

such as Sims, Cooper, and Co., and others, to say that they do not care because it would all come back on the farmer. If that is so, then there is a chance for the farmers to make a combination. I think that this motion is addressed more particularly to the farmers of the community, and not to a meeting like this, where there are very few farmers present.

*The Chairman.*—I propose, then, to postpone this matter until we have taken No. 3. Do you agree to that, gentlemen?—[Carried.]

*Mr. A. Chamberlain* (Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association).—It seems to be the wish of the Conference that a committee should be appointed, and I therefore move remit No. 3, "That a committee be appointed," &c. This committee, I think, should consist of six members for the South Island and six members for the North Island. I therefore beg to move that a committee composed of six members for each Island be set up.

*Mr. John Talbot* (South Canterbury Farmers' Union).—I have very much pleasure in seconding the proposition that a committee should be set up in accordance with the recommendation of the mover. That would be the best way to get at the information we want. The question of this slump is, no doubt, a very serious one indeed to the farming community, and if any information can be got that would prevent and settle this thing in the future, it would certainly be to our advantage. Of course, it is not particularly so much the slump altogether, but the uncertainty set up in our minds that wants removing. If we could be assured that the prices now ruling would continue it would not be so serious, so far as Canterbury is concerned—we could level down a little, and perhaps drop the lamb trade a little. But Canterbury is a province that goes in largely for fattening, and so it is affected by the store-lamb trade. The slump will fall more largely on the breeders of stock than on any one else. I do not want to take up more time, or to raise any argument, because I think that this committee when set up will be able to get a good deal of the information wanted; but I hope that it would not have the effect of closing up any discussion on the whole matter. I think, now this meeting is here, we ought to ask those gentlemen connected with the trade to give us as much information as possible; and if it does not do any good, it should at all events do something towards clearing the ground, and letting us see as far as possible the ins and outs of the business. I should not like to second this resolution with the view of keeping back any discussion that may be useful for the producers and for the public in general.

*The Chairman.*—It is proposed and seconded, then, that remit No. 3 be carried as amended.

*Mr. F. de C. Malet* (Christchurch Meat Company).—Did I gather that it is proposed to consider this question to-night, and to report to-morrow?

*Mr. Hall.*—That was only a suggestion of mine.

*Mr. F. de C. Malet.*—We know we have all met here as farmers; I am speaking as a farmer, and not as chairman of the Christchurch Meat Company. Looking broadly to this matter, I say it would be futile to set up a committee to-day, and to hope for some time at least to deal with a question of this nature. We have heard what Mr. Kinross White said, and there should be inquiries made, and there should be a time put when the committee is to report, and to whom. I do not think it will appeal to the Conference that the resolution should be passed by this meeting without stating these things. That is, if we are to attach any confidence to this committee's report.

*The Chairman.*—Do you wish to move an amendment, then?

*Mr. F. de C. Malet.*—I think I had better remain neutral, considering that I have interests as a farmer and as a member of the meat company, and am therefore here in a dual capacity.

*The Hon. Mr. T. Mackenzie.*—Mr. Malet has mentioned that there are obstacles in the way of the committee meeting and reporting to-morrow, and he has emphasized—I think, overemphasized—those difficulties and obstacles. That attitude is not neutral, or progressive, or designed to assist the Conference. I take it that those of us who are interested in the New Zealand meat trade desire to listen to the grievances of the producers, and to get enlightenment from gentlemen occupying the position of Mr. Malet. Charges have been made that should be answered, and ought to be answered, that there is an unfair proportion between the prices realized at Home and what are returned to the producers. There are charges made about unfair claims. Now, these people who have been intrusted for a considerable time with the handling of our meat should be prepared to give some enlightenment as a guide to those of us who are come together to assist in the Conference. If that is done we may be able to make progress. We know that a committee of this kind cannot inquire within a few hours into the ramifications of the trade, but the Conference is sufficiently intelligent to be able to determine whether or not something is required to be done, whether or not there is something that can be inquired into in regard to the conditions of the Home market. I want to get information on the point. That is the position I take up here.

*Mr. A. M. Borthwick* (Borthwick and Co.).—I think the Minister has taken up a most reasonable position—that we are here to-day at the invitation of the Agricultural and Pastoral Association; but I do not think the freezing companies could be expected to make haphazard replies to haphazard remarks before us to-day. It would mean that individual freezing companies might express different things, and I think that any replies of this sort should be for mature consideration.

*Mr. F. de C. Malet.*—In reply to the Minister of Agriculture, I may say that what I meant to imply was that, occupying a dual capacity here, I thought perhaps it was not desirable for me to take an active part in the discussion. I merely pointed out, as a friend of the Conference, that some further machinery than this clause should be added. I only rose with that object. Whether I should or should not take part in the discussion is not a matter for the Minister of Agriculture to decide; it is a matter for my own good taste.

*Mr. Lysnar.*—I think we should appoint the committee, and ask them what course they are to take. If it is possible to bring up a preliminary report, let them do so. We all have come here at great inconvenience and trouble, but I think it is possible for the committee to meet and give us some report before we leave; we could even wait for a day or two if necessary. The freezing