

28. Can you give the Committee any reasons for that, for such a condition?—No, I cannot, but simply it is a commission given to the agent for securing us the freight.

29. Do you know of any case where an agent has refused to accept the commission with such a condition attached?—No.

30. Do the co-operative associations accept payment of the same commission—in fact, do all agents accept payment of the commission complying with your conditions?—Yes, as far as we know.

31. Do you know or do you not know of any exceptions?—No, I do not know of any exceptions.

32. You have a general rate of freight for wool and for frozen meat and the principal items of cargo, I presume?—Yes.

33. Is any difference made as between shipper and shipper—is the uniform freight always charged to each shipper, irrespective of quantity or any other condition?—Yes, we have printed rates for each different class of goods. The same for everybody.

34. *Mr. Duthie.*] This system of loading-agents is universal in your company?—Yes.

35. You pursue the same course in England—for instance, in London you have an office there, your headquarters?—Yes.

36. What is the name of the manager?—Mr. Strickland.

37. You carried on that office for some years doing your own business?—Yes.

38. You recently changed and appointed brokers as loading-agents—Tyser and Co.?—Yes.

39. At the present time there is a firm, Westray and Co., I think, carrying on your business?—Yes, they are the freight and passenger brokers.

40. Over Great Britain you have, in outlying places, certain people engaging freight and passages for you?—Yes.

41. If these people engage a passage they receive this commission?—Yes, passengers pay just the same as though they came direct to us; but we pay the agent.

42. You charge the same price at your office in Leadenhall Street as agents in the country?—Yes.

43. Do you think a passenger could have a claim against your agent for a refund of the commission?—I do not think so.

44. That is a parallel case to what is in the colony?—Yes.

45. You have agents for all the principal places in New Zealand—a head office in Christchurch, and subordinate offices in several towns?—Yes.

46. Still, you have loading-agents in different ports?—Yes.

47. That is a matter, I suppose, known to the mercantile community for generations back?—Yes.

48. And to prevent undue competition between shipping-agents you stipulate they are to retain it (the commission) themselves?—Yes.

49. The shipping companies do not wish to encourage competition amongst agents?—No.

50. And you therefore stipulate they are not to give the services you pay them for away?—Yes.

51. Has it come under your notice that these agents minimise their charges to customers, and so get behind you a bit? They render services to the shipper, though they make a nominal charge for it?—They make their charges as low as possible to the shipper.

52. And they are enabled to make them lower by getting a certain remuneration from you?—Yes.

53. *Mr. McLean.*] Why is it 10 per cent. on steamers and 5 per cent. on sailers?—I do not know. It has always been so.

54. It has nothing to do with the loading?—The freights are usually higher by steamer.

55. About frozen meat: is primage charged, and to whom is it charged?—When frozen meat is shipped we make a contract with the frozen-meat company.

56. Then, there is no primage on that?—Yes there is.

57. Who pays that primage?—The frozen-meat company.

58. Do agents ever get any rebate from the shipping companies who are not shipping frozen mutton but acting as producers' agents—do they ever get anything in the way of a commission?—No, the commission is returned to the frozen-meat company only.

59. It is a similar charge on the outward cargo as the homeward?—Yes, with regard to the primage it is similar.

60. Who pays that?—That is paid by the shipper or importer.

61. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You say that 5 per cent. is paid to the frozen-meat companies?—Well, it is 5 per cent. if the freight is paid in the colony, and 3 per cent. if paid in London.

62. In the case of freight paid in the colony, you say 5 per cent. is paid to the frozen-meat companies?—Yes.

63. Are you aware whether the frozen-meat companies do or do not pass that on to the grower who happened to be an owner of the meat shipped?—I believe they do not.

64. Are you not aware, in fact, that they do?—No, unless they do it in their consolidated charge for freezing.

65. Would it surprise you to learn that they do so?—Yes.

66. You said that you, in all cases, insisted that the agent was to retain the commission, whatever it was?—Yes.

67. Is it the case that the frozen-meat companies are bound in any way to retain this commission?—It is rather a different plan with the frozen-meat companies. We enter into a contract with them for a term of years.

68. With regard to the custom applying to agents in England: do you know of your own knowledge that the agents there are tied down in the same manner as you explained they are tied here, not to return the commission to the shipper?—I do not know that of my own knowledge.