

prices, he was again unsuccessful, and that he believed the so-called "Canterbury mutton" was River Plate, but clothed in frozen-meat bags made in Liverpool, and branded with frozen-meat labels made in that city.

82. What I meant by the expression "utmost limit" was this: that every available sheep and lamb that can go out of New Zealand is taken every year, and that there is no refusal to any one who wants to send away a shipment. I meant in that respect that we have reached our limit. As the dairying industry is expanding and growing to an enormous extent, is it not a fact that there is a diminution in the number of sheep in the colony?—Yes, I believe that is so.

83. Do you believe that the farmer is a gainer by having outside representative buyers for his meat in New Zealand—such representatives as those of Fletcher and Borthwick?—Yes; I think it is beneficial to the farmer; but my opinion is that a better system could be adopted.

84. In what respect?—I suppose what I say here is privileged?

85. Yes, but, of course, it will be recorded?—I have to say, from what I know about the trade, that there are a great many purchasers in Smithfield who control shops, and obviously—it is human nature—if the market is falling the consignee is not likely to sell his consignment or shipment to the best advantage, owing to the fact that he is a beneficiary in the sale to his own retail shops.

86. How are we to get over that?—In Canterbury it was proposed that if they could acquire their own shops it would be advantageous to the country as a whole, whether it were done through the medium of the Government or by private enterprise, and one of the companies did start a shop at Home.

87. That would obviously require the controlling of the meat-producers in the colony?—Yes, I think that was suggested many years ago, and one of those who proposed it was Mr. David Nathan. It was proposed that there should be a combination among the producers and the freezing companies.

88. That would mean, in turn, control of the sheep in the colony?—Yes, I suppose it would, so far as the frozen meat is concerned.

89. And it would mean, in turn, control of the whole of the English representatives of houses which have their own buyers here who freeze, and who are free to do what they like?—I do not quite follow that.

90. If you wanted an organization to control the whole of the supplies of New Zealand, to enable them to be controlled you would have to control all the freezing interests of the colony?—In order to obtain the best results I suppose you would.

91. And if the English buyers were to fight?—No buying contract would be made with the farmers.

92. To control the outside meat-buyers would necessitate controlling the sheep of the colony as well, or to regulate the whole business in order to keep the prices up?—I think it would only be an extension of the system which already prevails with the frozen-meat companies. The Canterbury freezing companies started in 1882, and now practically control the export of sheep in Canterbury. If there was an amalgamation between the South and the North Island it would be only extending the system a little further. The Smithfield representatives obviously do not come here for a change of air. They are getting a very substantial profit out of the producers which, if it could be removed, would tend to the profit of our people—namely, the stockowners of this country. But I am not here to say whether the meat-shops should be run by the Government or private enterprise. For my own part, I agree with a great author who says that "the demonstration of your own eyes is the best evidence you can produce." I think if the people at Home could see the meat they would be large consumers of it. As we send about 78 per cent. of our produce to England our object is to widen the outlet as far as possible there.

93. We are inquiring into the whole question of frozen meat. The amalgamation of the freezing companies in the colony is one thing, the retailing of the meat in England is another, and in the opinion of some members of the Committee we have to consider the two. What I am asking you now is, whether you can give us any suggestion by which to improve the price the farmer is getting for his meat in New Zealand?—I have not gone into that.

94. *Mr. Rutherford.*] Do I understand that you are in favour of the opening of meat-shops on the lines laid down by Mr. Cameron?—I have not studied the question sufficiently closely to understand what Mr. Cameron's idea of the meat-shops is. If I understood him aright, it is a mere advertisement, and to that extent I am a supporter of the proposal.

95. Then I understand that you are in favour of it for the purpose of enabling people at Home to see what New Zealand mutton is like?—That is so.

96. Have you any knowledge of the operations of Borthwick's and Fletchers' buyers here, and others?—Yes, I have.

97. Have their operations had a beneficial effect upon the market here from a farmer's point of view?—Obviously any competition must have a beneficial effect; but I contend that there are a great number of people—taking the North of England alone—who practically know nothing about New Zealand mutton at all; and you will probably remember that the "Timaru" was sent to Manchester *via* the ship canal, and that the River Plate consignors were opposed to it, with the result that heavy loss occurred, and the experiment has not been repeated. Now, if the same facilities had existed then as exist now, I take it that the same thing could not have happened. At that time they had practically no storage, and had to pay demurrage on the vessel. The result now is that the North is not supplied with New Zealand mutton at all, but with River Plate mutton. I do not see why we should not get our meat into all those places, and if we widen the outlet we must increase the value of it.

98. Would not these shops incur the hostility of the Argentine people?—I have no doubt they would, in the same way as the shipment I speak of; but if this country has a good article to offer it behoves us to put it forward under the best and most favourable conditions possible.