

upon this important point? Is it $\frac{1}{2}$ d.?—Yes, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. is charged; but, as I say, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. is charged in many instances, and I know you can get a reduction on these rates if you make special arrangements.

82. Do you really mean to say that $\frac{1}{2}$ d. is the general charge under ordinary circumstances?—I have given you my reply.

83. How then does it come about that these stores have for years past offered storage at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for the four-weekly period mentioned?—I have said $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and no doubt you might in some cases get it for $\frac{1}{10}$ d.

84. I understood you to say that the ordinary charge was $\frac{1}{2}$ d., but special arrangements could be made for $\frac{1}{10}$ d.?—That is not exactly what I said. I said $\frac{1}{2}$ d. is the standing charge, but many quoted $\frac{1}{10}$ d., and I had no doubt $\frac{1}{10}$ d. could be arranged for.

85. I am to take it that you mean the ordinary charge is $\frac{1}{2}$ d.?—Yes.

86. How, then, does it come about that the London stores generally have for years offered, under ordinary circumstances, to find storage at $\frac{1}{2}$ d.?—I see I am wrong. It is $\frac{1}{2}$ d. It was a slip on my part.

87. Do you not think that $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for four weeks is a very high rate?—I considered it high when I had to pay it, and very excessive. Still, the companies throughout the country maintain that they are not paying.

88. *Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] You are familiar with ruling prices paid to the producer for meat in New Zealand?—Yes.

89. Do you know of any other countries that are able to maintain anything approaching the prices the producer has been able to get for his sheep?—No; I do not.

90. In what way do you suggest that these fairly high prices—in fact, higher prices than are obtained elsewhere, and which we are all anxious to maintain for the benefit of the producers of the country—can be assisted to be permanently continued? Is such a thing possible?—I think it is possible to maintain a fairly high price for New Zealand mutton in the Home market by specialising New Zealand meat, by advertising it, by introducing it to a new or better class of purchaser than that who now uses River Plate meat, and by getting it away as much as possible from the direct competition which at present exists between it and River Plate mutton.

91. Are you of opinion that by following the course you now suggest it would insure such prices as have been received continuing in the colony?—Well, I would not like to say it would raise the price higher than it is now. I think it would, however, prevent a fall to such prices as we have often seen before. I consider it would keep our meat at a fairly high level price.

92. Then, are you of opinion that if the steps suggested by you were taken, and admitting, as we all must admit, that the price has been high in the colony, the possibility would be, even with the precautions you suggest, that the producers would have to take a lower rate of prices? In other words, if we are dealing with the New Zealand meat-market when it is at its apex, will the natural tendency be to go above the apex or below it?—I think it would be a very difficult matter to raise it higher than it is now so as to insure that as an average price from year to year.

93. Is it not a fact that the high prices we have been getting in the colony have been brought about by the active competition of buyers in this country?—I do not think so. That competition has been brought about by a scarcity of meat at certain times of the year in the Old Country.

94. Has there been a diminution in the imports from any other countries into England excepting Australia during the last five years?—Not taking the year round, but there has occasionally been a glut, and at other times a famine in New Zealand meat on the English market. When a glut occurs New Zealand meat is very often placed in store and held in considerable quantity. Holding it in store in that manner depreciates it, and when it is placed on the market a lower price has to be accepted for it. Moreover, the fact of that meat going on the market is damaging to the reputation of the New Zealand meat. Fresh bright meat, being in short supply, fetches a high price.

95. Still, the fact remains that when that glut has taken place the price to the New Zealand producer has been a good one, and it is the speculator here who has had to bear the brunt of the glut?—Yes.

96. Is it not desirable, for the maintenance of the prices to the producers in New Zealand, to do nothing that would destroy the natural competition between buyers, because it is the producers whom we are trying to protect?—I do not suggest that anything should be done to hurt competition here.

97. When a glut takes place in the Old Country, under present conditions, you say the storage of meat necessarily continues for a longer period than the owners desire, and deterioration of the meat ensues from that holding?—Yes.

98. Now, if the meat were held at this end instead of in the Old Country for any lengthened period, I presume the same deterioration would go on?—I do not consider so.

99. Why?—Because the conditions under which the meat is held on its arrival in London are entirely different from what they would be in cold-air store here. Meat can be stored in a better condition in the colony than it can be at Home. In the first place, New Zealand meat when killed is cooled and immediately frozen. If it is properly kept in a cold-store, and not taken out or exposed to the atmosphere, it will remain for a considerable time in good condition; but if it is removed from the store, taken in a truck to the steamer, from the steamer transferred to a barge, and from a barge taken into another cold-store in London, the numerous handlings of the meat prove injurious to it, and when it is placed in that store it will not keep so well, nor get on the market in such good condition, as if it had been held here, taken direct from the store at this end, and shipped when required for the market at Home.

100. What I mean is this: Admitting that deterioration takes place in London, and apart from the freshness of the meat when it is put into the freezers at this end, suppose that in order to prevent a glut the meat has to be held for three or four months, would the holding of it here be less conducive to deterioration than if it were held in London?—I think so, certainly.