

33. Not from the meat companies?—If you do you have to pay the fees.

34. Can you give us the cost of killing at the abattoirs? What is the cost per head of sheep?—Sheep cost about 1s.; beef, I think, is about 6s. or 7s.

35. Is that the whole of the killing-charge—does that cover everything?—Yes, delivery to the shops.

36. I presume each butcher buys his own sheep, privately or at the saleyards, and sends his stock to the abattoirs to be killed, so that the market price, plus the cost of killing, indicates exactly what you pay for the mutton?—Yes.

37. Can you give us any idea what weight of meat one man would deliver, with one horse, in a day? Supposing a butcher had a thriving business, with a fairly large number of customers within a given area, how would it work out?—No, I could not give any idea of what the weight of meat would be. I used to load up a cart twice in a day when going rounds, but I could not give you the weight of meat.

38. Do you think there would be 6 cwt. in a load?—That is too low; it would be more than that.

39. Do you think one man would take a ton out in a day? You reckon 1d. per pound as the cost of distribution?—Most of the distribution is done by orders. The meat is cut up at the shop. I have never had any experience of a cash and booking round. Mine was a hawking round—a cash round. I put the meat in the cart in bulk, and cut it up and weighed it at the doors of the customers.

40. Do you think it would be an overestimate that one man would deliver a ton of meat in a day?—I should think if you put it at half a ton it would be nearer, and if he was fulfilling orders I am doubtful whether he would do that. There is one thing I ought to mention. The increased cost of beef is due largely to the fact that a lot of areas upon which beef was formerly reared have now been cut up, and the land is being used for dairy purposes. That has made an increase in the cost of beef. Take, for instance, a place like the Coldstream Estate, at Rangiora. They used to grow a lot of cattle there. That estate has now been cut up. That is a sample of many other places. We have had such difficulty in getting our beef that we have had to buy from the North Island; in fact, we draw most of our supplies from the North Island, simply because you cannot get good prime fat cattle in Canterbury. For the reasons I have given beef will probably get dearer.

41. *The Chairman.*] Is dairy-farming increasing in Canterbury?—No, Canterbury is rather a sheep country than a cattle country. There is some fine dairy country in this district.

42. You would not ascribe the shortage in the production of oats to farmers finding dairying to be more profitable?—I should think so.

43. *Dr. Hight.*] Do you ascribe all of the increase in wages to the influence of the labour laws? Would not the increase in wages have come about if there had been no labour laws in operation—would not there have been some increase?—I should think it would, because men could not live on the old wages paid with commodities at their present price.

44. And I suppose the majority of people require their meat to be delivered—a large proportion of the public, I suppose, would not come in to get their meat at the shop?—I think before our business started nearly all meat was obtained by delivery; but our business has rather altered that aspect of affairs, and now a very large number of people come to the shop for their meat. I think it was just because those people formerly had no inducement to come to the shop; the butchers were not competing for a cash trade.

45. There is room for both methods of doing business?—I think that those who are willing to come to the shop and take their meat away, thus avoiding the cost of delivery and booking, should be catered for, and when they are prepared to pay cash and thus get their meat cheaper they should get the benefit of that system.

46. Do you think there is any waste in the methods of dealing with meat—in the way of cooking meat, and the treatment of it: can you give us any information on that point?—Might it not be that meat is cheaper here in proportion to other things? As to there being waste in the methods of cooking and dealing with meat, I could not say anything as to that. I know that in my own house we do not waste it. I could not answer that question.

47. *The Chairman.*] Have you any further statements to make which would enlighten the Commission on the question in the rise of the cost of living?—No, I do not think so. Meat, I consider, is a necessity, and not a luxury.

48. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Are people using a better class of meat now than formerly?—No. I may say also that there are no monopolies or combines in connection with our business that I know of.

49. *Dr. Hight.*] They are paying a higher price for meat?—Yes, that is so. I may say this also: that I think it is the high price of stock that has caused the land to rise in value very largely rather than the other way. Men could not live on the land unless they got good prices for their commodities, and the fact that stock has been selling so well has caused a rise in the price of land.

50. *The Chairman.*] You are speaking of rural land entirely—it has not raised the price of land in the town?—That is so.

WILLIAM MURRAY, General Manager of the Christchurch Meat Company, examined on oath.
(No. 48.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are general manager of the Christchurch Meat Company, Mr. Murray?—Yes.

2. Have you held that position long?—For the last seven years.