

*Hon. Minister* : No, there is nothing else left but to fill up.

*Mr. Bullock* : For instance, ships coming over from Australia to load frozen meat—it would not be reasonable to send them cruising around Gisborne.

*Hon. Minister* : That is the sort of thing I asked you about, but Mr. Findlay said the “Ceramic” and “Thelma” were the only two.

*Mr. Findlay* : There were others with limited ports.

*Mr. Sandtmann* : You have only to look at wool, sir. Look at the accumulations at Gisborne and Napier, because we have not been able to send steamers. We have to get the ships turned round as quickly as we possibly can. We try to deal with it as well as we possibly can, but we cannot do impossibilities.

*Hon. Minister* : We recognize the shortage of ships. Some companies have suggested they would find means of sending the meat on to Wellington sooner than lose the shipment, but I do not think it could really be done. I do not know whether you could do any good with these figures. Would you care to look through them?

*Mr. Triggs* : I will send a copy to them.

*Hon. Minister* : I would be very pleased if you could give me some explanation. I will be going to Gisborne very shortly, and the whole of the trade will be on to me—butchers' troubles and all sorts of troubles. If there have been any mistakes made I would sooner admit it.

*Mr. Findlay* : We are quite ready to do that. We might have had steamers that called at Napier and Gisborne for beef only, but by the time such steamers came back and took lamb here the instructions have been altered. Some of them were in the South Island. We were afterwards authorized to take lamb from the South Island, overriding the instructions to take beef.

*Hon. Minister* : And in addition every private company is cabling for special concessions. This is the position. I want information in connection with the whole of the meat so that I can submit it to the various companies, and if there have been anomalies created, and if some freezing-works have not kept faith and carried out what the Tonnage Committee expected them to do, then we will have to take other means of adjusting the matter, and put it on a better footing for the coming season. I would like to get from the companies, not necessarily the names of the boats, but the number of boats that have been requisitioned for transport purposes, and the number of boats requisitioned by the Imperial Government. An endeavour has been made to create the impression that ships have been handed over for trade in other countries that were not necessary, and that we should have kept them in these waters.

*Mr. Bullock* : Ever since March, 1915, the Imperial Government have had the whole of the insulated space under their control. You cannot get away from the fact that up to this season New Zealand has been exceptionally well treated. Now that the pinch comes there are a few people making all this fuss and bother.

*Hon. Minister* : I only hope that it is not going to be any worse. But we are told, of course, that we have allowed all this tonnage to slip through our fingers and it has gone to Argentina and America at the behest of the trust.

*A Speaker* : Refer them to the Imperial authorities—it is nothing whatever to do with us.

*Hon. Minister* : The Imperial authorities are accused of being the trust. I shall be glad if you will let me have the information we have spoken about.

*Mr. Wallace* : There is no means of ascertaining what boats have been requisitioned by the Imperial Government.

*Mr. Findlay* : Mr. MacDonald means, what steamers have been diverted to other trades?

*Mr. Pearce* : That is misleading. They might take two or three steamers which are not regular traders to New Zealand, and this gives this man the excuse for putting his finger on them. They might only come here intermittently and not belong to New Zealand.

*Mr. Findlay* : I think it will be shown that not a great number have been diverted, and what would probably be useful would be to have the number of Australian steamers that have been sent over here, and it is quite likely that the balance will be in New Zealand's favour.

*Mr. Bullock* : Up to this year, sir, you will be quite safe in saying that the loading in New Zealand during the war has been more than before the war, whilst the export has been larger.

*Mr. Sandtmann* : At any rate it has been quite up to normal.

*Mr. Bullock* : We cleared off all the stuff at the end of last year. When are you going to Gisborne, sir? Would you like one of us to go up with you?

*Hon. Minister* : If I can get any reasonable information I think we will get along all right.

*Mr. Bullock* : We will get all the information we can for you, sir.

*Hon. Minister* : Just some information to show that there has been some reasonable interest taken in the shipments of the company.

*Mr. Sandtmann* : If you want a comparison of what was the position before and during the war, we ought to include the number of ships lost during the war.

*Hon. Minister* : Oh, yes, that is important.

I now desire to read a letter following on that interview, from Mr. J. Findlay, Chairman of the Shipowners Committee, to the Minister in Charge of the Imperial Government Supplies, which is as follows:—

Sir,—

New Zealand Overseas Shipowners Committee, Wellington, 13th June, 1917.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 9th instant, to which you attached a transcript of the notes of the conference which took place between yourself and the members of the Overseas Committee on the 7th instant.

The Committee gathers from the transcript of the notes and from the conversation which took place between yourself and the Committee that the information which you desire to obtain may be put under three headings: (a) A statement showing the number of steamers which have been diverted from the New Zealand trade or have been lost; (b) a statement showing steamers diverted from Australia to New Zealand for temporary service; (c) any information which the Committee can afford with regard to the shipment of ewe mutton and lamb at certain ports during the current season.

With respect to (a) and (b): The Committee attaches for your information statements marked (d) and (e), which will convey the information desired by the Hon. Minister.

With regard to (c): The Committee first desires to bring under the notice of the Hon. Minister the accompanying copies of directions which have been issued from time to time to the different freezing companies throughout New Zealand in so far as the shipment of meat for the present season is concerned:—

16th November, 1916: Acting upon advice received from the London Tonnage Committee through the Overseas Shipowners Committee, the Department of Imperial Government Supplies notified freezing companies that priority of shipment was to be given to meat in the following order: (1) Beef and wether mutton; (2) pork; (3) ewe mutton and lamb.

16th February, 1917: Freezing companies were informed at this date, as the outcome of advice from the London Tonnage Committee, that lamb could then be shipped in normal quantities.

21st February, 1917: The instructions previously received on the 16th November and the 16th February were varied on receipt of advice from London, which was allowed, that after providing for beef, mutton, and Government cheese, lamb might be shipped in any quantity offering.

26th March, 1917: Notification received from the London Tonnage Committee that it was important as much Army meat as possible should be shipped; special preference should be given to beef, and then wether mutton and cheese, while not excluding ewe mutton and lamb entirely.

24th April, 1917: Advice was received from the military authorities that while preference of shipment was to be given to beef and wether mutton, the balance of space which could not be filled with meat of that class could be used for shipment of ewe mutton and lamb, so as to avoid the closing of works in districts where lambs have to be dealt with and beef is unobtainable at that period of the year.