

As an instance of the anomalies in the matter of freight which merchants have to put up with, I might just state in conclusion that, according to the rates of freight prevailing on a well-known steamship line, it is cheaper for the Ceylon merchant to consign his produce to Melbourne or Sydney *via* Hongkong than it is for him to ship it to an Australian port direct.

I have, &c.,

J. GRAHAM GOW.

The Hon. Sir Joseph G. Ward, K.C.M.G.,
Minister of Industries and Commerce, Wellington, New Zealand.

COMPULSORY GOVERNMENT GRADING OF GRAIN.

Representations have been made to the Department that steps should be taken in the direction of the compulsory grading by the Government of all grain for export, with a view of making the official certificate of quality and weight the basis of all oversea transactions.

As this was a matter which very closely concerned the different grain brokers' and buyers' associations in the colony, steps were taken to consult and obtain an expression of opinion from such associations. The two principal objects sought to be attained were stated as follows: (1.) Independent and reliable sampling. (2.) A common agreeable basis between buyer and seller on which to determine all questions of weight and quality.

An expression of opinion was invited as to whether in the opinion of the different associations such a step would assist export business, particularly with the Commonwealth and South Africa. In every instance, with one exception, the reply was in the affirmative.

I append the following replies, which show the almost unanimous opinion of the trade as to the desirability of establishing compulsory grading of grain for export.

SIR,—
Dunedin, New Zealand, 3rd March, 1903.
I have to advise, in reply to yours of the 25th February, that at a meeting of my association, held to-day, which embraces practically all the produce-shippers at this port, it was unanimously resolved to accord the matter of the compulsory grading of grain for shipment beyond the colony every support.

I was asked in reply to mention that it was the opinion of each individual member present that great good would result from such a course being adopted. Hoping this may assist you in the direction indicated,

I am, &c.,

W. ERIC REYNOLDS,
Chairman, Dunedin Grain-buyers' Association.

T. E. Donne, Esq.,
Department of Industries and Commerce, Wellington.

SIR,—
Invercargill Grain-brokers' Association, 9th March, 1903.
I am in receipt of your favour of the 24th ultimo, and have delayed replying to same till the matter received consideration by this association at a meeting called for the purpose yesterday afternoon.

The feeling of the meeting was strongly in favour of compulsory Government grading of grain, something on the lines of that at present in vogue in connection with dairy-produce and hemp. You will recognise that this association, although it may be anxious for the grading of grain by your officials, cannot make it compulsory for the buyer to accept same without all the South Island associations acting in concert and agreeing to make your certificates the essence of contract regarding weights and quality. You will thus gather that the idea in the main was agreed to, but it was recognised that the details would have to be well considered. It was the opinion of the meeting that short feed should be graded into A, B, and C qualities, and anything below that should go ungraded, and that long oats, such as white and black Tartars, should be graded into first and second quality. In fact, it would appear necessary that Canterbury and North Otago ports should have a different certificate to Southland. It was not considered advisable to have this certificate in operation between the merchants and the producers, for various reasons, chiefly owing to the fact that the oats would have to be graded twice—i.e. when they came down from the country and later on when they were shipped—and also owing to the fact that at present there is not much difficulty in settling grading disputes with the farmers. Should any dispute arise at any time, the Government Grader's services could then be called in on any special line, if necessary.

This will give you briefly the ideas of this association, and it was resolved unanimously that we fall in with your Department's suggestion provided other South Island associations do likewise, and that the grading only applies to export work.

Of course the feeling of the meeting was that it was no good trying to arrange this business at one port only, and we thought we would not commit ourselves to supporting the proposed scheme unless our northern neighbours did likewise, and acted jointly in demanding of Australian and African buyers that they accept your certificates as final as regarding weight and quality.

With the idea of co-operation, we are now in communication with the other associations.

Yours, &c.,

M. C. FEATHERSTONE,
Honorary Secretary.

T. E. Donne, Esq.,
Secretary Department of Industries and Commerce, Wellington.

SIR,—
Oamaru, 12th March, 1903.
Your letter of the 24th ultimo came duly to hand, and was laid before a meeting of grain-merchants specially convened for its consideration, when the following resolutions were unanimously agreed to, viz.:—

1. "That the proposal *re* compulsory grading of produce for shipment outside the colony is very desirable."
2. "That a thoroughly competent, reliable local grader should be appointed for each port of shipment."
3. "That the grader's certificate of quality be accepted as final between buyer and seller, and that weights at port of shipment be the basis on which all sales be made."
4. "Seeing that a large proportion of our produce is railed straight from country stations to vessels, and therefore the railway weighbridge has to be depended on for weights, the Government be urged to see that such weights are thoroughly reliable. To insure this it is suggested that a reliable officer of the Railway Department be placed in charge of the weighing, who shall see each truck carefully weighed when full, and immediately reweighed when discharged, so as to obtain the correct tare. The Department then to issue promptly an official certificate of weights, at the same rate as is now charged for weighing."

I have, &c.,

JOHN H. BARR,
Secretary Chamber of Commerce.

T. E. Donne, Esq.,
Secretary, Department of Industries and Commerce, Wellington.