the depreciation of the sheep, you have obtained a better price than the settlers who have sold to the companies?—Yes, generally; but on one occasion I bought a lot of sheep at Foxton which made 18s. 5d., but I lost about £20 by that.

159. What class of sheep were they?—A fine class of Romneys.

160. Have you ever known of lines of sheep from the North Island being frozen in the South?—Yes. I know of a line that was shipped by Mr. Fulton. He bought them in the North Island, and they were frozen on his account in the South.

161. Do you know whether that was a profitable shipment or not?—I do not.

162. You know that those sheep were for freezing purposes and not for the butcher?—Yes.

163. What becomes of the sheep bought by the southern people?—The sheep I sent down to be frozen by the Christchurch Meat Company bore the Christchurch Meat Company's brand.

164. When frozen here what brand do they bear?—The Meat-export Company's brand. Longburn will not put their brand on unless they sell the sheep themselves—unless they act as agents at Home. I simply look upon that as an inducement to people to sell their sheep to them.

165. The price is affected by southern buyers coming up here?—It is, undoubtedly.

166. Prior to the agitation and the resultant advent of these buyers, I take it that prices were not so good?—I would not put it that way. I would say there has been infinitely more life in the movement, and more sympathy. Before the southern men came up the price would open at such-and-such a figure. Within two or three months the companies would raise their price—when the wool grew. In Hawke's Bay I think it is 4d. steady increase per month; but since the c.i.f. man has made his appearance here prices have fluctuated enormously.

167. And to the benefit of the farmer?—Yes, often. The c.i.f. buyer gets a cable from Home making an offer for sheep, and perhaps that cable tells him to give 3s. more than the ruling price, and if he went into the open market he would probably have to go into competition with others. If I get an order now I do not offer the farmer what I am offered. I offer him 6d. advance, perhaps.

168. But if you had a fat-stock market the farmer would participate in the benefits?—Yes; he would have to suffer also if there was a drop in the market.

169. Is it not a recognised thing amongst farmers that there is a combination amongst the companies against them: is there not a general feeling that the price is fixed by an understanding between the companies?—Yes, there is a general feeling that way.

170. *Mr. Haselden.*] Do you mind giving the name of the company which objected to its buyer bidding at the sales?—The Gear Meat Company. The particular sale to which I referred was McLellan's, of the Oroua Downs. He proposed to have a sale of his fat stock there, and we tried it. I remember the Gear Company's buyer sitting on a rail, and he never opened his mouth.

171. What class of sheep do you buy for the c.i.f. buyers for preference?—He makes us an offer up to a certain weight—from 48 lb. to 63 lb. Then he gives us another price for a higher weight. But the effect of these three or four prices is that they all average about the same.

172. But in preference would you buy a 65 lb. sheep?—Yes, if we could get them.

173. And crossbred and Leicester?—Yes. To me it does not matter much. I simply undertake to send so many sheep of such-and-such weights.

174. You were speaking about the difference in Canterbury sheep's fat: are you aware that the Meat-export Company give an extra pound, which the Southern buyers retain for themselves—that is, the crown-gut fat?—I understood so from Mr. Sladden.

175. *The Chairman.*] You spoke of the fluctuations of the prices just now: does the presence of the southern buyer ever cause a fluctuation downwards?—I have not noticed it.

176. In other words, the presence of the southern buyer is to the advantage of the local men?—Undoubtedly. I am absolutely positive of that.

177. In regard to setting up fat-stock sales, is there any suggestion that you can make by which the colony could assist those, in connection with railway freights, or is there any other form of assistance by which these people could be encouraged?—Except by paying their commission for them.