

whether the gentlemen who gave that information are estimating the value of the fat from what they have heard. They would no doubt speak of the North Island sheep delivered at their works in the South Island.

268. Do you think that the system of feeding sheep in Canterbury, when the sheep are kept moving the whole of the winter through with rape and turnips and constantly put on fat through the whole season, is likely to give them more inside fat than the system of allowing the sheep to forage for themselves through the winter, and then to get a flush of feed?—I do not know that that bears very much on the question. If a North Island farmer can get something equivalent to Canterbury prices, I have not the slightest doubt he is able to treat his sheep as well, and perhaps a good deal better than a farmer in the South Island, because we have better land in the North Island, and if we can get a little more money for our sheep we shall do what he does; but for 9s. and 10s. we cannot do very much more, and especially with wool at 5d. a pound.

269. You spoke of the capital of the North Island sheep-breeder being reduced by one and a half million, if you compare the price of North Island sheep with the price these sheep would be worth if in the South Island?—Yes, taking the difference at 3s.

270. Can you conceive that if you were to send down the whole of your sheep—say in the district you live in—that they would bring in Addington yards 3s. a head more than they are worth in the district you are from?—Not if I sent them down in one lot; but by taking the sheep haphazard and sending them down continually and realising as much as 5s. a head more than we can get here, that is conclusive proof that the whole of the sheep are worth it. Of course people cannot take the whole of the sheep and denude the country, but there is evidence that these sheep are worth 5s. more down South. I had 3,500 store sheep from Hawke's Bay, and we sent down some of them, which realised 14s. I heard that these were bought for 8s. in Hawke's Bay.

271. How do you account for the difference in values?—In this way, that the Canterbury people are abreast of the times, and are getting full value, while the North Island farmer is not looking after his business, and, consequently, has suffered—he is behind the times.

272. Admitting all that, what remedy do you suggest?—That freezing-works shall be started in suitable localities, which shall buy no sheep, but simply freeze and assist the farmer to deal with the c.i.f. men, or some other good system.

273. Are you aware that Nelson Bros., of Hawke's Bay, and the Wellington Meat-export Company have assured this Committee that they both started their works on the lines you suggest, and were driven to become purchasers of fat sheep in order to keep their works going?—I am aware of it. As I told you before, in answer to Mr. Letinbridge, the meat company we had started in that way. Nelson Bros. may have, but I am not aware that they did; but I am aware that Mr. Buchanan some time ago went to Woodville and tried to induce farmers in that district to help his company. I know the farmer is to blame for the matter, but that is no reason why we should not rectify it.

274. Supposing this Committee recommended the Government to guarantee 4 or 5 per cent. on a loan to establish works, say, at Woodville or Palmerston North, do you think the guarantee of that proposal would be justified by the farmers sending their fat sheep to be frozen on their own account?—Do you mean that the action of the Government would be justified?

275. If works were established at Palmerston North or Longburn which were going to freeze solely on owners' account, do you think that during the busy season, say, three thousand sheep per day for the whole season would be sent in to keep these works going if the freezing was being done solely on owners' account?—I do not know that three thousand sheep per day could be provided. That is rather a big order, and, roughly speaking, ninety thousand a month. For eight months in the year that would be over seven hundred thousand. I do not think you have any works in the North Island anything approaching that capacity, and probably not more than half of it. I think your works would be ahead of the times. Provided you had the works, and the farmers gave a guarantee under a penalty, it could be done. They could not expect to be assisted unless they did it.

276. If this was done, how would farmers arrange for their advances? Is it not an advantage that when a buyer comes in and buys the sheep he leaves a cheque before he goes away?—That would have to be done in this case, and a fund would require to be provided for it, but not a very large fund. You would have to provide sufficient money to give the farmer an advance as large as possible with safety, and the money you would require to provide would be simply for the first sales. It would be a nucleus fund, and would be carried on by that means.

277. Cannot the farmer now go, after he has sent his sheep to the freezing-works, to the bank, deposit his documents, and get an advance?—Yes, I believe he can; but that has not been very successful on account of the reclamation.

278. Has there been any attempt to set up a combination amongst the farmers to work on their own account?—Yes.

279. Has it succeeded?—It is in a fair way to succeed.

280. *Mr. Hornsby.*] Have you seen it stated in the newspaper press that at an annual meeting of the Wellington Meat-export Company, held two years ago, a statement was made by the chairman of directors, Mr. William Booth, that the Meat-export Company had so carefully graded the meat that there was now only $\frac{1}{4}$ d. difference between prime Wellington Meat-export Company's meat and prime Canterbury on the London market? Do you know that that statement was made?—I do not know that it was made, but I can quite agree with the remark made with reference to the prices.

281. Do you know anything about a number of shipments of sheep that were made by Mr. Potts, the manager of the Mount Herbert Station, to Christchurch?—He has told me about it.

282. Will you tell me what Mr. Potts has told you with regard to that?—He told me that he sent sheep down. One lot of sheep topped the market in Addington and realised 16s. 3d., when 10s. only was obtainable in Hawke's Bay.