

however, a very serious case of fraud in connection with the sale of New Zealand mutton came under my notice. Under your instructions I made close investigation concerning it, with the result that an information was laid against a firm of meat-salesmen on Smithfield Market for substituting, in a contract they had for the supply of New Zealand mutton, River Plate mutton to which New Zealand tags and wrappers were applied. Proceedings were taken in the Magistrate's Court, with the result that the salesmen were convicted and fined for the fraud.

As a result of this conviction many communications were received from various institutions having contracts for the supply of New Zealand meat, requesting that this office might inspect the supplies received by them, so that they might be satisfied that their contractors were acting honestly by them.

The fraud of selling River Plate and inferior meat as New Zealand, I regret to say, is not decreasing, and I am satisfied that, while it is doing an enormous deal of harm to the New Zealand meat trade in this country, it will not be checked until steps are taken by the shippers themselves to protect their own interests. As I have repeatedly pointed out, there is no means by which consumers can distinguish New Zealand meat when they desire to obtain it, and when they ask for it they often get inferior stuff supplied to them, which disgusts them, and destroys the reputation of the New Zealand article.

It is impossible under present conditions to advertise New Zealand meat advantageously. Any money spent in doing so would only benefit the whole frozen-meat trade at the colony's expense.

The necessity for marking New Zealand mutton and lamb with a small, neat, indelible brand, by which the meat would be guaranteed to consumers, and advertisement rendered possible, becomes daily more apparent. Of course, it would not do for any individual shipper to attempt branding. If that were attempted, the parcels so marked would certainly be boycotted by buyers in this country, who, naturally, are adverse to the proposal, and a low price only would be realised. Branding, to be effective, must be done generally throughout the country. The demand for New Zealand mutton and lamb in this country is such that no general boycott of the meat could be maintained. Immediately it was retailed with the brand on it, the demand amongst consumers, owing to the guarantee given, would be so great—the sale of substitutes being ended—that prices for New Zealand mutton and lamb would be firmly maintained. I feel, from continued experience of the markets here, that the branding of New Zealand meat is entirely in the interests of the trade. It is a subject worthy of the closest consideration by those interested in the colony.

CONDEMNED MEAT.

I regret to report that during the year my attention was directed to a number of condemnations of carcasses arriving from the colony in such an emaciated condition that the Meat Inspector at Smithfield condemned them and had them destroyed on that account. Particulars concerning these seizures were forwarded to the colony, and it is hoped that as a result the precautions taken there will prevent the possibility of such occurrences in the future.

Although it is recognised that the Inspectors in New Zealand are keenly alive to the necessity for unremitting care in inspecting meat for export, I understand that they have no legal power to condemn meat which, although being healthy and fit for immediate consumption, in their opinion would not appear so on being offered for sale in this country after freezing and subsequent thawing. It might be a matter for earnest consideration by the authorities whether, in face of the condemnations made by the Health Officers in this country, it would not be desirable that such powers should be conferred upon the Inspectors.

TINNED MEATS.

Owing to the scare created concerning tinned meats by the startling disclosures made of American methods, it was considered desirable to demonstrate to the provision trade in this country the merits of the goods produced in New Zealand canning-factories. Accordingly space was taken at the Grocery Exhibition held at the Agricultural Hall, Islington, in October, and a large display of tinned meats forwarded from the colony was there shown to advantage on a tastefully arranged stand. Each packing company forwarding goods had a distinct section set apart for its exhibit.

A large quantity of literature dealing with the slaughtering and inspection of meat in New Zealand was prepared and distributed during the Exhibition, and the opportunity was taken by every means of emphasizing the purity and quality of the meat exported from the colony.

Acting under your instructions, I arranged for a visit of the officers connected with the Departments of Supply and Contracts of the Admiralty and War Office to the Exhibition, when a minute inspection of the New Zealand meats was made by them. The agents of the various companies opened samples desired of the goods, and these were thoroughly examined. The officers, as the result, declared themselves highly satisfied with all they saw and heard. The New Zealand slaughtering and inspection laws specially appealed to them.

At their request samples of considerable size of the meats were sent forward to the naval and military depots, and as a result the names of several of the packing companies were placed on the official lists of the Admiralty and War Office, so that they might be given the opportunity of tendering for contracts to supply canned meats when supplies are required in future for either the navy or army.

The question of canned food has been specially considered by the Incorporated Institute of Hygiene. The feeling of the medical fraternity attached thereto is entirely favourable to the use of such foods, which they allow to be wholesome, nutritive, and prepared under more sanitary conditions than is the case of food consumed by persons in many of the poorer districts in this country. The resolutions passed by this Institute in favour of canned meats have been specially valuable, as, appearing widely in the public Press, they proved of considerable benefit to the trade.