

works to provide for the whole of it, resulting in fat stock going back into store condition and preventing their being shipped. This meeting would urge the authorities to arrange for some better control of the shipping facilities."

From the copy of the Board of Trade report which I am enclosing you will notice the following significant statement in paragraph 15: "During the early part of the war, for sufficient reasons one British-owned line was allowed to continue running between the River Plate and New York." In addition you have the fact, as shown by the official figures published by Weddell and Co., that for 1915 and 1916 the United States became exporters of beef, mutton, and lamb to England, which she had not done for many years previously. I would here quote to you a paragraph from the *British Citizens and Empire Worker* published in England on the 10th February, 1917, in which the following statement is made: "And, again, the Food Prices Commission concealed the fact that a large part of the Argentine output for 1915 was carried in British-owned boats from Buenos Aires to New York, held in cold store there, and afterwards re-exported to England. Indeed, from beginning to end the whole position is a revelation of the humiliating subjugation of the British people and Government to the beef kings of America."

I quote also a few extracts from the report of the New Zealand Overseas Shipowners Committee, dated the 13th June, 1917, to the Hon. W. D. S. MacDonald, which he produced on the occasion of our interview, and which purported to detail the listing of the employment of the ships owned by the companies trading to New Zealand.

Referring to the New Zealand Shipping Company's vessels I note the following—"Otaki": Employed regularly in the New Zealand trade. Loaded in Australia, October, 1916, not being required to load in New Zealand. Sunk by enemy, March, 1917. (NOTE.—A few of company's steamers have made intermediate trips between New York and England, and New York and France, to fill in time while awaiting their turn on the loading-berth.

Referring to the Shaw, Savill, and Albion Company, the report proceeds—"Delphic": Has been regularly employed in New Zealand trade, but since March, 1917, has by Imperial orders been trading with America. "Pakeha": Has been regularly employed in New Zealand trade, but for four months in 1915 was by Imperial orders diverted to America. "Zealandia": Has been regularly employed in New Zealand trade, but for four months in 1915 was by Imperial orders diverted to America. "Waimana": Conveyed New Zealand troops Home in autumn of 1914, afterwards made a voyage from New Zealand, and was then by Imperial orders utilized for about fifteen months in trading with America and elsewhere. Afterwards made a voyage in New Zealand trade, and is since February, 1917, by Imperial orders, trading with America.

The report then deals with the Federal and Shire lines—"Somerset": Been trading to New Zealand but understand now diverted to transatlantic service.

All P. and S. steamers are interchangeable, Australian New Zealand trade, no special steamers being apportioned either service. General practice has been to load steamer in country where completed discharge, and all the above except Australian transports have loaded in New Zealand from time to time since the commencement of the war.

And with the Commonwealth and Dominion Line—"T.s.s. 'Port Pirie,'" t.s.s. "Port Elliott," t.s.s. "Port Hardy," t.s.s. "Port Chalmers," t.s.s. "Port Lyttelton," t.s.s. "Port Campbell," t.s.s. "Port Hacking," t.s.s. "Port Stephens": All requisitioned by Imperial Government since March, 1915, and running regularly to Australia and New Zealand until recently, when owing to the food situation in Great Britain about half of them have been diverted to the United States and River Plate trades under Imperial Government orders.

The suspicion that occurs to my mind regarding these so-called "Imperial Government orders" is that they are in fact merely the decisions of the Shipowners Committee in London, and dictated more for the benefit of the trust than of the requirements of the Imperial Government.

These facts show that the complaint of the Gisborne farmers in September, 1915, was fully justified, and that there are still grounds to believe our ships are being diverted more for trust than for Imperial purposes.

Dealing with the statement made at our interview by Mr. Triggs, a representative on the New Zealand Overseas Shipowners Committee, denying that Wellington had received any advantage over other ports in the shipment of ewes and lambs, and that his Committee did not recognize any responsibility in regard to the character of the meat which was put on board, I will, for your information, repeat here the actual wording of a letter of complaint made by Mr. James Findlay, chairman of the New Zealand Shipowners Committee, to a North Island freezing company, and dated 12th January, 1917: "S.s. 'Port Chalmers': I understand that in this steamer you shipped as part of your allotment about 2,200 lambs. As you are aware, Imperial Government instructions call for priority of shipment being given to beef and mutton. I am unable to trace that your company pointed out that you would be unable to fill your allotment without the shipment of lambs, and shall be glad to hear from you in the matter." I may say that the explanation of the reason for shipping this small quantity of lambs was that there was not sufficient beef and wether mutton in store to fill the allotted space, as the Imperial instructions were that beef and wether mutton were to have priority over ewes and lambs in shipment, except where necessary in order to prevent the closing of freezing-works.

According to the official data which the Hon. Mr. MacDonald produced at the interview yesterday, it was shown that one of the Wellington meat companies exported 72,000 carcasses of lamb and another 151,900 carcasses of lamb, and a third 45,404, making a total of 269,304. In addition it is known they exported large quantities of ewe mutton, while other freezing-works in different parts of the Dominion were being barred from shipping any ewes and lambs.

From these facts I suggest that one can fairly and with some truth say that the New Zealand Shipowners Committee have not been fairly controlling and apportioning the shipping-space, particularly as regards ewes and lambs, and the same might be said regarding other produce; and I also submit, with every respect, that if the Board of Trade's report referred to above is correct as regards shipping, then it does not seem that there is any justification for the people of New Zealand being informed that our protracted shortage of shipping is due to submarining, especially when it is remembered that unrestricted submarining has only been in operation for a comparatively short period, while our shortage of ships extends over the full period of the war. But if, to your knowledge, the report in this respect is not correct or justified, I suggest that you not only owe it as a duty to this Dominion but to the British Empire to immediately point out the incorrectness of this report to the Imperial authorities; and, seeing that the report has been placed before the House of Commons, and presumably approved of, it is only right and proper that this correction should either go through the House of Commons or its attention be drawn to the matter.

As these matters are of the very greatest importance I think it advisable to have them placed on record and brought specifically to your notice, as I personally feel that the great stumbling-block in connection with true reform in shipping and meat matters is the very great difficulty in obtaining true facts for our leaders in authority to act upon; and I would here like to state that I very much appreciate the difficulties that I am aware you will have experienced in obtaining reliable data in such matters as these, and please do not think I am complaining of your own action or Sir Joseph Ward's in the matter, but I desire to emphasize my complaint regarding the actions of others in supplying incorrect information to the official heads, both here and in England, who, naturally occupying busy lives, must largely rely upon information received from subordinate official sources.

As I regard this as a very serious public matter, I propose at an early date to hand this letter to the Press for publication, and should you desire to criticize or in any way reply to it, I will be glad to receive your reply before so doing. I am forwarding a copy of this letter to Sir Joseph Ward with a copy of the Board of Trade report, as he, like yourself, has not seen the report.

The Right Hon. W. F. Massey, Prime Minister, Wellington.

W. DOUGLAS LYSNAR.

[Extract from *Poverty Bay Herald*, 12th July, 1917.]

FRANCE'S SHIPPING: INCREASING THE TONNAGE.

Paris, 4th July.

The Under-Secretary to the Navy states that France had 2,500,000 tons of mercantile shipping before the war; 560,000 tons have been lost, of which 460,000 were submarined. France has built 120,000 tons during the war, has captured 150,000 tons, and purchased 413,000 tons. Therefore she has increased her tonnage by 120,000 tons, apart from the 140,000 being built and the 63,000 tons now being purchased in different parts of the world. Britain is supplying iron plates for the new constructions.

There was no reply to that letter from the Hon. Mr. Massey.