

is there anything to prevent one company or monopoly doing the whole of this business?—I am afraid the New Zealand producers would not stand a monopoly of that sort.

60. Do you think that if such a monopoly were established by the Agricultural Department it would not be to the benefit of the producers?—I am not in favour of Government trading.

61. You do not think the Government should fight the middlemen?—I do not think the Government should trade. What I suggest is that the freezing companies might agree among themselves to have a better system of working, for the improvement of the New Zealand meat trade generally.

62. You say that our meat trade suffers from irregular shipments?—Yes.

63. Where do you think the shipments should be regulated—at this end or at London?—At this end.

64. In that case, do you think it would be an advantage if the Government erected cool-stores at the ports of departure?—I think the object would be attained if the present refrigerating companies erected sufficient cool-store accommodation to keep the meat until it was wanted.

65. Do you not think that if cool-stores of sufficient capacity were erected, so that regular shipments could be made from New Zealand from month to month, it would be a great advantage?—It would be a great advantage. I think it could be arranged by the freezing companies agreeing amongst themselves, and also agreeing with the shipping companies to carry home regularly certain quantities.

66. What effect would regular shipments have upon the shipping trade?—That is more a question for the shipping men than for myself. I should imagine that ships coming here with a knowledge that they would get a certain amount of cargo regularly each month would be more in the shipping companies' favour than getting a large quantity of meat at one period and at another having to lie here for a lengthened period before they could get a sufficient quantity.

67. *Mr. Field.*] With regard to the subject of insurance: What do you regard as the remedy for the trouble which exists concerning insurance? You say that thirty days is allowed to the consignee, during which time the meat is covered from damage done to it, and you also say that the consignee does not mind, because he knows that he is covered and that the insurance company is willing to stand the risk of a claim. That is so, is it not?—Yes.

68. And you say it affects our meat-market in the Old Country?—I think it affects the meat in this way: that, through the lack of sufficient care being taken of it by those in London interested in it, considerable damage occurs to the meat. Claims having to be paid for by the insurance companies on any damage that occurs are the cause of the premiums being kept high. There is now very little damage occurring to New Zealand meat during transit on board ship. I might point out that it is now a very exceptional thing to hear of meat being condemned by the Health Officer. For the quarter ending last March only one carcase and twenty-eight part-carcases of mutton and lamb, and seven packages of kidneys were condemned by him.

69. What remedy would you suggest? You say, "Influence should be brought to bear by the producers and shippers in the colony for the purpose of inducing the underwriters to resist many claims now made." Are you aware whether such influence has been attempted, and, if not, whether the Government can interfere in the matter?—That is my suggestion. I thought it advisable that those interested in the meat trade should induce the insurance companies to make very close inquiry as to the genuineness of the claims made on them for damage and of the allowances paid.

70. Do you consider the matter of sufficient importance to justify the Government or the Legislature taking it into consideration?—No; but I think it is a matter of sufficient importance to cause the shippers to take steps in connection with it. I consider it is for them to see about it in their own interests.

71. With regard to the difficulty about the meat having to be taken in barges up the river before it reaches the cool-stores, can that be overcome?—Under present conditions in London, and considering the system followed, I do not see how it can be overcome.

72. Assuming, as you suggest, a concentration of supply by the companies here combining, do you think it would be practicable to purchase a site in the near vicinity of the docks and to erect a building capable of holding all the meat sent forward from time to time?—No. I am in favour of a sorting-shed being built at the docks; but I do not think, seeing that there are so many stores owned by people who purchase the meat that is shipped from this colony, that you could build stores and compel these people to put their meat into them and leave their own stores idle.

73. There was a proposal made by the chairman himself when he was in London for the purchase of a central site at Smithfield on which to build a large store and market—I think both were to be combined. Do you approve of that, or do you think the suggestion is practicable?—I do not think it is practicable.

74. Do you think the cost would be so large as to be unjustifiable?—It would be justifiable if the desired end were attained, but I fail to see how any great benefit could be derived from it.

75. With regard to the question of prosecutions for fraudulent sales, do you think this Government should represent to the Imperial Government the necessity for a change in the laws so as to make success more easily attainable?—I think it would be advisable. The matter has been under the attention of the British Government on several occasions, and more than once a Bill has been introduced to compel all imported meat to be branded, so as to prevent it being sold for other than what it is. So lately as last April, the President of the British Board of Agriculture sent a letter to the meat-traders' associations in Great Britain in regard to this matter. I have embodied that letter in my report—Appendix B.

76. You are of opinion that the River Plate shippers are so actively watching our operations and getting the best of us wherever they can, that the time has come when we must, if the meat-market is to be what it should be, retaliate, and fight them with their own cudgels?—I do not say