

101. How do you suggest the avoidance of this glutting under the conditions that exist from time to time on the London market? And I would like you, before answering this question, to survey the general conditions that regulate the trade. I do not think, myself, there is any need in a big matter such as this is for any moralising or sentimentalising about it at all. Here is the position: It is open to every purchaser of meat in England or in New Zealand to buy direct from the producer and to make arrangements with any shipping company to convey his produce to England, and they are all doing it. If steps were taken to prevent that, necessarily we should destroy competition between buyers here and inflict a very serious blow upon our farmers. In consequence of the competition, both here and in England, and the facilities for getting the meat into England, these gluts have occurred in the past, and will occur again. What do you suggest we should do to avoid these gluts and enable us to put money into the pockets of our farmers?—Of course, I have no desire and can suggest no means of preventing buyers from England coming here to purchase in competition with each other. I think it is a very good thing for the farmer. What I refer to particularly is the irregularity of shipments, and what I consider might have been done last year is this: During the first seven months of last year the average number of carcasses of mutton received at Home was 155,968 per month. During each of the two following months the number received was close on 300,000, while during each of the last three months of the year only 64,000-odd were received. Now, those were extreme numbers. I consider that if care had been taken it would have been possible to have placed these quantities with as great regularity all the year round on the London market as during the first seven months. If, instead of shipping the large number referred to—close on 300,000—during each of the two months mentioned, the same number of sheep had been forwarded as during the previous seven months—say, about 160,000—and the balance held in store, it would have allowed an average to be spread over the whole year. You might have kept back, say, about 300,000 sheep in August and September, and held them in cold-store for October, November, and December, when they could have been added to the 64,000 then sent each month. That would have kept the supply regular.

102. Supposing the 300,000 had been purchased under competition by numerous buyers both in England and here for the purpose of getting them on to the London market, how would you suggest we could hold them?—I cannot suggest anything if the buyers determine to send them Home. I can only emphasize that it would be of great advantage to the trade if it could be arranged to hold the meat so as to keep the supply at Home regular.

103. Are you of opinion that the greatest safety of the farmer in this country lies in the active competition amongst buyers for their meat both inside and out of the colony?—Under present conditions I allow that there is active competition. What I dread is that when the enormous competition which we must expect from the River Plate comes on we shall suffer.

104. Are you of opinion that it is in the interests of the farmers here, or are you not, that active competition for their produce should exist both in the Old Country and in New Zealand itself?—Certainly I am.

105. Then in order to regulate deliveries in London, if we want to do anything of a practical nature, we require in some way to control the meat-buyers both in and out of the colony?—I do not see how you are going to control the meat-buyers if you sell to them.

106. If we do not control them we naturally arrive at this position: that they may create a glut in London while at the same time they are giving a good price to farmers here?—I admit that. It might be politic on the part of some buyers on occasions to cause a glut on the London market and then to cause a famine, in order to introduce meat from the River Plate in competition with us. It might even pay the Argentine shippers to buy every sheep in New Zealand for export and have them in their hands.

107. Well, if they gave the farmers here more than other buyers will give, it might not be a bad thing?—Not for the moment, but it would result in loss afterwards.

108. However, you admit that the problem of regulating deliveries in London is a very big one to grapple with?—I recognise that.

109. As a matter of fact, you have stated in evidence that you cannot suggest any practical way by which that could be done?—Only in the way I have said, and, of course, that could be defeated by the action of Home buyers who operate here.

110. *Mr. Barber.*] Is a glut on the London market at the risk of the purchaser—is it his loss?—Yes; but it reflects on the producers. If the purchaser has lost money he naturally tries to recoup himself.

111. How would you control him?—I cannot see how you can control him.

112. *Mr. Witheford.*] Is it your opinion that increased shipments of meat from New Zealand should be stopped, in order to keep a low average?—To regulate the average, not to lower it.

113. Would not a little more activity at Home in your Department enable better arrangements to be made?—The New Zealand Government has no control over the buyers.

114. Is it not your mission at Home to assist the sale of our raw products, and also the sale of sheep?—I do all that I possibly can.

115. It is not your place to find better markets?—I travel all over the country with that purpose in view.

116. You said you were not there to assist the buyers of New Zealand meat?—I did not say that.

117. I thought you were there to promulgate the sale of New Zealand meat. When I was in England I saw some live men engaged in introducing the Argentine meat. The Argentine people are increasing their trade by millions of carcasses, and I cannot understand how the few hundreds of thousands of carcasses from this colony can paralyse the meat-market. The Agent-General's office at Home, and particularly your Department, have been established to increase the sale of the colony's raw products?—Yes; and I travel all over the country and do my utmost to aid the sale of New Zealand's products.