

mutton and lamb is to be marked it must all be marked, and, this being done, it would then be imperative that the excellence of its quality must be maintained. If branding is adopted it is unnecessary that the inspectors' signature should be applied. The "V.R., New Zealand," and the owner, would be quite sufficient, and would be a guarantee that the meat was from the colony, and that it was warranted to have been inspected and passed as wholesome by the Government Veterinary Inspector. Underneath that brand the brand of the freezing company forwarding the carcasses might be placed. It is not advisable, however, to put too much on, the simpler the brand the better; so, perhaps, it might be sufficient if each company attached, as now, labels, bearing their brand, in order to distinguish the source of origin. These are details, however, that ought easily to be arranged at a conference of the managers of the freezing companies.

Having lately written on the desirability of branding New Zealand meat it is not necessary to go very fully into the subject. I need only say that I am strongly convinced of the necessity that exists for it, and that I believe that it is not only to meat-marking that opposition will be shown by the trade here, but to any innovation that may be adopted by the producers in the colony that may be thought likely in any way to interfere with the present system of carrying on the meat trade. That trade is now running in such clearly defined grooves that any strong steps taken to alter it would be strongly resented.

Six of the sheep have been sold to three butchers, from whom I expect a report as to the opinion they may have of the marking, and as to what their customers thought of it. These reports have not yet come to hand. The remaining twelve sheep I do not intend selling at present. I shall keep them for demonstration when required. The committee of the National Agricultural Union have expressed a desire to see the brand, and I expect to arrange a meeting with them shortly, when I can show it. I also intend directing the attention of the Meat Section of the Chamber of Commerce to it. This is the body that lately laid an information against the British Farmers' Association for selling frozen mutton for English, when a fine of £40 was imposed, and to which I directed your attention.

My opinion of the brand now submitted to me is that it is an excellent one, suitable for the requirements of the meat trade, being neat, clear, and in no way unsightly or disfiguring to the meat, and irremovable except by destroying the joint on which it is placed.

I do not expect to have a better brand submitted to me, nor do I think a better is necessary. Of course, I do not know anything concerning the nature of the application of the brand in the colony and only speak of the results as I have found them.

*Extract from the Produce Commissioner's Report of the 30th July, 1902.*

I would again urge upon the Agricultural Department at Wellington the great necessity I consider that exists for branding the meat exported from the colony. I have been making very close inquiry throughout the country as to the result of this, and am satisfied that the objection made to it—that it would encourage prejudice and would be hurtful to the sale of the meat—is entirely erroneous. At present consumers know well—except when it is sold to them as English—from the price they pay for colonial and foreign meat that they are not receiving English, and they purchase it with that knowledge. They do not know, however, whether they are receiving New Zealand or River Plate meat, even although they may ask for the former. There is nothing to indicate this to them. A neat, clear, indelible brand placed on each of the principal joints would be a guarantee of the source of origin and of the quality of the meat supplied. Not only would a brand be a guarantee to the consumers, but it would afford a good point from which to advertise New Zealand meat. I have no hesitation, from the inquiries I have made, in asserting that, speaking generally, retailers and consumers throughout the country would welcome the introduction by the New Zealand Government of a system of meat-branding.

GEORGE BROWN, Farmer, Representative of the Upper Hutt Branch of the Farmers' Union, examined. (No. 21.)

157. *The Chairman.*] You appear before this Committee to give evidence and to represent your own opinions and those of the Upper Hutt Branch of the Farmers' Union with regard to the frozen-meat trade, and means for improving it?—I do. I am one of those who were appointed by our branch of the Farmers' Union to come here. I have not a great deal to say in regard to the matter. I have not gone into it particularly, and am in a small way only as a farmer. I have no particular grievance to complain of. Of course it is acknowledged all over the colony that the meat trade is not in a satisfactory condition—that the farmers as a whole do not get the prices for their sheep which they ought to get, and I understand that this Committee is set up to see if it can find some way of improving it. There is no doubt that this Committee has a great responsibility thrown upon it, because the question is a far-reaching one, and one which requires a great deal of thought—certainly much more than I have been able to give to it. Mention has been made with regard to the difference in prices between North Island and South Island mutton. I have been speaking to a number of South Island people who have been given me various opinions, but one gentleman in particular expressed his views as to how the difference came about, and I think he struck the nail on the head. It was about the best opinion I have heard, and it was that the North Island will never produce the same quality of mutton as the South Island while it proceeds on its present lines. He says that down South the mutton which is bred for the English market is a cross between the Merino and English Leicester, and also—which is quite true—that the South Island climate is much drier than the North Island, and has much less rainfall; consequently the grass is drier, and it goes more to improve the sheep and harden the fat than the North Island grass does. I have seen in Australia that the cattle and sheep are the same, because