

295. At a fixed price?—Yes; they fix the price. That is one thing we have to put up with, although it is much better than it was.

296. You find yourself assisted to a very large extent by the Christchurch Meat Company?—Yes; I say that emphatically.

297. *Mr. Haselden.*] You said that the average weight of your wethers was 51·6 lb.?—Yes.

298. How much do you get for them?—For the first draft I got 10s., and the last draft 11s. 6d. A neighbour of mine got 12s. My first draft went away in the early part of February, and my last draft went away in April. The twelve-shilling shipment I am certain was made after my last draft.

299. Supposing you had an open market, the same as they have at Addington, and you had more competition, do you think you would get greater prices?—They may have brought a better price had they been landed later. Of course, we could not possibly land fat sheep in Christchurch, because, if fat when they left Nelson, they would be in a store condition when they arrived at their destination.

300. How many miles do you drive them over?—About one hundred and fifty miles. I cannot speak with accuracy. I think the bulk of the sheep are sold at Culverden.

301. *Mr. Field.*] You have practically only one buyer on a large scale?—That is all.

302. But you have an advantage over Wellington because you have a lot of independent butchers?—We have only one fat-stock buyer—the local butcher. We have several store buyers from Christchurch.

303. But there are a number of independent butchers in Nelson, are there not?—Yes; but they are governed by the Christchurch Meat Company. Previous to the advent of the Christchurch Meat Company the butchers gave us what they liked. That was why we tried to start freezing-works. I have often seen good fat wethers weighing 68 lb. sold for 7s.

304. Do you ever ship on your own account?—No. This is our first experience in sheep-fattening. The year before last really amounted to nothing. This year was really the first time we attempted to grow feed to fatten sheep.

305. Have you seen the freezing-works at Picton?—No, but I believe they can put two thousand sheep through.

306. Have they taken any of our North Island sheep there?—Yes; I believe they took some six thousand from Foxton and froze them there.

307. And I suppose they will freeze on the owner's account?—Yes, they will freeze at the same price as other companies.

308. And they will make an advance, I suppose?—Yes.

309. Do you know what at?—I have never done any business with them.

310. *Mr. Flatman.*] You gave us the weight of some sheep that you sold as 51 lb.?—Was that the freezing-weight?—Yes.

G. N. HUNT, Sheep-farmer, of Wakefield, Nelson, and Representative of the Nelson Agricultural and Pastoral Association, examined. (No. 17.)

311. *The Chairman.*] Would you care to make a statement to the Committee, or rather be examined in the usual way?—I prefer to be examined.

312. *Mr. Haselden.*] Do you sell your sheep in the same way as the last witness, to the Christchurch Freezing Company?—Yes; I think we are rather handicapped in Nelson by only having one buyer.

313. You are not quite satisfied with the price?—No. The same quality of sheep at Nelson would bring much more at Addington if it was there.

314. *Mr. Field.*] I would like to know whether you have had any experience of sending sheep to Christchurch on your own account?—No.

315. Do you know if any of the Nelson farmers have sent them to Christchurch?—Not that I know of.

316. Have you had any means of ascertaining what price they fetch at Addington?—A syndicate at Collingwood sent a line of sheep which netted 13s. 6d., and were offered 7s. 6d. for them by Bisley Bros.

317. That was for store sheep?—Yes.

318. Out of that they had to pay the driving-fees?—Yes; it cost about 1s. a head, I believe, overland. I meant to say that we are solely at the mercy of the Picton works with regard to the price of our sheep. They are the only buyers, and the price they offer we have to take.

319. And I suppose the local butchers are careful not to pay any more?—Yes. The mining ports and places like Westport, Reefton, and Greymouth are better markets. As regards North Island sheep, as a sheep-man, I think the North Island farmers have a grievance.

320. In what way?—On account of the difference in the price of the sheep at Addington of the same quality. That is my opinion.

321. You mean that the North Island farmers suffer more than you do?—Yes. Of course I know that the North Island sheep are Lincoln and Romneys and are brought up on unhealthy land, which reduces the value of the sheep.

322. *Mr. Flatman.*] You say that your position has improved since the freezing-works started at Picton?—Yes, and we needed it too.

323. But still you have a grievance?—Yes, we do not get the price we should do.

324. Do you think there is room for another freezing-works to start?—No I do not.

325. *Mr. Field.*] Does any remedy suggest itself to you that would better your position?—Yes, by the freezing-works of the colony being put into the hands of the Government, if possible.

326. *Mr. Hornsby.*] You say that the freezing-works of the colony ought to be in the hands of the farmers? Do you suggest that some proposal such as that made in Mr. Moore's report, that