

TUESDAY, 11TH AUGUST, 1903.

Examination of Mr. H. C. CAMERON, Produce Commissioner, continued. (No. 6.)

1. *Mr. Hogg.*] You have been asked questions with regard to insurance rates charged to cover all risks on frozen meat. Do you ever have to handle frozen meat on behalf of the Government?—No, I have not.

2. In that case, I presume the insurance charges on meat do not come directly under your notice?—No, not directly.

3. Do you mean to say, then, that all you have ascertained about the insurance charges is the result of mere hearsay?—Yes, that is so.

4. You have no actual information of your own on the subject?—No.

5. Is it part of your duty as Produce Commissioner to ascertain about those charges?—I have no connection with the charges whatever. Any information I gain concerning them is from inquiries I may make—hearsay evidence.

6. Can you discover, in your capacity as Produce Commissioner, the methods of business adopted by the various companies trading in frozen meat?—No, it is quite impossible for me to ascertain that accurately. I may only gain general information.

7. How is it, then, that representatives of New Zealand companies in London can get this information, and yet you are unable to do so?—Well, representatives of New Zealand companies are in a different position from what I am. They have something to sell or to buy, and the London houses therefore receive them favourably, expecting to make a profit on their transactions together. With me there is no profit to be made, and what information I desire is considered to be probably for use of New Zealand producers against the London houses. Many of them resent what they erroneously consider to be Government interference with trade.

8. Do you have anything to do with the meat after it is placed in the cold-stores?—Nothing whatever.

9. And you have no means of ascertaining the condition it is in when it comes out?—No, not directly; merely by hearsay.

10. Can you say whether one store keeps the meat in a better condition than another: have you not the means of ascertaining that?—Personally I have not.

11. With regard to the meat shipped from the colony, do you get any information concerning these shipments from time to time?—No.

12. Do not the Government keep you posted up with regard to these shipments?—No, I get no information whatever.

13. Then you are not able to anticipate shipments or to see whether there is likely to be a glut produced in the market or not?—No, I do not know until after a vessel has been discharged what quantity she has on board.

14. You are not able to keep in touch with what is going on here at all?—No, not directly. I see by the newspapers, but that is the only way by which I can keep myself posted up.

15. When the vessels are arriving in London do you know anything about what they bring?—No; not until they have discharged.

16. You said that $\frac{1}{10}$ d. was charged for the insurance of meat during the twenty-eight days that it remains in the cold-stores, but I think you said that lower rates would be charged if advantage were taken of the facilities afforded by the companies throughout Great Britain. What is your reason for making that statement?—I have interviewed many of the managers of the cold-air stores throughout the country, and they have told me that, if they could get New Zealand meat for storage there, they would be willing to give considerable concessions in the storage charges in order to get it.

17. Then you think a reduction might be effected in the charges?—I am sure of it, from what the managers have told me.

18. *The Chairman.*] What stores would charge less than $\frac{1}{10}$ d. a pound, and for what period?—Several stores in the large towns throughout the Midlands and North.

19. For what period?—Well, if you were storing there, as you are doing in London, for twenty-eight days or so, they would give you a concession. I have not personally gone into particulars of the reduction, as I do not handle meat, and had none to offer them.

20. You said that there were places where, if they could get New Zealand meat, they would charge less than $\frac{1}{10}$ d. per. pound?—Yes.

21. Would they give a month's storage if they got the meat?—Yes.

22. What companies are they?—There are several stores in the Midlands and North.

23. Can you give us any of the names?—I do not think I ought to make the names public, seeing that it might bring them into conflict with their competitors.

24. Do you know of any stores in London that would store the meat for less?—No.

25. Have you made inquiries in London?—The inquiries I have made lead me to understand that there is an agreement between the various cold-air-store owners in London to keep the rates uniform.

26. As a matter of fact, is it not well established that the one-ninth of a penny is the rate of storage, and has been so for years, as much so as 20s. is the value of a sovereign?—Yes, in London.

27. You have nothing to do with the meat after it goes into the cold-stores?—Nothing.

28. Do you not think that ought to be part of your business?—Well, if I had power to go into the stores it might be; but seeing that I have no power to enforce anything that I might consider right—

29. Have you ever tried?—No, I cannot say that I have.

30. They have never refused to allow you to go in?—No.

31. Do you not think it a most important part of the investigation to know what condition the meat is in after it gets into the stores?—It is important.