

The Committee desires to acquaint the Hon. Minister that upon receipt of instructions from the authorities in Great Britain the several freezing companies throughout the Dominion were advised of the wishes of the Imperial Government.

The Committee now finds that, particularly in Wellington, the instructions which were issued to freezing companies have not been correctly interpreted, and that considerable quantities of ewe mutton and lamb have been shipped when beef and wether mutton was apparently in store and available.

The Committee has hitherto relied upon the freezing companies respecting and giving effect to its modifications issued from time to time as to the class of meat to be shipped, but from an examination of the details of shipment it appears this has not always been done. The Hon. Minister will gather that the instructions received from the Imperial Government and conveyed to freezing companies between the 16th November and the 17th April are somewhat confusing, and were open to misinterpretation, especially owing to the modifications at short intervals of the instructions. The Committee will do, as far as it can, what is possible to make provision for the shipment of ewe mutton and lamb in cases where companies have respected the instructions received and consequently been at a disadvantage in comparison with companies who have not correctly interpreted them. This Committee has already advised the London Tonnage Committee of its intention to do so.

This Committee desires to point out to the Hon. Minister that it understands the Imperial Government has been regularly advised by cable of details of shipments and the different classes of meat in store, and is unaware that any exception has been taken to the quantities of the different class of meat placed on board by freezing companies.

The Committee will also, in respect to further allotments, pointedly convey to the shippers that the instructions which are issued with regard to the character of meat to be shipped must be faithfully observed, and hopes by this means to secure a fulfilment of such instructions.

As a further step it has been arranged between the Overseas Committee and the Department of Imperial Government Supplies that the Government shall furnish this Committee with particulars of the meat actually put on board from day to day.

If these steps do not secure the fulfilment of the directions of the Imperial Government, then more drastic action will require to be taken.

I have, &c.,

JAMES FINDLAY, Chairman,
New Zealand Overseas Shipowners Committee.

The Hon. the Minister in Charge, Department of Imperial Government Supplies, Wellington.

19. *Mr. Forbes.*] There was another letter you mentioned?—Yes. The letter to the Hon. Mr. Massey was on the 28th July, 1917, and is as follows:—

DEAR SIR,—

Midland Hotel, Wellington, 28th July, 1917.

Re Shipping and Meat Difficulties.—In pursuance of my promise to you yesterday at the interview between the committee representing the Dominion Conference of the New Zealand Farmers' Union and yourself, Sir Joseph Ward, and the Hon. Mr. MacDonald, I now beg to hand you a copy of that portion of the report dealing with meat and shipping made by the committee appointed by the London Board of Trade, and dated the 22nd September, 1916. In paragraph 16 you will notice that the report states that to-day the River Plate insulated steamers "can carry 450,000 tons, and Australasian insulated steamers have to-day a carrying-capacity of 520,000 tons in a year."

I also enclose you a copy of the cable I drew your attention to yesterday from Paris, dated 4th instant, issued by the Under-Secretary to the French Navy, in which you will see that notwithstanding the loss of 460,000 tons of shipping through submarining, France has, with building, capturing, and purchasing, to-day an increased tonnage by 120,000 tons, apart from the 140,000 tons being built and 63,000 tons now being purchased in different parts of the world.

From the above it will be seen that Argentine insulated steamers had a carrying-capacity of 450,000 tons, and if you will look at the Official Board of Trade returns on page 7, as published in Messrs. Weddell and Co.'s report, you will see that in 1916 Argentine imported into England only 240,297 tons of meat. Thus you will see that, according to these figures, Argentine used little more than half her tonnage in the carriage of meat to England; and the same official figures of the Board of Trade show that for last year Australia exported 51,343 tons of meat and New Zealand 158,123 tons, making a total of 209,466 tons of meat exported from Australasia into the United Kingdom for last year; thus showing that Australasia did not use half her tonnage. It is interesting to note that the Board of Trade's report accounts for the tonnage not being fully utilized by stating that "Their Australasian tonnage, however, is largely required for butter, cheese, rabbits, and fruit." Seeing that we have so much of our butter and cheese held up, and that rabbits and fruit are practically prohibited from being shipped, this excuse as to why we are not using our full capacity of tonnage for meat purposes, I suggest, is in no way justified. You will notice the report in no way suggests any shortage of shipping through losses by submarines.

I desire to draw your attention, as again emphasizing the general statement that there is practically as much tonnage available now as there was before the war, to the further fact that on page 9 of Weddell and Co.'s report, where, dealing with the question of British refrigerated steamers, they say, "and the actual tonnage available now is much more than it was a year ago." This report, you will notice, is dated 1st February, 1917; and in justification of this statement they attach particulars of all the 283 British steamers that appear on Lloyd's register of insulated cargo steamers as upon the 31st December, 1916. Thus you will see that there is official data for saying that in connection with the refrigerating shipping for France, Australasia, Argentine, and Britain there is really as much tonnage available as there was before the war.

Regarding the question raised by the deputation that some of our New Zealand tonnage is being utilized in the Argentine and American trade, which you questioned, I would draw your attention to the following facts: A few months after the commencement of the war I, with others, waited upon you and pointed out that within three months of the start of the war three steamers, which had been regularly trading between New Zealand and England, had been loaded with frozen meat, wool, &c., and sailed direct from New Zealand to New York, and that a fourth steamer was then loading. Again on the 11th September, 1915, Mr. H. Hamilton Irvine, secretary for the Poverty Bay Farmers' Committee, wrote to you, as Premier, and Sir Joseph Ward, as Minister of Finance, as follows: "On behalf of the committee appointed by the public meeting of farmers of Poverty Bay held to-day, I beg to hand you a copy of the resolutions passed at that meeting. . . . Further, with regard to the shipping, I am directed to respectfully request that the Government take steps to have a copy of the resolution regarding shipping (passed at the aforesaid public meeting) cabled to the controlling authority in London who is responsible for approving the setting up of the Shipowners Committee. In view of the serious shortage of freight, my committee is anxious that some better control of the shipping should be established, so that there will be no grounds for feeling that our New Zealand shipping facilities are being diverted to a foreign country where the Imperial authorities have not commandeered the meat. I should be glad, therefore, if you could let me know at an early date whether you can accede to this latter request, as the committee consider it advisable that the authorities should be acquainted with the facts, and would prefer that the information go through the New Zealand Government."

The resolutions forwarded were as follows: "That the present control of commandeered shipping is not proving satisfactory for, *inter alia*, the following reasons: (a.) That there is no representation of New Zealand farmers' interests upon the Shipowners Committee that has been set up both in England and New Zealand with the consent of the authorities to control the commandeered insulated space of British steamers. (b.) In consequence of a number of New Zealand boats being diverted to the Argentine (which is an alien country, and where the Imperial authorities have not commandeered the meat) the difficulty of shipping the New Zealand commandeered meat has been greatly increased. (c.) . . . (d.) At the present time, in consequence of the serious shortage of shipping, there is a very large quantity of commandeered meat in the various freezing-stores of this Dominion, while the freezing operations for next year will commence next month. Therefore, if there is not some better control of the shipping the Imperial authorities will lose their hold upon a very large quantity of New Zealand meat, as it will be impossible for the freezing-