

represented, as the boards of the Canterbury companies show. [Mr. Reakes's report quoted at length.] I hope the committee which has been set up to-day to represent the producers in this colony, in the shape of the freezing companies, to some extent, will take these things into account, and take such account as they think fit to remedy whatever is wrong, and that is the way in which they can do a very great deal. To my mind this is the most important point: As producers we have to see that our grades are kept up, and then there will be much less trouble in regard to damage claims.

*Mr. J. G. Wilson* (Wellington Farmers' Union).—Mr. Hall said he thought the original report was passed under a misapprehension. I may say that it certainly was, so far as I was concerned. I read the proposal which you see on the paper as No. 1 to mean that this Conference should recommend that a further company should be started. I could not see my way to support that; I thought there were quite sufficient companies now; there are too many, I think, as a matter of fact; it would be better to have fewer men in London than more selling our mutton; and on that ground I could not support it, unless further argument showed it to be necessary. But I should be very glad to see that the minority report was passed, for this reason: In the butter trade every person who does not go to London, and does not see the way the butter business is conducted, thinks always that his butter is sacrificed by his agent. The butter people thought the best thing to do would be to put their hands in their pockets, and send a man Home on their own account. We did so; we pay £1 per ton in my company, which sends this man Home to live in London and report upon any subject upon which we write him. He there represents the interests of the producer, and is distinct from any person in the shape of merchant or agent, and we look to him to tell us of the abuses, and of the advantages to be gained by any alteration in the trade there. Every year or two he comes out to New Zealand, and meets the people who subscribe towards this fund, and gives them a confidential report; and by that means the farmer is really in a position to know how his trade is being done in London. That is a subject which the ordinary farmer does not know here. I think it would be a very good outcome of a Conference of this kind if the farmers would really put their hands in their pockets (they are quite well enough off to do that). They ought not to go to the freezing companies or the Government, but they should send Home a man of their own, to be a confidential adviser and watch their interests. The producer would then have expert and confidential advice as to what was being done, and then I think a great many of the misunderstandings that have taken place in the end would be disabused altogether, and very likely we should get a better system of doing business. That was the idea I had in suggesting resolution No. 2 in the report; and we could find out from the farmers themselves if they are willing to send Home a man. There is a great deal of suspicion in the minds of the farmers which could be allayed, I think, in this way: A good man could be selected, who should be well paid for his work, and many of the ideas the farmers have now that they are underpaid for their produce would be disabused. For that reason I should like to see the farmers support the proposition to send Home a man of their own.

*Mr. J. McQueen* (Southland Farmers' Union).—Sir, we had a committee of twelve appointed, and there are two reports, and I think we might very well adopt the report of the committee as a whole. The questions raised in the minority report should be separate motions. With regard to the question of insurance and damage: Up till this last year the question of damage has been for a great many years a very minor one. The claims for damage have been very slight; and, although I have been shipping on my own account a little from year to year, my attention was scarcely called to the damage, it was so little; but, as in every case where there is a slump in the market—in grain or any other produce—you will have a large number of claims made for damage at that time. The people will try and make a better bargain than they really had by raising claims. Now, it seems to me unfair that account sales should be selected, and the percentage given of the damage. I would like to ask what was in the ship—what percentage of meat was damaged in the whole ship. I could quote instances where all the meat was damaged, but it would be unfair to quote that as an example of the state of the cargo. When the trade gets back to its normal, which I believe will be this year, from that time onwards, and during the time of normal conditions, you will have very little trouble with claims for insurance. The temptation is always there for the buyer to make claims, but the seller or the insurance company ought to see that these bogus claims are contested.

*Mr. A. E. G. Rhodes* (New Zealand Shipping Company).—I did not intend to speak at all, Mr. Chairman, but I should like to say, as far as the New Zealand Shipping Company is concerned, they have heard of no considerable claims for damages in their ships at all. As for 14 or 15 per cent., they have never heard of it. The rates in Australia were claimed to be very much less than here: as a matter of fact they are 3d. less. I might mention that I have just telephoned to the New Zealand Shipping Company, and have found that the average damage in its ships is a few broken shanks, and nothing like the damage mentioned by Mr. Lysnar.

*The Chairman*.—I shall now put the minority report.

Motion lost—12 for, 25 against.

*The Chairman*.—I shall now put clause 3 as it stands in the report of the committee.

Carried.

*The Chairman*.—We now come to the last clause, "That it be a recommendation to the committee to consider the question of cool-storage in London," &c.; I therefore beg formally to move this.

*Mr. H. D. Vavasour*.—I second that.

Carried.

*The Chairman*.—In carrying this recommendation of the committee, clause 2 provides, I may point out, that a committee should be set up. I think we had better deal with that now, and I shall therefore ask you to nominate a committee.