

to Manchester at the same rates of freight as to the other west-coast ports of the United Kingdom, provided they can get under the bridges in the canal, or, in the event of this being impossible, we undertake to deliver frozen meat at Manchester without extra expense to the shippers. This concession on the part of the company, involving as it does calling at an additional port not in the contract, making five ports in all on the west coast of the United Kingdom available to New Zealand, is one which we feel sure will be appreciated by the colony, and it is the first time that direct shipments from New Zealand ports to Manchester have been arranged. The fact that the company, should the steamers not be able to pass under the bridges, will provide for transshipment shows that we are most anxious to meet the requirements of New Zealand shippers.—Yours faithfully, THE NEW ZEALAND AND AFRICAN STEAMSHIP COMPANY (LIMITED) as agents (W. WALLIS, Manager)."

113. Will you refer to the communication from the New Zealand and African Steamship Company, dated the 23rd August, embodying a communication from the Christchurch Meat Company?—"The Secretary, Industries and Commerce Department, Wellington.—DEAR SIR,—We have pleasure in appending a copy of telegram received from Mr. Gilbert Anderson, managing director of the Christchurch Meat Company, which may interest you, as follows: 'MANAGER, New Zealand and African Steamship Company, Wellington.—Am pleased to state expect cable in course of day or two fixing up the contract for meat for Manchester. Have to thank you for your ready assistance in bringing about this business, and much appreciate your company's action in consenting to send steamers to a new port without charging extra freight, and for their prompt attention to the business. Am also pleased to add cables just received state that meat by "Suffolk" arrived in good condition. Believe west-coast trade will soon reach large dimensions and be of immense benefit to this colony.—GILBERT ANDERSON.' This telegram from the largest exporting company in New Zealand of frozen meat appears to us to be a very satisfactory acknowledgment of our efforts in providing the means of opening up another market for New Zealand produce.—Yours faithfully, THE NEW ZEALAND AND AFRICAN STEAMSHIP COMPANY (LIMITED) as agents (W. WALLIS, Manager)."

114. With regard to the rates of freight, the rate for grain, I believe, is 15s.?—They have been carrying oats to the west-coast ports of the United Kingdom for 15s.

115. Do you know whether grain was ever carried from New Zealand by the direct steamers to the west-coast ports of England for 15s. before?—No; I am quite certain it never was.

116. Is it a fact that Melbourne firms have been shipping grain from Melbourne to New Zealand for transshipment to the New Zealand and African Company's steamers for the west-coast ports of England recently?—Yes. I am not quite certain whether there have been any more, but there were 7,000 sacks sent over.

117. At all events, you know that there have been shipments from Melbourne for transshipment into these steamers for the west-coast ports recently?—Yes.

118. From that the inference is that freights from here are cheaper than from Australia?—Yes; otherwise they would not go to the expense of sending grain over here.

119. The conditions of the accepted contract, I understood you to say, were the best offered to the colony?—Yes, they were the best offered.

120. And no monetary consideration has been paid by the colony to get that service?—No.

121. The direct liners, prior to the contract being entered into, charged 25 per cent. more for carriage to the west-coast ports than they did to London?—Yes.

122. That 25 per cent. has now been saved to all shippers from New Zealand to the west-coast ports?—That is so.

123. Have there been any complaints made to the Department regarding the carrying-on of the service to the west-coast ports?—No. A question was raised about freight on frozen rabbits, if it can be called a complaint.

124. There was a complaint made by Sullivan and Co., of Dunedin?—Yes; they said the company charged £2 10s. a ton measurement for rabbits, while they could obtain freight on the same class of merchandise from Hobart for £2 a ton.

125. Did the New Zealand and African Company lower their rates then to the same as were charged in Australia for rabbits?—Yes; they brought down the rate from £2 10s., which they were entitled to charge under the contract, to £2.

126. Under the schedule for rabbits the New Zealand and African Steamship Company were entitled to charge £2 10s. per ton?—Yes; per ton of 40 cubic feet.

127. And we could not have compelled them to carry rabbits for less?—No.

128. The complaint was made by the shippers of the rabbits, Messrs. Sullivan and Co., of Dunedin, that £2 was the ruling rate from Tasmania for rabbits?—Yes.

129. Upon the matter being brought under the notice of the New Zealand and African Company, did they reduce the rate of freight to £2?—Yes.

130. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You mentioned, Mr. Munro, that the average passage of the boats of the New Zealand and African Steamship Company was from sixty to seventy days?—I gave you one as seventy-seven days, one as seventy-two, one as sixty-six, and one as sixty-nine. I have not worked out the average.

131. What would you take the average passage of the direct steamers to be?—They range from about forty-two to sixty days, and the New Zealand and African Steamship Company's range from sixty-six to seventy-seven.

132. Do you mean that any of them took sixty days from the last New Zealand port to the first English port?—Yes.

133. Which of them?—One of them I noticed the other day took sixty days. I think the mail-steamers take forty-two days—that is the minimum; but some of the slow ones take well up to sixty days. Fifty-two days was the maximum time of the boats that carried butter last year—