

order to do what you now suggest, a few years ago a suggestion was made by the New Zealand Government to the shipping companies and the dock company at Home to erect a sorting-shed at the docks, into which all the meat could be discharged and sorted for distribution. Unfortunately nothing came of the suggestion, and under present business conditions at Home there seems no probability of getting this done. It would be quite unnecessary to have the gates you suggest for the carcasses to be sorted into various lots. The proposed plan is adopted in the C. C. and D. Company's store in London, and is a very efficient method of handling meat. If the sorting-shed were erected it would be an excellent thing for the colony.

87. But, assuming that all the meat was sorted in the dock store, is there railage communication with Smithfield Market available at short notice?—No.

88. That difficulty has not yet been got over?—No, it is all conveyed by horse-vans.

89. And what is the distance to Smithfield from the docks?—About twelve miles.

90. Do any of these river barges carry refrigerating machinery?—No. They are insulated.

91. All of them?—No, but all are supposed to be so.

92. When I was at Home last I saw some of these barges waiting for the completion of their loading, and the top tiers of the mutton were quite soft?—That was about twelve years ago. The conditions have been greatly improved since then.

93. Is any damage of a similar character now going on through the thawing of the meat in transit by these barges?—I think barge transit is a very bad system. The barges lie alongside the vessel and have to wait until they get their full load. They often have to wait for the tide, and it may be twenty-four or forty-eight hours from the time they begin to load until they get away up the river. Those barges, loading on the outer side of a vessel, although an attempt is made to keep them as closely covered as possible, of course must have their hatches open, while the sun is probably beating down upon the meat when it is being stowed. I am referring to meat going Home that has to go up river to the cold-air stores. Many of the people handling meat have their own stores up the river. There is only one store at the dock, that owned by the dock company.

94. Is there any damage of this description to Argentine mutton in transit?—The bulk of the Argentine mutton goes to other ports than London, and is discharged "on a face" from the ship. That is to say, there is no sorting of classes or marks done in the vessel. It is carted immediately to the cold-stores, which are only a short distance from the point of discharge.

95. Irregularity of shipments; do you admit that there is any deterioration of meat from a storage of several months' duration even under the best conditions possible?—I consider that if meat is put into a properly constructed freezing chamber immediately it is cooled, and held there, without being handled, for several months, little or no damage would occur to it.

96. How do you account then for complaints made against the quality of the Wellington Meat Export Company's mutton—admittedly amongst the best in the North Island—after it was stored for several months under the conditions you name?—I do not know that there have been complaints made. Can you tell me the particulars of the complaints, and indicate to what you specially refer?

97. In 1901, towards the latter end of the year, the market was rising slightly, and the Wellington Meat Export Company's mutton was sold under the usual conditions, after several months' storage under the conditions you have mentioned, and we had complaints as to the appearance of the meat as compared with the usual state in which the Wellington Meat Export Company's brand is delivered in London?—I remember the season to which you refer. Prices had been high in February.

98. It was late in the year when the meat was sold?—Yes; prices had been high in the early part of 1901, and considerably heavy stocks were known to be coming forward from New Zealand later on. Prices commenced to recede. A number of those who had large supplies in store in London held their stocks there rather than accept the falling prices. After some months they found that prices were not recovering, and they determined to realise. That season, and I suppose about the time you refer to, a large quantity of New Zealand meat that had been held for months in store in London was placed on the market. It came out of store in a very unsatisfactory condition, and very low prices had to be accepted for it. The difficulty that your company experienced in selling c.i.f. then was occasioned by the depreciated state of the market, owing to this inferior meat being placed there at the time you allude to.

99. My question was, how do you account for the complaint of the c.i.f. purchaser, not as to price, but as to the stale appearance of the meat after these months of storage; I did not refer to price?—I cannot say why. All I can say is, that it arrived at a bad time, when the market was depressed, and that possibly the people at Home may have made excuses for getting low prices.

100. Every one admits that the colour and appearance of meat deteriorate by lengthened storage, even under the best conditions, and the purchasers at Home merely indorsed what was evident before the meat was shipped. Some of this meat was frozen in February and March, and not shipped to England until October?—You will admit that meat stored under those conditions, and held here, will keep better than under the conditions prevailing at Home.

101. Oh, yes. How would you get over the irregularity of the shipments from New Zealand if you damage its appearance by lengthened storage, and you have at the same time the great bulk of the sheep coming in fit for the market in four or five months of the year? How would you get over the irregularity which you complain of?—Last year, there was great irregularity of shipment to London, and I think I could explain how that irregularity could have been overcome, and in doing so I will convey to you my suggestion as to how it might be managed in the future. Last year, during the first seven months, New Zealand mutton arrived at Home at an average of 156,000 carcasses per month. During each of the next two months close on 300,000 carcasses were received, while during each of the last three only about 60,000 carcasses were received. I would have ad-