

should average 1s. 6d. per pound, and this cable now gives information that the wool will only turn out at about 1s. 4½d. net. Thus if we kept on buying sheep and valuing wool at 1s. 6d. we should be persistently losing. Towards the end of the conference Dr. Reakes left, and the chairman got up and requested me to leave the room, as I was a buyer. Although I represented a freezing company, he said I was not to remain. Why should I, as a buyer and owner of meat, hides, slipe wools, &c., be prevented from getting any information regarding the disposal of our produce?

7. Which conference are you referring to?—The Freezing Companies' Conference held in Wellington in August last.

8. Who was the chairman?—Sir George Clifford. The chairman said, "The time is now opportune for discussing contract embodying terms and conditions of next season's business," and I was asked to withdraw.

9. *Mr. Scott.*] Why?—Because I was also a buyer.

10. *Mr. Talbot.*] Did you make any protest?—Yes, I did. I said I must decline to leave and thereby disfranchise the freezing company I represented unless the conference first discussed the advisability of that being done. But there was no discussion. The exclusion of buyers in the shape of free exporters had evidently been prearranged. Our opponents accordingly by such means know beforehand whether any alteration is going to be made in next season's business or whether the Government is going to pay interest or make allowances, and yet we cannot get that information.

11. Since then have you complained to the Government?—Yes, I wired to all the free exporters of New Zealand, and we had a deputation, which waited upon the Right Hon. the Premier and Sir Joseph Ward, and now ask that free exporters should have a representative on the Requisitions Committee.

12. *Mr. T. A. H. Field.*] And one of those present at the conference represented an American meat trust, in your opinion?—Yes.

13. And he was getting inside information, and you could not?—Yes. The Government can protect the exporter by not following the lines of least resistance. We have put the whole matter before the Premier, and free exporters will gradually have to go out of the business unless they are protected. Several years ago the free exporters were not in existence to any extent, and their advent has been a godsend to the growers. If we are eliminated prices must go back, and the business will soon be back in the hands of the buying freezing companies, who in previous years used to combine and fix prices to be paid to growers. The freezing companies are advised by the Government and given information which free exporters do not get, although they are very large owners of the products affected. The second suggestion is, adjust rail tariff to provide for dead meat to be carried at cheaper rates than live-stock. In regard to this matter of railage, it is now cheaper for live-stock to be railed than dead meat, with the result that this past year we have had the spectacle of weekly stock trains coming down from Waikato carrying stock to Wanganui and southern works, and leaving the existing works in Auckland with short supplies. The Railway Department is fostering that by the present tariff. It costs to carry live-stock from Frankton Junction to Wanganui 0.15d. per pound for both cattle and sheep, and the distance is 259 miles. To carry frozen meat from Taihape freezing-works to Wellington costs 0.178d., although the distance is only 160 miles. Moreover, in a truck they can get 160 quarters of frozen beef as against 36 live quarters. Frozen meat is thus penalized as against live-stock. If you could adjust the railway tariff it would mean preventing the stock being taken past freezing-works which may require the stuff, and will also prevent allied trust houses bringing stock down by rail past half-empty co-operative freezing-works to Wanganui and other places. For instance, Taihape could not get the stock to fill their empty chambers. Their buyers were trying to buy, but they could not secure stock at the prices which were being offered by reported trust houses. In order to meet that position I would suggest the following. 3. Provide by graduated rail tariff against deliberate carriage of live-stock for freezing from one district to another so long as the existing works in the originating district can cope. Then, the fourth suggestion is prohibition of secret rebates by freezing companies to clients, or, if given, to be given openly to all. That is in the interests of the free exporters, and also in the interests of the growers. Then, suggestion No. 5: Register under license all fat-stock buyers in New Zealand on the undertaking not to knowingly sell to notified blacklisted trust houses, such buyers to disclose periodically their transactions if required. Suggestion No. 6: Legislate to make it illegal for any company or individual interested in any shipping company carrying meat from New Zealand to be also an operator in frozen meat or live-stock for export from New Zealand. Suggestion No. 7: That in connection with the sale of any freezing-works in New Zealand, such sale to be first subject to the sanction of the authorities after full investigation into all the facts leading up to the sale. No. 8: Similar sanction to be also obtained in connection with the proposed leasing of any freezing-works. No. 9: Publish regularly throughout New Zealand the prices offered in the Argentine, &c., by trust houses as against our free prices in New Zealand. I have already supplied information showing that Swift and Co.'s price for prime beef was 30s. per hundred, as against our price of 47s. per hundred. If those prices were published throughout New Zealand the growers would see what the position was. The 30s. per hundred referred to represented an increase of only 5½d. per hundred on the previous year, although beef had advanced 50 per cent. Then, the tenth suggestion: That legislation be passed giving the Government full powers over shares in freezing companies held under letters of trust. The trust people must not be allowed to be indefinitely associated with freezing companies by shares held in trust by "dummies." The eleventh suggestion is that an independent Board be set up by the New Zealand Government in Wellington, the functions of which Board are to be the pursuance of all matters relative to the Meat Trust; such Board, if possible,