

Our detail reports and recommendations to the questions set out in our Warrant are as follows :—

1. *Whether the supplies of fresh meat available for the New Zealand retail market are adequate at all times of the year.*

In considering this question the Commission has assumed that there is implied the qualification as to whether the supplies are adequate “at a reasonable price”—that is, at a price which can be reasonably related to the fixed retail prices allowed the butchers under the current price orders.

The evidence showed that there is an adequate volume of fresh meat available for the New Zealand retail market at all times of the year. Indeed, the Commission was impressed by the fact that, in spite of the difficulties of winter feeding and in spite of climatic fluctuations, the supply of meat for domestic consumption in the various localities has remained remarkably consistent.

Much evidence, however, was to the effect that in recent months supplies of fresh meat, particularly in the winter, and more especially in the South Island, were being obtained at prices which it was claimed by a large majority of butchers did not enable them to make a profit under the current retail price order.

Our answer to the first question is therefore as follows : The supplies of fresh meat available for the New Zealand retail market are in the main adequate at all times of the year, subject to the following reservations :—

- (1) Exceptional seasonal conditions may create temporary shortages at any time in a particular area which have invariably been met by transporting from other favoured areas, admittedly at extra cost.
- (2) Transport difficulties and costs over the past few years, particularly between the North and South Islands, tended to accentuate the butchers' difficulties in obtaining supplies at satisfactory prices.
- (3) It would appear that in the winter period, particularly in the South Island, the price of stock is too high for the butchers to make a reasonable profit in that period under the existing retail price order.

2. *If your findings on the matter aforesaid be in the negative, whether steps should be taken under the regulations specified in the Schedule to the Supply Regulations Act, 1947, or otherwise, to make so available at certain times of the year additional quantities of fresh meat or (if this be not thought possible) chilled or frozen meat.*

Although we are of the opinion that generally the supplies of fresh meat are adequate, we consider that the practice which has obtained to some extent in the past of releasing supplies of frozen meat for local consumption during periods of shortage should be allowed to continue.

We understand that freezing companies are already authorized by the Marketing Department to reserve supplies of frozen meat from export stocks on application by any butcher. Furthermore, the Food Controller is empowered to require butchers in any locality to use a percentage of frozen meat over any determined period. The Commission is of the opinion that supplies of frozen meat should continue to be reserved from export for the retail trade and, further, that when fat-stock prices in any area become excessive the Food Controller should, in consultation with the appropriate butchers' organizations, require all butchers concerned to use a percentage of frozen meat. The exercise of these powers appears to the Commission to require the conferring of authority on the appropriate department to maintain continuous supervision of the domestic meat-supply situation and of the arrangements necessary to relieve the situation.

The Commission noted from the evidence submitted by many organizations and individuals that there appeared to be a fairly general prejudice against the use of frozen meat. The Commission doubts whether this prejudice is well founded, and is satisfied