

146. *Mr. Harding.*] You said that the stores at Home charged from  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per pound for four weeks' storage after the ship's arrival?—Yes,  $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

147. What is the average time the meat is held in store? Is that from the date the ship arrives in dock?—In the first place, discharge depends greatly upon the weather, and, in the second place, on the number of marks which have to be sorted out during discharge.

148. What is the average?—Probably a fortnight or three weeks.

149. What is the average price charged for freezing and taking the meat Home in the ship?—Mutton, in summer,  $1\frac{1}{10}$ d. per pound, less 5 per cent.; in winter,  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per pound net. Lamb, in summer,  $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. per pound, less 5 per cent.; in winter,  $\frac{9}{10}$ d. per pound net. Beef, in summer,  $1\frac{1}{10}$ d. per pound net; in winter,  $\frac{9}{10}$ d. per pound net.

150. You said the charge for storage was a variable one, and that there might be cases where it could be got for  $\frac{1}{10}$ d.?—Yes.

151. Do you think that if the colony erected stores at Home it would be cheaper?—No; many of the stores are not paying now.

152. Then, in your opinion, they are not charging an exorbitant rate?—Many of the stores charging that rate are not kept full. If working up to their full capacity the rate would be a heavy one, but they are not, and for this reason I say we should endeavour to get storing facilities throughout the whole of England.

153. *Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] Is the high price obtained for the meat at Home due to its high quality?—Yes.

154. Sometimes it is of an inferior grade?—Yes.

155. Would you say it would pay the colony or the farmers to develop gradually a superior class of meat?—I think too much attention cannot be paid by the producers here to produce the very finest quality of mutton possible.

156. The Argentine appears to be our greatest competitor: is the quality of Argentine meat anything approaching the quality of ours?—The quality of the Argentine meat has been improving more rapidly than New Zealand meat—in fact, the complaint at Home is that New Zealand's best class of meat has been rather receding.

157. You refer in your report to the irregularity of shipments: is it your suggestion that larger stores be built at the principal ports here?—That was my suggestion: that the meat should be held here in store rather than be sent Home and held in store there.

158. That would involve increased accommodation here?—Yes.

159. *The Chairman.*] In your pamphlet of 1901 you state that there was very great stagnation in the meat-market, and that the prices were not paying producers?—Yes. The prices were then: Canterbury mutton,  $3\frac{1}{4}$ d.; North Island,  $2\frac{3}{4}$ d. per pound.

160. Well, the prices are considerably higher now?—Yes.

161. You prophesied stagnation then, and you again prophesy stagnation in your present report, while, according to your own showing, prices have gone up considerably?—Yes, and they will fall again.

162. Is it not a fact that, concurrent with the increased output from the River Plate, there has been a largely increased output from New Zealand during the last few years?—Yes.

163. In view of your prophecy is that not singular?—I do not think it is singular.

164. Regarding the prices charged, you state that the report by returned colonists that New Zealand mutton is sold everywhere in England at 4d. or  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound for legs is absurd?—Yes.

165. Here is a report from London dated the 1st June, 1903, which says the following are the prices: For best selected New Zealand sheep,  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound; ditto, ordinary  $3\frac{3}{4}$ d.; and this can be cut down to joints and distributed about?—That is a wholesale distributing company's price.

166. I understand, and it is a fact, that these people will send a leg of mutton to any place in England at that price?—They do not pose as retailers—they say they are wholesale men.

167. Is it not a fact that any person in Great Britain can buy the best selected Canterbury mutton in London at  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound?—Canterbury mutton, yes; but that is not the question you were asking me about. I say in my report that I have often been surprised at reading in the papers interviews with returned colonists, in which it has been stated that New Zealand legs of mutton are sold all over the country at 4d. or  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound. That is retail.

168. Have you ever, in connection with the handling of meat, tested which is the best way for New Zealand shippers to weigh their meat—whether in the stores or out of the stores?—I have tested meat weighed *ex store*, and found, after it is hung, that it is less in weight than it was when frozen. There is a loss in weight.

169. Supposing a shipper were storing his meat at Home: the freezing companies can either weigh the sheep when going in or coming out, and it is upon these weights that the price is charged?—They are sometimes sold on the colonial weights.

170. Do you think it is better to sell on the colonial weights?—I think it is.

171. Would you be surprised to find that in my test—and the first lot I tested over several months—that the New Zealand or colonial weights were 376,274, against the weights going out of freezing-stores in London 382,730, leaving a balance in favour of the New Zealand shippers of over 6,000 lb.? That is what the New Zealand people gained and were paid for by my selling out of the cold-store rather than by taking the colonial weights?—I have not gone into that.