

27. *Mr. Hornsby.*] If this fat-stock market which has been spoken of so much could be established in your district, would it be of benefit to the farmers? Do you think it would be a fair solution of the difficulties under which you are labouring at the present time, if a market were established in a good central position?—I do not know that it would unless we could get the buyers to attend; I do not think there are sufficient buyers. As a rule, the buyers for the freezing companies do not go to the sales to buy.

28. Supposing a central fat-stock market were established that would probably attract buyers from other parts to come and buy the stock, would that be a solution of the difficulty?—It would in a great measure, but I could not say whether it would be entirely.

29. Would the buyers prefer an open market where a standard value is given to the sheep?—If we could get a market like Addington we should prefer it. There was some serious talk of having an association and appointing an agent—a good business-man to do all the selling to the dealer or the frozen-meat company.

30. Do you get any southern buyers up in your district?—Very seldom.

31. Supposing there were a thousand fat wethers put into the market at Palmerston, would there be any buyers?—Not from Wanganui. The reason is that they can go out and pick their sheep at their own price. They will not take delivery immediately, and it may be not until a month afterwards; and where the works are so blocked and the sheep get nothing to eat the stock is deteriorated. They plump the sheep down for seven or eight days sometimes, and they become half-starved.

32. Supposing a few people in Wanganui persistently try to establish a stock-market, do you not think one would be created in four or five months? Supposing a man within a few miles of Wanganui put in five or six hundred fat lambs, do you not think that would compel the buyers to come up and purchase them?—I do not know. The only way that farmers can protect themselves would be by forming an association. What you say might improve the market, but you would have to build a market up, and it would be a step in the right direction.

F. WAYMOUTH, Manager of the Canterbury Frozen-meat Company, Christchurch, examined. (No. 13.)

33. *The Chairman.*] You are aware of the object of this Committee. I do not suppose you want the order of reference read to you. It simply relates to the frozen-meat trade generally, and the prices paid for stock in both Islands. It involves the price for stock for freezing and butchering purposes in both Islands. Would you prefer to make a statement or to answer questions?—I have not prepared any statement, and until I got into the room I did not know what the Committee required. Therefore I would rather answer questions put to me.

34. Have you any complaint to make with regard to the railway facilities for forwarding stock to your factory?—No, beyond the fact that occasionally the trucks are very dirty, and in busy seasons there is generally a shortage.

35. Does your company freeze any stock that they purchase on the market, or do they confine their work entirely to freezing for exporters?—We confine our business entirely to freezing for clients—for farmers and exporters.

36. Have you any fault to find with the freezing-accommodation provided by the shipping companies?—No. For the last three years it has been ample for all our requirements.

37. And has the produce generally turned out satisfactorily in the United Kingdom?—Yes; there has been a very marked improvement during the last four years, and I do not think we have any cause for complaint as to the way our meat is carried.

38. How does your company dispose of any meat in the United Kingdom that is sent through the company direct without being in charge of any agency?—We generally consign straight to the consignee all that is sent by the consignor. Sometimes we consign to Fitter, and sometimes to Bothwick, and sometimes to Fletcher. If any consignors wish to elect to send to any one particularly, we send the consignment where they wish.

39. I am to understand that your company takes in charge the stock until the returns are in the hands of your clients?—Yes.

40. What is the method adopted to dispose of such consignments?—If there is no other direction, we consign ourselves where we think it advisable for the time being to do so. Then, of course, so far as sections are concerned, they are fellmongered; the wool is shipped to London, and we make an advance of 80 per cent. on the value of the wool until the returns arrive; and the fat is sold under contract prices regularly—monthly; and the pelts are sold on contract terms, which are arranged every six months.

41. Are you aware that a system of concentration of supplies is in force with those agencies having charge of the Argentine consignments in London?—I understand that there is some arrangement of that sort, but the business in the past has been limited to three companies for the whole of that country.

42. You are aware that those three companies have representatives in London, who meet every morning and fix the price for the day?—Yes.

43. Having had a long experience of the business, both in wool and meat exported to the London market, your knowledge is such as to give you sound ground for expressing an opinion on the subject: would you be in favour of a system dealing with New Zealand meat in the same manner as the agents of the Argentine deal with their meat in the London market?—I would be in favour of it if it were possible, but under the existing circumstances of the trade it would be impossible to do so.

44. You think a combination at this period would be impracticable?—Yes; and you would have to capsize present arrangements. Such a large proportion of meat is sold to English owners before it leaves New Zealand that we could not make a condition that the man who has to sell the meat should be controlled by the people in the business at Home.