

136. Do you think that would be likely to occur?—I think it will. I think you will so damage the industry by going against the retail butcher that the scheme will do more harm than good.

137. Regarding the branding of meat from New Zealand, would that be accepted by the retailers in England as an advantage to them by enabling them to obtain a higher price for New Zealand meat?—No, it would act the other way—I think you would get a higher price for the unbranded than the branded article. Branding is a disfigurement—you get an ugly brand on your joint, and few would care to eat such meat.

138. I presume it is a fact that the English butcher is not above selling either New Zealand or Argentine meat if he can get a higher price for it?—Certainly not, and therefore it is all to the higher advantage of New Zealand to get it sold. You are cutting the ground from the butchers' feet by branding it.

139. Would it increase or benefit the sale of meat from New Zealand if we took steps to advertise it as New Zealand meat?—Decidedly it would be a very great advantage to you, and also your opponents, who would gain proportionately.

140. Do you think it would increase the sale of our meat?—I think your opponents would undersell you. I will give you another extract: "Mr. William Nelson, chairman of James Nelson and Sons, responds in the following enigma to the request for his opinion: 'Really, I wish the New-Zealanders every success, and the greater their success the greater will be our success.' Certainly it is safe to say that most of the special systems and innovations introduced into the wholesale handling of Australasian frozen meat here have played into the hands of the Argentine exporters." They recognise that you are advertising their meat as much as yours.

141. Have the Argentine people improved the quality of their meat?—Decidedly.

142. Is there any difference in the quality of New Zealand and Argentine meat?—Argentine prime is equal to the prime of New Zealand. One very big man said there was a slight advantage in favour of the Argentine meat, because it was not so long in the ice.

143. What is the rate of freight between the Argentine and London, and from New Zealand to London?—I cannot tell you that, but I will send a book down to show you that. To South Africa the distance is only fourteen days, with a fair wind and at a very small expenditure of coal, and there is everything in their favour. The freight from Buenos Ayres is 19s. to £1 2s. 6d. per ton for general produce.

144. I understand it is a fact that the great meat firms, previous to the recent war, have been in combination, and it is a very powerful organization?—Yes; very powerful. If you started to cut the prices the Argentine Government would immediately subsidise all the companies up to 6d. a head for exported carcasses. They did that some years ago, and are prepared to do it again.

145. You favour the combination of the freezing-works of the colony, I understand?—Yes.

146. Supposing the State were to own all the freezing-works of New Zealand upon a 4-percentage basis of capital, and undertook to freeze free to all growers, and taking for their profits the by-products, would that, in your opinion, place New Zealand upon a strong footing for the purpose of meeting a strong combination such as that of the Argentine, in order that we might place our meat upon the English market at a comparatively small price, but with a better net result to the producer here?—My experience in Australia is that there is no State experiment there where they have been able to pay interest. We have not paid interest on one single thing run by the Government, and our railways have been running at a loss. As long as you run anything as a State concern you get the Government stroke. The Australian Colonies have entered on nothing that has paid interest, and its concerns have only been kept alive by borrowed money. The Adelaide and New South Wales Export Boards have cost more than double the total amount of money dealt with to run them. I can give you the railway figures. You can tell me of nothing that the Government have attempted to run which has been a financial success, and therefore I do not believe anything will be a financial success if it is run by the Government.

147. *Mr. Laurensen.*] Why has it been a failure in New South Wales?—Because a man who has a vote can do what he likes. If he loses his employment under the State, he has his friends and relations who sympathize with him, and the Government knows that they will lose a number of votes.

148. In New South Wales?—Yes.

149. *Sir J. G. Ward.*] It is the altered conditions in the Argentine, and in the meat-producing world generally, that are causing fear in the minds of some people that the output from our colony may lower values to the producer, and it is in the interests of the colony that we are anxious to obtain information and strengthen our position if we can. Now, there is a powerful organization in the Argentine which controls the freezing-works, and they would work as one man against this country. If a combination is necessary in order to fight them, the problem we have to face in order to fight them is whether the various companies could do it themselves, or whether, without doing an injury to the freezing companies, we could practically by combination allow the freezing to be done free of cost, so as to give our producers an opportunity of successfully fighting in England?—If you could depend upon not having a large increase in the Argentine production, there might be something in it, but when you remember that you have to fight under your proposal the whole trade—including the butchers' ring of Great Britain—and, at the same time, the Argentine people are doubling and trebling their output, I think you are driving the trade at Home into the hands of the Argentine.

150. My idea is to allow the freezing-works to be run for the free use of all, so as to enable the producer to get the highest price possible, and to save the initial cost of freezing by making it free to all. The whole thing comes down to the saving of cost and charges in this country, so as to enable us to successfully compete, particularly in the annihilation of distance, against the big