

210. You grade very carefully at your works, do you not?—Yes.

211. Perhaps the best in New Zealand?—I believe we get credit for that.

212. In a parcel of meat averaging 60 lb. would you send Home some as low as 40 lb. and some as high as 80 lb.?—The first thing is to grade for the quality of sheep or lambs. Then they are graded according to weights. We have always made a point of grading all meats that are likely to be sold c.i.f., but for meat that is going straight to the London market that we have graded for quality we have recommended a grading for weight; but sometimes a farmer declares that he does not want them graded for weight because he is going to consign them.

213. I take it that unless the meat has to be sold at Smithfield off the hooks it would not be sold under those conditions?—No.

214. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] Do you mind repeating the answer you gave to the Chairman when he said, "Can you make any suggestion to this Committee in the direction of a scheme which would prevent a single individual lowering the market price current, or which would prevent slumps"?—The first thing should be that every farmer should be made to declare to the factory to whom he was going to sell his meat.

215. To whom would that be an advantage?—To the trade as a whole, because that particular meat could be watched at Home.

216. By what means could you compel a farmer to do that?—By his own free will.

217. In other words, compulsion is impossible unless by legislative enactment?—I think it will come, and that they will do it. Of course, this trade has grown, and the difficulty is that it has grown faster than any one anticipated.

218. Can you suggest any way of doing it without passing an Act to that effect?—No.

219. Would it be possible for a freezing company to decline to freeze for any one who refused to disclose the name of his agent?—The probability would be that any company taking up that stand would lose business.

220. It really comes to this, that you cannot see any means of compelling farmers to do what you suggest. What is your view with regard to the railrage rates on frozen meat?—I really cannot understand why, if it paid the railway authorities to carry a half hundred sheep some years ago, they are not able to make a substantial reduction, seeing that the trade, especially in Canterbury, has grown some tenfold.

221. Do you ever rail from Smithfield to Islington?—Yes, when steamers are not suitable.

222. What is the rate per ton from Smithfield to Lyttelton?—I cannot tell you now.

223. Do you consider the rate fair as compared with that charged for butter and products of the same class?—There is a special rate between Timaru and Lyttelton in order that the railway may compete with the steamers. The railway authorities would like us to load our meat in Lyttelton, and they would give us a low rate; but we think the meat should be out of the freezing-chambers as short a time as possible before it gets into the ship.

224. Are there any other suggestions you can make by which the Government can assist the trade?—I pointed to the reduction of the rate for carrying live-stock. I think that would give strength to the farmer, and it would mean in Canterbury a tremendous saving. There are enormous numbers of prime stock coming to the freezing-works; but on store stock the farmer has to pay very high rates.

225. Do you consider that if the Government, instead of having mixed trains, ran night trains for stock a reduction could be made, and a handsome profit be made by the Government?—Undoubtedly; and they could deliver the stock in far better condition.

226. Have you had any experience at your works of freezing North Island sheep?—We had a line from the North Island sent to us this season. We were told they were North Island sheep. I was asked what was to be done with them. The owners said they were to be killed on their own merits, and they were frozen with our brand—"N.Z.," with a crown.

227. Your usual brand is a crown?—No. The crown indicates an inferior quality. There was no "Canterbury" or anything of that kind on them. That applies not only to North Island sheep, but to inferior Canterbury sheep.

228. Have you had any experience in freezing sheep from Otago and Southland?—At Timaru we have had some. The inferior breeds are like some in Canterbury, but there is not anything like the same quality.

229. I understand that, in addition to your company owning works at Christchurch and Timaru, you have works also at Picton?—Yes.

230. Have any sheep been sent from the North Island to Picton?—Three little lots came over, but there we have a different brand also.

231. Speaking with regard to sheep that go from the North Island to Addington for sale: what is your experience as to what becomes of those sheep?—The large bulk of them, I understand, are ewes that are put to Shropshire and Southdown rams, and they are very good ewes indeed. The other fat stock, I am led to believe, has been bought up by the butchers. Of course there is a very large trade round about Christchurch. There is not only Christchurch and suburbs, but there is the Lyttelton trade and the shipping trade, and the butchers are keen to get the North Island sheep, because they have to pay such a high price for Canterbury sheep.

232. I believe your company are the principal retail butchers in Christchurch?—We have retail shops.

233. You do the biggest trade there, do you not?—Yes.

233A. What is the average value that the company receives for mutton retailed in Christchurch?—I could not answer that question, for this reason, that the shops are run as a separate affair.

234. Is it not a fact that the consuming public in Christchurch pay considerably more locally for the meat they consume than the meat itself, after freezing, brings in the London market?—Yes, I think so.