

118. *Mr. Rutherford.*] You say in your report, "One very serious drawback to handling New Zealand meat in London in the best condition is that the large cold-air stores are built on the riverside some miles higher up than are the docks where the meat is discharged. This necessitates handling the meat from ocean steamers into lighters, by which it is conveyed up the river to these stores. There is only one cold-air store at the docks, which is certainly a large one, having a capacity for 764,000 carcasses. It belongs to the dock company, and, naturally, being conveniently situated, it is always patronised. You can well understand that frozen meat having to be carried in these barges up-river—a journey occupying often more than a day from time of loading to discharge—is liable to considerable deterioration. The system is bad." I think we must all agree with that, but have you any remedy to propose?—I cannot say that I have any remedy to propose. The stores are established in their present position up the river, and personally I do not think it would be at all feasible to have the system altered now. I merely mentioned the system to let those here know the position and to explain that that was the reason why a good deal of the damage arose at Home of which you have all heard. I have no remedy to propose.

119. *Mr. Rutherford.*] You go on to say, "A matter of very great importance, and one which proves very hurtful to the advance of trade in New Zealand mutton at Home, is the irregularity with which shipments from here arrive," &c. We know that, as a matter of fact, New Zealand shipments are irregular because we cannot supply the mutton—in the South Island, at any rate—after, say, June. In the Argentine it appears that they can supply all the year round. Do you know whether Argentine sheep are fed all the year round? In the South Island you must feed the sheep on turnips, and give them chaff as well?—I do not know personally how they manage in the River Plate, because I have not been there. I understand, however, that artificial feeding on turnips and chaff is not resorted to. While I refer to this matter I may remark I can understand the position as to the New Zealand meat-supply being, as I say in my report, a harvest when it is produced at the best time and most cheaply. But what I refer to particularly is the irregularity of the shipments, and, if you look at the figures that I have placed before you, you will agree with me that if care had been taken last year it would have been possible to place the quantities of these shipments with as great regularity on the London market all the year round as for the first seven months. I have already explained this in reply to Sir Joseph Ward.

120. *Mr. Rutherford.*] You suggest that we should extend the frozen-meat chambers. Do you think it would be cheaper to store meat here than in England?—I do. I consider that meat can be stored in better condition in the colony than at Home.

121. *Mr. Rutherford.*] You think that in New Zealand we should extend the frozen-meat chambers so as to enable a more even distribution at Home?—Yes, rather than that it should be held in store in London. When it is stored for any lengthened time in London it is not generally in good condition when disposed of. You would also keep your markets more evenly supplied with regular shipments by storing in the colony.

122. *Mr. Rutherford.*] You further state, "That proper means of identification by the consumer are necessary for the welfare of New Zealand trade I am convinced. I have given considerable attention to this subject, and I have made very close inquiry throughout the country as to the result of branding. I am satisfied that the objections made to it—that it would encourage prejudice and would be hurtful to the sale of the meat—are entirely erroneous. At present consumers know well, except when it is sold to them as English, from the prices 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 though they may ask for the former. The New Zealand tag being generally removed by the retail butcher, 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 such a brand be a guarantee to consumers, but it would afford a good point from which to advertise New Zealand meat exclusively," and so on. I understand you to suggest that all our meat should be branded with the New Zealand brand?—I am in favour of that.

123. *Mr. Rutherford.*] It occurs to me that this brand could be forged, so to speak. There would be nothing to prevent a butcher branding the meat after he got it in his shop, and it seems to me that it would be a very difficult thing to detect. A man might get fifty carcasses of New Zealand sheep and fifty carcasses from somewhere else, and use the brand as he liked. How do you suggest guarding against this? It could be so easily done, it seems to me—much more easily than by buying New Zealand tags and sticking them on?—It could not be so easily done as that. Of course, if a man wishes to be a rogue it is a most difficult thing to prevent him. The tags at present in use lend themselves to fraud, being easy of application to other carcasses. I scarcely think that a man would take the risk of forging an imitation of a Government patent brand and applying that to carcasses of foreign meat. Besides, to apply one brand which I know of it must be done while the meat is hot. The brand will not "take" after the meat is frozen.

124. *Mr. Rutherford.*] You state that the profits of Nelson and Co. and other companies amount to as much as 50 per cent. Seeing that they buy at their own price, do you think that would be any guide in our case as to what our profits would be?—No, I do not insinuate that it would.

125. *Mr. Barber.*] You suggested that the output of our New Zealand mutton should be restricted with a view to more regularity of shipment. On page 2 of your report you say that the River Plate people closely watch the action of the New Zealand shippers. In the event of New Zealand shippers refraining from sending cargoes in the months you have mentioned, do you think the Argentine people would still keep the markets?—I do not suggest that the shipments during any of those months should have been made smaller than during the preceding seven months of the year. What I advocate is regular shipments each month—not a glut for a time, and then a