

2. That the railway vans and facilities now available and intended to be available for next season for the conveyance of frozen meat from the freezing-works to the ports of shipment are totally inadequate to the requirements of the trade.

3. From the correspondence which has recently passed between the Railway Commissioners and some of your petitioners, and which is as follows, it is evident the Railway Commissioners either do not fully grasp the situation or cannot get the funds with which to provide the necessary vans :—

No. 1.

The CANTERBURY FROZEN MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCE EXPORT COMPANY to the RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

GENTLEMEN,—

Christchurch, 20th July, 1894.

Referring to the interview which took place last summer between yourselves and representatives of the shipping, insurance, and freezing companies upon the matter of the conveyance of frozen meat from the freezing-works to port, I would beg again to point out the total inadequacy of the facilities provided, and also the more serious difficulties which will arise in the near future.

With regard to last summer and autumn, I would point out that owing to the non-arrival of machinery when expected our business was considerably restricted till March. Subsequently further difficulties arose owing to shortness of shipping; these difficulties were accentuated owing to the fact that when the vessels at our disposal arrived in Lyttelton we sometimes could not get wagons sufficient to enable us to forward the meat to port as rapidly as we could kill and freeze it. You will readily understand this to have been the case when you are aware that as a rule the maximum of wagons at our disposal was twenty-two, equal to, say, 3,000 sheep. Without exceptional efforts by railway, ships, and ourselves, the utmost transporting-capacity of these wagons was about 4,000 sheep per day, while our killing-rate was over 2,000 head per day. When, as was frequently the case, wagons were withdrawn for use at Timaru, our business was completely paralysed.

With regard to the future, I would point out that the very low prices for grain are causing reductions in the areas of lands in grain-crops, and corresponding increases in the areas available for sheep. Consequently, a very large increase in the export of frozen meat must take place. In view of this my directors are increasing the capacity of our Belfast works, our ordinary working quantity next summer will be 15,000 per week; and there is no doubt but that for several months we shall be fully occupied, as, although our circular inviting applications for next summer space has only been in shippers' hands about ten days, we have already applications in for upwards of 10,000 per week for some of the months. We understand that our neighbours at Islington are also making provision for increase of business. The business of the Timaru works is also increasing rapidly. My directors therefore trust that you will lose no time in making provision for all our requirements.

I enclose a copy of a letter received from the New Zealand Shipping Company upon the subject, which not only confirms my statement as to the difficulties of the past season, but also the estimate as to the coming one, in that large increases in shipping-tonnage are being made.

I would again draw your attention to the fact that the present ordinary train arrangements prevent the vans at our disposal being used to the best advantage, and would again ask you to consider the advisableness of altering our morning train, so as to enable it to connect with the 9.55 train at Christchurch for Lyttelton. This alone would save an average of an hour's detention of the meat on the journey, and thus enable the vans being returned more speedily. The meat for our morning goods has to be loaded by about 10.30, although by no possibility can discharge begin in Lyttelton until after 1 p.m. Then, again, the time at our disposal between the arrival and departure of the midday train only permits our shunting and loading about five wagons; so that without an afternoon special our daily output is limited to only five vans more than is provided for the morning's work. The evening train can but rarely be used without curtailing the following morning's work.

I would also ask you to be good enough to consider the question of the rate charged on frozen meat. In this connection I would point out to you that its present classification as fresh meat is purely accidental, as the classification was made before frozen meat was thought of, and the traffic in fresh meat was limited to butchers' supplies, for which special provision had to be made of a relatively more expensive kind than is necessary for frozen meat. Thus, one wagon of fresh meat loaded contains sixty sheep, say 60lb. each, equals 1 ton 12cwt. and 16lb.; one wagon frozen meat, 130 sheep, say, 3 tons 9cwt. 2qr. 16lb.; so that the haulage from Belfast to Lyttelton on a wagon of fresh meat is 13s. 8d., while the haulage on a wagon of frozen meat is £1 9s. 8d. I would also point out that since the inception of the trade the railway freight is the only charge that has remained stationary. All other charges, such as freight, freezing, insurance, London storage, and commissions, have been reduced from 50 per cent. to 75 per cent.

In view of the fact that the revenue derived by you from our siding falls little short of £10,000 per year, and is rapidly increasing, I trust you will give this letter your favourable consideration.

I am, &c.,

F. WAYMOUTH, Secretary.

(Enclosure.)

The NEW ZEALAND SHIPPING COMPANY (LIMITED) to the CANTERBURY FROZEN MEAT COMPANY.

DEAR SIR,—

18th July, 1894.

I have your letter of even date, and am glad to learn that you are promised so much support for the coming season, and also that you contemplate enlarging your storage capacity.