

EXHIBIT 25.

SYNOPSIS OF REPORTS FROM CERTAIN INSPECTORS OF STOCK REGARDING THE OPERATIONS OF MESSRS. SIMS, COOPER, AND CO., RICHMOND, AND OTHERS, IN CONNECTION WITH THEIR ALLEGED MANIPULATION OF THE STORE-STOCK MARKET.

Stock Inspector, Masterton.—Inquiries made leave practically no doubt that Sims, Cooper, and Co.'s representative operated extensively throughout the district last season, and paid such exorbitant prices for both store and fat sheep as precluded other companies competing. It is too early to obtain definite information regarding this firm's operations for the coming season.

Stock Inspector, New Plymouth.—Sims, Cooper, and Co.'s buyers have certainly been operating in this district, but I cannot learn that they have been paying bigger prices than other firms. At the same time there is no doubt that during the past season the price paid for store sheep left little margin for fattening. It is difficult to obtain definite information.

Stock Inspector, Woodville.—Sims-Cooper (and others) operated extensively in all kinds of sheep, particularly in lines for forward delivery, during the past season, and their buyers advised farmers that they were prepared to give 1s. a head more for sheep than any other company, and they made no secret about it. This season they have not been buying on forward delivery.

Stock Inspector, Hawera.—Sims, Cooper, and Co. paid the highest prices for sheep of any one operating in the district, and with smallest percentage thrown out; in fact, they threw out no sheep at all. The company took delivery of all they purchased, and what were not fit for freezing they grazed, and disposed of them as store sheep all through the winter when prices suited; in fact, they have sold nothing as stores for less than they paid for fats. The sheep have been travelled all up and down the coast for sale. One firm disposed of four thousand of Sims-Cooper's reject fat sheep this season. If all one hears is only partially correct the firm are doing no good to help legitimate buyers for fattening. There is one thing clear: Sims-Cooper are always ready to buy lines from other dealers. It is safe to say that this firm is in the sheep-dealing line to a big extent, and this year already they are again offering 36s. for wethers after shearing; at least, farmers say they have been offered that price. In the cattle line the firm has just been like other people, their stuff going to the Imlay works. All freezing for Sims-Cooper from Taranaki was done there last year.

In regard to Richmond and Co., I have not heard of them operating in this district, but have heard of them on the east coast by repute. Some of the local dealers were buying cattle in the Waikato last season, and if what they say is true the firm of Richmond was always ready to purchase when cattle landed down the east coast, and pay the price. I have never heard their name mentioned in regard to sheep-dealing.

Stock Inspector, Christchurch.—I am certain there is not a particle of truth in the statements that certain individuals are forcing up the prices in the store-sheep market. The only store sheep purchased by Sims, Cooper, and Co. are lines of fat lambs with a fair percentage of store lambs among them. These are drafted and sent back to the store-pens. All the lamb-buyers are in the habit of doing this. If the accusations applied to the "fat" market, then I would certainly say that Sims-Cooper are making the price as hot as possible.

Stock Inspector, Palmerston North.—I cannot give any definite cases of such dealings as you state. I have made careful inquiries in several parts of my district. No one seems to be able to give any definite cases of such trading, although they all seem to be under the impression that a certain amount is going on. As you are no doubt aware, when stock of any description are fetching high prices there is seldom much margin between stores and fats, and at present among a number of stock-dealers there is the impression that stock will still further go up in price, and as a consequence these buyers operate freely. There is a good deal of speculative buying going on, but I have been unable to find out anything to positively show that the firms mentioned are dealing in any way different to others, further than to keep their prices slightly in advance.

Stock Inspector, Hastings.—There is certainly little margin between the prices obtainable for fat and store sheep at the present time. In my opinion the reasons for this are (1) the uncertainty of shipping; (2) the number of carcasses in store at the meat-works; (3) the unwillingness of a great number of sheepowners to quit good strong store stock in view of the excellent conditions of pastures and the prospective luxuriant and abundant growths of forage in the coming spring; (4) the shortage of cattle (the depletion of the country of cattle during the drought years is still felt); (5) the essential necessity of store stock to keep the country in good order. The prospects of abundant pastures are this year even greater, hence the unwillingness to sell except at the inducement of high values. As stores would be more valuable in keeping the pastures in good grazing-order, it appears to me that, with the uncertainty of shipping, the price of stores would naturally almost approximate that of fats. Some of the big buyers, such as Fox, Rodgers, and Richmond, undoubtedly hold a great number of store sheep, but so far as I can gather they do not hold, or have not bought for forward delivery, in the aggregate anywhere near the number held in previous years. It must also be recognized that men like Richmond are extensive landowners, graziers, and fatteners, as well as buyers. Personally I do not think that the operations of these buyers have much bearing on the margin of profit between stores and fats, and that such conditions exist as a result of the state of affairs mentioned above.