

191. You are hardly satisfied with the way in which your meat is handled in London?—It is the uncertainty of the price, which is a very great disadvantage to both the buyers and the sellers.

192. How can that be best overcome—by concentration?—By farmers freezing their stock on their own account and sending it through an associated agency.

193. Have you seen any North Island sheep sold at the Addington yards?—Yes.

194. Are they sold as freezers?—Very seldom, I should say, because they are recognised at once.

195. Heavy weights are not such good quality?—They are a different-shaped sheep, and heavy weights are not so well covered. The reason is that in the North Island you have a greater rush of feed than we have in Canterbury. There is not a great difference between our store sheep and fat sheep. Our stores never get so poor—they are always meaty.

196. Has your climate anything to do with that?—Yes, and the breed also.

197. *Mr. T. Mackenzie.*] Do you think the prosecutions taking place just now at Home are doing the meat trade any harm?—When I was at Home last year there was a very great difference of opinion on the subject. A great number held that it was advertising the River Plate meat. There are instances within my own knowledge where people have preferred River Plate meat to North Island meat.

198. You are not quite clear as to the advantage of these prosecutions?—No.

199. Your company has always been in favour of concentration, has it not?—Yes, we have done all we could towards that end—the whole policy of the company has been towards concentration. We give a rate from the time the stock is lifted from the farm, including an advance, and returning the proceeds to the farmer.

200. You have had several meetings extending over a number of years with regard to regulating that?—Quite a number.

201. Have your efforts not always been frustrated by one company?—Our efforts, at any rate, have not been successful. The large sheep-farmer can look after himself where his consignments amount to from ten to twenty thousand carcasses per annum. The farmer who can afford to make regular shipments had better by far take the full benefit of the London market. The small farmer who can only send his one or two consignments in the year, in my opinion, ought to end his risk here, until such time as some association has been established that will handle the meat in London. The ideal way would be for each freezing company to handle its own output. You would have the rivalry of each factory then at the same time as you would have the benefit of combination.

202. You mean in the same way as your company handles it now?—We are not able to handle our output, because the farmers will not trust us with a lot. We have put out a consolidated risk which covers everything. It is a growing business, and there is an increase in that direction; but the ideal way would be for the farmer to throw the responsibility on the freezing company of showing good returns. Take my friend, Mr. Waymouth, for instance; we are rivals at this end, and if we were rivals at the other end also the farmers would know which was the best company to deal with.

203. Considering the slumping of meat altogether, would it be possible for you to do that for the farmer?—It could be done very well. It is a coercive measure I do not like. But we have a mark which indicates a farmer's lot, and that lot may be sold in London along with another lot.

204. But then you have to sort them up?—We get over the difficulty in this way: we have two marks on the farmers' lots when they come into our works. That is quite apart from quality. The farmer can send in his meat, and, after it is in the works, he can elect to sell to anybody in the local market, or he can go to the secretary of the company who tells him what price he can give. He says, "The c.i.f. price to-day is so much; the charges are so much, and you can get so much as your price." If he accepts that it goes on, and the subsidiary number (or mark) is ignored. If the farmer says, "No, I am going to ship on my account," he gets a bill of lading showing the marks and numbers. If, on the other hand, he says, "Send them through at the consolidated rate," the lot goes under one bill of lading and only one mark is shown. In the specification that goes to London each mark and number is shown, and the farmer has his actual returns for each particular lot of sheep, showing the date and number and when it is sold.

205. You referred to a small consignment of lambs breaking the market by a reduction of $\frac{3}{4}$ d.?—Yes.

206. I suppose it is within your knowledge that a large company did the same a few years ago? I do not know that a large company did, but it is currently reported that it suits the Smithfield salesmen to break the market down if they get a chance.

207. Is it not within your knowledge that when lamb was at a good price at Home suddenly the market unexpectedly fell, when various holders of meat met and resolved not to sell below a certain price, and for a week or so the meat brought a certain price; but a certain factory in New Zealand, through its agents, lessened and lessened its price until the meat came down 1s. 2d. a stone? I do not know that that was so. I understood it was attributed to a Smithfield salesman. I do not know whether that meat was consigned meat or bought meat.

208. If you had a proper system by which the companies controlled consignments, such as obtains with the Argentine meat, could that occur?—No; nor under such a system as I suggest. If such a thing happened, and there were no means of sheeting it home to any particular company, if that company had been represented in London and returned the account sales, then you could have it sheeted home to it.

209. If it is possible for one company to destroy the market at Home, would you not go a considerable length in legislation in order to require that those people should fall into line?—Would not the ordinary course of trade correct that?