

*Mr. T. E. L. Roberts* (Scargill Farmers' Union).—I do not consider that the present conditions are perfect, as alleged. This first resolution seems to be taking the power away from where we should wish to have it, and leaving it with the freezing companies. Of course, the farming community wish to have a little more say in the matter than they have had in the past. As to the handling of the meat at the other end, a gentleman has said that Smithfield is one of the cleanest places in the world. Possibly my notion of cleanliness is very different from his. If meat I am supposed to eat can be thrown down amongst straw (I do not know how long this litter has been lying there; the gentleman did not tell us how often it was removed: but my observation showed it had not been removed for a considerable time), and thrown down without cloths over it, that is not cleanliness.

*The Chairman*.—I do not think, Mr. Roberts, you are speaking to the motion.

*Mr. Roberts*.—I think I am, Mr. Chairman. At any rate, my remarks apply as much to the motion as Mr. Bennett's remarks do. I say, if meat is thrown down on straw, without cloths, I do not think that is cleanliness. A great deal more in the way of cleanliness is wanted at Smithfield Market, and there is no use people coming here and saying that everything is perfect, or as good as it can be, for we know that such is not the case.

*Mr. A. S. Paterson* (Dunedin Chamber of Commerce).—As representing the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce, I wish to acknowledge the courtesy that has been extended to the Chambers of Commerce in inviting them to be present here to take part in your Conference. I regard it as an indication of breadth and inclusiveness on the part of the promoters of the Conference. I wish to make a few observations from the business man's point of view upon the various questions that surround the first and second resolutions. In the first place, I should like to say that the ordinary business man thinks that, first and last, the farmers have been exceedingly well cared for in the matter of this frozen-meat industry. In the first place they have been very well cared for by the shipping companies, who not only have provided in a magnificent way for the growing requirements of this trade from time to time, but who also by capital and otherwise have assisted the farmers very seriously in the problems that they have had in setting the various freezing companies upon their feet, and the freezing companies themselves seem to have done nobly for the farmers. Not only are most of them co-operative concerns, but even those which are not might be said to have done noble work for the farmers. Look at it in this light: The average dividends and profits earned by the freezing companies have not been large. In cases where they have been the very largest, the most that could be said in any case perhaps is that the original capital has doubled—I think there is a case of that, but not more than one, I think. But the farmers have had their values far more than doubled by the freezing companies, and in that way it could be said that the values gained by the freezing companies are not more than commensurate with the values earned by the freezing companies for the farmers. Then these splendid concerns built up by the freezing companies are at the disposal of the farmers for the marketing of any line of sheep, large or small. It almost strikes an outsider with admiration to see the extent to which the farmers' interests have been safeguarded and protected in connection with this business. Even the smallest lots are individualized and treated separately. I am not saying that is altogether a good thing. I am rather inclined to think that the pooling of these small lots ought to be of great advantage. Small lots are troublesome from the beginning to the very end of the business. They are troublesome in every respect: they are troublesome at the freezing-house; they are troublesome in the discharge of the ships, and in the cold-meat store, and everywhere else. Delays take place through the individualizing of these small lots, and keeping them separate one from another, and exposure is very often the result in London. A small lot waiting for its barge is put out into the sun, and deterioration takes place; so that I think the pooling of these smaller lots would be an indication that the organization of the trade was advancing. I should like to indicate one or two other matters which are not here mentioned, bearing upon points surrounding these first and second resolutions. I venture to say that it strikes the ordinary business man, looking at this business from outside, that one of the reforms which seems to be called for in connection with it is that each one of these freezing companies should have its own office, its own establishment, in London, for the purpose of looking after its interests there. Nothing has struck me more in listening to the whole discussion yesterday than this: that all the difficulties, and troubles, and complaints connected with this business seem to be at the other end. At this end the difficulties of the business have been conquered, and there is no cause for complaint. The complaints are all at the other end. Then, it is there that the chief attention of the freezing companies and those handling this business is required, in order to see that the distribution and the marketing is brought up to the same degree of perfection that the freezing, and shipping, and preparation, and so forth have been brought up to here. I do not see how that can be done unless by those who are chiefly interested in the business being on the spot there to look after it. I was much struck, sir, by a sentence in your speech yesterday, in which you said that the New Zealand farmer when his stuff came to London could not look after it himself. That is quite true. But the nearest that he can come to that should be done, and I take it that the nearest is this: that those freezing companies in which he is interested, and to which he hands over his interests in his carcasses, should be in London to watch, and to study, and to find better methods of handling, and marketing, and distributing, and everything else connected with the trade—shipping, including redress of grievances that may be alleged from time to time against the business as conducted at the other end. There is another reason why I think every freezing company should be represented in London by its own staff, and should handle its own meat, and that is that a lot of business which a freezing company handles is sufficient to be treated in that way, and is too great to be treated in any other way. Look at it this way: I suppose it would be only an average freezing-house the value of whose produce would be, say, half a million pounds a year. When there is £400,000 or £500,000 value to be handled in one spot, the concern chiefly interested