

they opened Tasmania to a doubtful country it might interfere with their staple industry ; and there seemed to be, even in the mind of the Chief Inspector himself, great doubt as to whether the colony was clean or not, taking the statement which he made to the Conference of delegates from agricultural and pastoral societies held in Christchurch on the 26th May, 1892. He spoke as follows : “ That a rigorous muster had been commenced on the previous day. As soon as he was assured that that district was free from scab, he should take the necessary steps to have the colony declared clean. The Australian colonies held their regulations till the end of the present year, when they would relax them.” They wanted to be careful in a matter of this kind. They had only a small number of sheep in Tasmania, but the subject was a very important one to them. Mr. Bruce and Mr. Gordon were interested, and he should like to hear them express some opinion.

Mr. RITCHIE said he wanted to be very careful before recommending the Minister to issue the Proclamation declaring the colony clean, and he would take care that this was not done until he was absolutely certain that the country was clean. For this purpose he had taken great care that every chance should be given to the Inspectors to examine doubtful flocks, and, having done that, he thought, when the Proclamation was issued, the other colonies could safely rely on New Zealand being clean.

Mr. GORDON said, at the last Conference there must have been a doubt in the minds of the delegates that the matter had not been properly dealt with ; but from what had been said, and from Mr. Ritchie's earnestness in the matter, he was satisfied that the colony was now clean.

Mr. BRUCE said that if Mr. Ritchie would carry out the course suggested by Mr. Tabart, of making a thorough inspection of flocks at the coming shearing, and found no signs of disease, he should be inclined, like Mr. Gordon, to recommend his Government to take the embargo off. It would only be a matter of a few months now. It might be considered necessary that they should take some precaution in addition. It might be that they should require to dip for a time ; but that would be a matter which would involve very little expense, and no delay. If no disease was found at the next shearing, and if Mr. Ritchie would make a careful inspection of the doubtful country at that time, and still found no signs of disease, he (Mr. Bruce) would recommend that the prohibition be taken off.

Mr. RITCHIE, on behalf of his department, would undertake that a thorough inspection was simultaneously made of each individual flock in the doubtful country. He had three men in the Marlborough District now, and they could spend the whole of their time there. There were only a few flocks, at Mount Patriarch, which were doubtful, and he would undertake to have them thoroughly inspected, and would supply the other colonies with copies of the Inspectors' reports.

The ACTING-CHAIRMAN said that any exportation when the ports were opened would undoubtedly come from the southern portions of New Zealand, which had been entirely free from scab. There might be a few exported from Auckland, but the larger number would come from the South, and would be principally long-woolled sheep from the Bluff, and down South generally. He might mention his own experience with regard to one of his properties on the coast. The front country was cleared, but the back was dense bush. They found scab there about eight or nine years ago, and had a difficulty with it. He knew that for two or two and a half years the Government kept men in the bush scouring and killing the sheep. The extent of country was perhaps not more than fifteen miles of bush, and they had men during the whole of that period destroying the sheep. They had had no wild or scabby sheep since that time. He only mentioned this to show how the department had been dealing with the matter.

Mr. BRYDONE gave notice of the following motion : “ That if, after the next shearing of the flocks in the last-infected districts, and on inspection, the said flocks be found free from scab, this Conference recommends the different Australasian Governments to remove the restrictions at present in force against the importation of New Zealand sheep, and also from the intercolonial steamers.” (See pages 8, 9, and 35.)

PRIVATE QUARANTINE-GROUNDS.

Mr. LAWRY moved, “ That in the opinion of this Conference the proclamation of private premises as quarantine-grounds for imported stock constitutes a grave public danger, by virtually abolishing all safeguards against the introduction of disease.” Scarcely a year passed without Cattle Boards being pestered by importers to allow private quarantine, and he thought it would strengthen the hands of the Government if such a resolution as he had proposed were passed. He would not detain the Conference further, as it appeared to him to appeal to the common-sense of all present.

Mr. BOAG seconded the motion.—Agreed to.

Consideration of the resolutions passed by the previous Conference was resumed.

INTERCHANGE OF AUSTRALASIAN ANIMALS.—SCAB.

Clause 18, held over from the previous sitting for further consideration, was passed as printed—viz., “ That no colony be deemed to be a clean colony in which scab exists, or has existed within the next preceding two years, and no sheep or sheepskins shall be introduced except from a clean colony.”

Clause 19, postponed, was amended as follows : “ That no sheep shall be imported by vessels that have traded to any but a clean Australasian Colony within the next preceding three months, nor by any vessel which shall within that period have had any sheep on board from any colony or country other than a clean Australasian Colony ; and the captain of the vessel shall, when required, make a declaration to that effect.”

Mr. RITCHIE thought that this clause would affect New Zealand in the event of the colony being declared clean, as intercolonial vessels would not be able to carry New Zealand sheep unless the embargo were also taken off the steamers.

Mr. BOAG asked if the vessels would not be considered clean if the colony were declared clean.

Mr. RITCHIE thought not, as matters stood at present. It would be at least three months before the stock could be carried, and another three months before it could be taken on board by the steamers, thus considerably affecting the intercolonial trade.