

frozen. If it is properly kept in cold store, and not taken out or exposed to the atmosphere, it will remain for a considerable time in good condition; but if it is removed from the store, taken in a truck to the steamer, from the steamer transferred to a barge, and from the barge taken into cold-air store in London, the numerous handlings prove injurious, and when the meat is placed in that store it will not keep in such good condition as if it had not been taken out of the store at this end until it was required for the market.

*Mr. Rutherford* : You think that in New Zealand we should extend the frozen-meat chambers so as to enable a more even distribution at Home?

*Mr. Cameron* : Yes; rather than that it should be held in the store in London. When it is stored for any lengthened time in London it is not generally in good condition when disposed of. You would also keep your markets more evenly supplied with regular shipments by storing in the colony.

*Mr. Rutherford* : You further state, "That proper means of identification by the consumer are necessary for the welfare of New Zealand trade I am convinced. I have given considerable attention to this subject, and I have made very close inquiry throughout the country as to the result of branding. I am satisfied that the objection made to it—that it would encourage prejudice, and would be hurtful to the sale of the meat—is entirely erroneous. At present consumers know well, except when it is sold to them as English, from the prices they pay for colonial and foreign meat, that they are not receiving English, and they purchase it with that knowledge. They do not know, however, whether they are receiving New Zealand or River Plate meat, even though they may ask for the former. The New Zealand tag being generally removed by the retail butcher there is nothing to indicate this to them. A neat, clear, indelible brand placed on each of the principal joints would be a guarantee of the source of origin and of the quality of the meat supplied. Not only would such a brand be a guarantee to consumers, but it would afford a good point from which to advertise New Zealand meat exclusively," and so on. I understand you to suggest that all our meat should be branded with the New Zealand brand.

*Mr. Cameron* : I am in favour of that.

*Mr. Rutherford* : It occurs to me that this brand could be forged, so to speak. There would be nothing to prevent a butcher branding the meat after he got it in his shop, and it seems to me that it would be a very difficult thing to detect. A man might get fifty carcasses of New Zealand sheep and fifty carcasses from somewhere else, and use the brand as he liked. How do you suggest guarding against this? It could be so easily done, it seems to me—much more easily than by buying New Zealand tags and sticking them on.

*Mr. Cameron* : It could not be so easily done as that. Of course, if a man wishes to be a rogue it is a most difficult thing to prevent him. The tags at present in use lend themselves to fraud being easy of application to other carcasses. I scarcely think that a man would take the risk of forging an imitation of a Government patent brand, and applying that to carcasses of foreign meat.

*Mr. Rutherford* : You state that the profits of Nelson and Co. and other companies amount to as much as 50 per cent. Seeing that they buy at their own price, do you think that would be any guide in our case as to what our profits would be?

*Mr. Cameron* : No, I do not insinuate that it would.

*Mr. Barber* : You suggested that the output of our New Zealand mutton should be restricted with a view to more regularity of shipment. On page 2 of your report you say that the River Plate people closely watch the action of New Zealand shippers. In the event of New Zealand shippers refraining from sending cargoes in the months you have mentioned, do you think the Argentine people would still keep the markets?

*Mr. Cameron* : I do not suggest that the shipments during any of those months should have been made smaller than during the preceding seven months of the year. What I advocate is regular shipments each month—not a glut for a time and then a famine for the next few months. It is when we have a small amount of meat on the market that the River Plate people have an opportunity of supplying the people we would supply if we had more regular shipments.

*Mr. Barber* : On page 2 of your report you suggest the pooling of small lots for the purpose of quick delivery and less trouble in distribution, and the giving of an average price for these lots. Would not that act contrary to what we are endeavouring to do in raising the quality of the meat? Would it not be mixed with other mutton?

*Mr. Cameron* : I understand it is the habit of the freezing companies to grade the sheep for their clients. What I say is that if half a dozen men, instead of each sending Home, say, 200 sheep of grade A, grade B, and grade C, sent Home all their grade A carcasses together as one lot, grade B as one lot, and grade C as one lot, it would take away the lottery element that now exists. At present a man may have his sheep out of the ship first, or he may have them out last, according as they are stowed, and he may either make a gain or loss, getting a higher or lower price, according to the state of the market at the time of delivery. Consequently I say that if the shipments were pooled the owners would get an average price, which would be fair to all. It seems to me that it is certain that this would avoid a great deal of the injury done to the meat through so many handlings during the sorting to numerous marks. Each owner's lot being shipped under the same mark to one agent, this sorting would be avoided.

*Mr. Hogg* : I see you say on page 4 of the report that New Zealand is encouraging River Plate competition. I would like you to specify in what way this competition is being encouraged.

*Mr. Cameron* : That refers to what I have already said. I would really require to read the previous paragraph in order to explain that.

A discussion here ensued as to the necessity for grouping under various sections the several points touched upon in the report, and it was ultimately decided to appoint a sub-committee to deal with the matter.