

178. We want practical suggestions, and if you can give us any information to help us we should like it?—I certainly think that if the Government could make a concession on all fat sheep railed to market it would encourage the people to try the thing.

179. Do you get any concessions on the railways in connection with drovers and others who are travelling with sheep?—Yes; if you consign a truck of sheep you are entitled to send a man.

180. You do not suggest any improvement on that?—No.

THURSDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1902.

ALEXANDER HEGGIE, Wanganui, Farmer, examined. (No. 12.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are aware of the object for which this Committee is sitting: would you care to make a statement that would be of benefit to us in our investigations, or would you rather that your evidence was taken down in the manner of cross-examination?—I would rather have questions asked, and then if anything suggests itself I could inform the Committee of it at the time.

2. Is the method of conveyance of meat in the Wanganui district satisfactory—that is to say, are there facilities for the carrying of live-stock on the railways sufficient for the purposes of the settlers?—Yes.

3. You have no objections to make on that score?—No.

4. Have you sufficient freezing-accommodation at the works for your stock?—Yes. There are occasions when there is a slight blockage, when a vessel has not got in at the time it was expected; but there is a good deal of space in the cool-chamber, and large enough for from seventeen to twenty thousand sheep.

5. You have no particular complaints to make in that respect?—No.

6. Have you any market for the purpose of disposing of or establishing a value for fat stock in your neighbourhood?—No.

7. Have the settlers at any time made efforts to establish such a market?—No; they thought it would be almost futile to attempt such a thing, as we are in the hands of the freezing company; and they arrange the price, and we have no say in the matter. We are obliged to fall in with that arrangement or our sheep would be left on our hands. There is no other way of our getting rid of them.

8. Have you made any efforts to better the conditions of the trade in your district in any way?—No.

9. It has not been, as it were, a burning question with you?—No. We are told that we could not better ourselves, and we submit. Of course, it was thought that the freezing-works were established for the benefit of the settlers, but the settlers do not seem to be willing to freeze on their own account, and the company has to freeze for itself. There is very little frozen on the settlers' own account.

10. *Mr. Hornsby.*] Have the settlers expressed very much dissatisfaction at the present condition of affairs?—There is a very good deal of dissatisfaction.

11. The farmers are persuaded, to your mind, that there is an understanding between the companies as to fixing prices?—Yes.

12. You have never heard of one buyer of a company giving a different price to that offered by the buyer of another company?—No; all offer the same rate. Sometimes the Meat-export Company may offer 6d. more to indicate the price next month, and then our company follows suit, and *vice versa*.

13. It is fixed from month to month: is that your experience?—Yes.

14. In the buying of the sheep from the farmer what does the buyer generally do? What line does he take when he goes to buy a man's sheep?—He usually takes the heaviest and fattest sheep.

15. If there are any nice, compact little sheep, going about 60 lb., does he take them?—Yes, but they must be very prime.

16. These 60 lb. sheep would probably be fine: would he take them if coarse?—He would take them if coarse.

17. Would he take anything under 60 lb.?—If in tip-top condition he would, but he would prefer the heavy weights.

18. What would the heavy weights run into on your farm—the freezing-weight?—From 70 lb. to 75 lb. freezing-weights.

19. What about lamb: what weight of lamb do they prefer?—Lamb of from 35 lb. to 40 lb.

20. Will they take them over that weight if they can get them?—Yes, if they can get them fat.

21. They would prefer them over 40 lb. if they could get them?—Yes, the bigger the lamb the better.

22. *Mr. T. Mackenzie.*] Which do you consider the best selling-weight of lamb?—I think about 40 lb. is a good selling prime lamb.

23. Have you ever shipped any?—Not lambs, and there are not very many shipped from our country. They are getting half-bred Merino ewes, and a cross between the Border Leicester and Down, and they have been very successful in breeding rams.

24. Would the buyers take lambs of from 35 lb. to 40 lb. or over?—Yes.

25. Would you consider a statement that the buyers are instructed to take everything offering and anything over 40 lb. a correct statement?—I would.

26. And they would take a sheep over 70 lb.?—Yes.