

40. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Can you tell us what is paid for mutton-sheep?—I consider that £1 3s. 6d. is paying too much for a fat wether—that is, dead-weight.

41. Eighty pounds at £1 3s. 6d.—that is, 3½d. is the cost of that mutton on the average. Are you now giving the fair average price at Burnside, or is this a high price?—No, it is the general thing. The agent buys from the farmer at from 10s. to 12s. per sheep, and between the farmers' price and Burnside the price goes up to £1 3s.

42. Cannot you see that there is still an extraordinary gap. If the dead-weight price at Burnside is 3½d. per pound, it is quite clear a man cannot sell mutton at from 3d. to 4d. per pound—unless the man at Kensington is buying through other channels than Burnside—that must be self-evident?—That is the actual price you have given. There are the skins, fat, and all that to be added. He has all that as profit.

43. What is the value of the skin?—From 7s. 6d. to 10s.; then there is about 4s. or 5s. worth of fat.

44. The cost of killing has to be paid for. All the by-products go to the owner of the sheep?—Yes.

45. How much does the killing cost?—About 3d.

46. The skin is worth how much?—There is the wool and hide—from 7s. 6d. to 10s.

47. Is there anything else in the way of by-products?—The tallow, fat, and bone. I should say that is worth from 3s. to 5s.

48. You have given us these figures: 7s. 6d. to 10s. That reduces the cost of the sheep to 9s. 9d. for 80 lb. of mutton—that is, roughly, 1½d. per lb. That is all that man is paying for his mutton: is that so?—Yes; and the charge here is from 4d. to 6d. per pound for chops.

49. *Mr. Hall.*] With regard to the sheep you say were sold so cheap in the early days: were they old broken-mouthed ewes?—No, fat wethers. They were first-class sheep.

50. Were you referring to live sheep or dead sheep?—Sheep ready for the table: the carcase.

51. Was there a drought at that time?—No; I was going over a period of from six to ten years. When we first materially noticed a rise in the price of commodities was when the swaggers were taken off the road, after the advent of Mr. Seddon's Government. I saw first-class mutton sold off the farm, or by the farmer, at from 10s. to 12s. per sheep.

52. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] How long ago was that?—About four months ago, in Canterbury.

53. What would the dead-weight be?—From 60 lb. to 80 lb., at 10s.

54. What would be the value of the pelt, wool, &c.?—About 3s. 6d. to 5s.

55. That would be equivalent to from 14s. to 16s., as against to-day's price for the same sheep, bearing in mind that the skin was worth from 7s. 6d. to 10s. 6d.?—Yes. I may say that I followed that mob of sheep which had been sold by the farmer at from 10s. to 12s. I followed those sheep to Geraldine, and they were sold there alive by the agent at from 17s. 6d. to 19s. 3d. by auction.

56. *Mr. Hall.*] How far had they to drive them?—Six miles.

57. What would be the cost of driving them?—About 10s. for the half-day.

58. How many sheep were there?—154—104 at 12s. and 50 at 10s. per head.

59. What kind of sheep were they?—Crossbred wethers: fat sheep. There were a few ewes amongst them.

60. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] This is something that you can distinctly vouch for?—Yes.

61. *Mr. Macdonald.*] What, in your opinion, created the difference in value in those two days?—The number of agents. There were six agents there, and these agents have to be provided for. Those sheep belonged to the agents or auctioneer.

62. What induced the paying of the higher price in that case?—The agents.

63. *Mr. Hall.*] What month would that be?—About two months ago.

64. Was there any shortage of feed at that time?—No.

65. *Mr. Macdonald.*] The farmer is a simple fellow, and cannot protect himself?—He is satisfied with from 10s. to 12s. For running the sheep for a couple of months on rape and fattening them the auctioneer made the difference between 10s. and 12s. and 17s. 6d. and 19s. 3d.

66. To whom did the auctioneer resell at 19s. 3d.?—In the public auction.

67. *The Chairman.*] Who buys them?—The butcher.

STEVE BOREHAM, recalled.

*Witness:* I would like to qualify some evidence which I gave this morning. With regard to the sheep which I followed, and which were taken to Geraldine: When I said I followed them I was speaking in a broad sense. They were taken to Geraldine, and I saw them sold at the enhanced price. They were fourteen days on rape before finally sold to a butcher. That has to be added to the price at which they were sold at Geraldine by the second agent.

68. *The Chairman.*] What value would be put on to the sheep?—I think they charge about 6d. per week per head.

69. That would be 1s. on each sheep?—Yes, very comfortably. With regard to the Kensington butcher's shop: Since the Commission adjourned I have made inquiries and have found out that the men running the shop are old shearing-mates of mine. I want to make this statement: that there is a ring amongst the butchers in Dunedin. I have seen their schedule of prices and the names attached to that schedule; and the man at Kensington has refused to sign it.

70. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] You have seen a list of the prices signed by the butchers?—Yes, by all the butchers in the combination.

71. *The Chairman.*] Would it be possible to get a copy of that document?—No, but I propose to bring Mr. Matthewson here to give evidence himself. I wish the trend of my evidence to lead you to understand that I am perfectly convinced that it is owing to the great number of agents going about—