

fully recognise that it was absolutely unfair to ask people to cease buying without some guarantee being given that their works would be kept going. You know that in the case of an individual, or company, or nation, which has had a measure of success, it is necessary to have some knowledge of what you want to be able to judge later on whether you have succeeded. Well, there is plenty of room in this frozen-meat business for three classes of people, and that is the position to be attained if possible. First of all there is the producer; then there is the labour people, who prepare the mutton for the market and stores, who carry it home and sell it; and, thirdly, there is the consumer. You cannot imagine a better position than that the farmer should send his meat to the consumer and get the cash. But what is the present position? First, there is the producer, then there is the meat-dealer, then you have the c.i.f. buyer, then you have the labour people who do the work, then you have the butcher, and then you have the consumer; so that there is quite a number of people in this business to make a profit out of it. I quite recognise that it cannot be cut down to three interests, but still we should do what we can. The labour people should be protected, because we recognise that they have to do the work.

254. *Mr. Haselden.*] Is there any competition amongst the buyers in your neighbourhood?—None whatever.

255. They just fix the price and the farmer has to take it?—Yes.

256. Since the South Island buyers came up to your district, has there been an improvement in your prices during the past season?—I hardly think so. I had no knowledge of South Island buyers coming until late in the season, when the bulk of the sheep had gone, and, of course, usually the sheep increase in value in the latter end of the season, although the better sheep have gone earlier.

257. You have not sold direct to South Island buyers?—No. I took two shipments to Addington. I brought a number of store sheep to Wellington and then took them to Addington. They cost 8s. 4d. under the hammer, and realised 13s. 5d. Some were partly Romney half-bred sheep and some were Lincoln sheep.

258. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] Did you sell them in one lot?—No. They sorted them out in Canterbury. The bulk of them were sold in one line—I think 375 out of 544. It has been suggested that a fat-stock market, if started, would do good.

259. What is your opinion about that?—I am perfectly satisfied that it would be utterly worthless on its own account. If you had a freezing-works doing legitimate business and your fat-stock yards close, then men bringing their sheep into the fat-stock market and not being able to get a price could put their sheep into the works.

260. Do you not think it would cause more competition if people came to buy them like they do at Addington?—It is open now to people to come round, and I do not think it would be doing any good to bring them all together.

261. Your idea is that the farmer should own the freezing-works?—Yes; not necessarily own them, but if by any means the works could be started to do legitimate business it would do good, wherever they were located; but if a central locality were chosen for the works it would be just what we want, and we would not be in the position with the companies that we are now.

262. But I understand you to say that you consider the North Island sheep to be as good as the South Island sheep?—No, not by any means. I consider that per pound the Canterbury mutton-sheep is more valuable, but the North Island carcass is more valuable than the prime Canterbury carcass. You know, no doubt, perfectly well that the difference between fine Canterbury mutton and mutton from the North Island in the London market does not equal $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per pound, taking the average of prime Canterbury mutton and Wellington Meat-export Company mutton.

263. You would not seriously say that the sheep that are produced in the North Island, being almost entirely Lincoln and Romneys, are equal in quality or value to those of the South Island, would you: have you had any such South Island experience?—No; but I have had a long experience in sheep. I was brought up as a boy in the business. I have never had farming or any lengthy experience in Canterbury; but what I maintain is this: that it is the carcass we are principally dealing with; and we have always been told by the meat companies that prime Canterbury is a sheep ranging from 60 lb. to 65 lb., and that it would be a fair thing to take the average at 60 lb. Well, you know the North Island sheep starts at that figure and runs up to over 70 lb. and 80 lb.

264. On a 60 lb. sheep at $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per pound, that will give you the advance in price of a South Island sheep over a North Island sheep?—Your $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a pound is too high, because I have watched the cables for a very long time, and I do not think I have seen for a long period that it has exceeded $\frac{1}{4}$ d., and I maintain that $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a pound is not more than the average. Indeed, it is not $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a pound, taking the different classes of mutton.

265. Now, as to the by-products: what do you consider is the difference in value between a prime North Island sheep and a prime South Island sheep?—I think the balance would be in favour of the North Island sheep, with the single exception of the wool. I am not an expert, and can only give you an opinion. I cannot speak from positive knowledge, but we know the pelts are very valuable, and there is not the slightest doubt that the pelt off a large Lincoln sheep is far superior to the pelt off a Merino, and then the fat will be as good and as great in bulk in a Lincoln sheep.

266. What about the inside fat?—It is a general complaint in Canterbury that North Island sheep have not the same amount of inside fat, but the North Island sheep loses that inside fat through being starved for a week or more while knocking about before they get to Canterbury.

267. Without exception, every witness has admitted that there is more fat in the South Island sheep than in the North Island sheep, and the best men say that it is worth more in the South Island as fat?—I would not attempt to contradict that statement, but I would like to be certain