

153. You said "lower than the ruling price": My question is, "lower than the tenders from New Zealand"?—I do not know what the tenders were from New Zealand. The Agent-General asked the War Office to tell him what prices were offered, and they said they could not make public the tenders received. No one outside is aware what the prices were.

154. Have you any suggestion to make by which New Zealand could meet with better success when tenders are again called for?—The difficulty in the way of getting contracts for New Zealand meat, either from the War Office or from any large institution, is that there is no guarantee that the meat supplied as New Zealand is New Zealand. If the meat were branded that would be a guarantee that they were getting what they were paying for.

155. Would you explain how this difficulty would arise in a case, we will suppose, of a New Zealand tender having been accepted: Where would the difficulty come in of recognising the meat on its arrival in South Africa?—I am now talking of the War Office contracts at Home. I have nothing to do with the South African contracts.

TUESDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1903.

H. C. CAMERON, Produce Commissioner, further examined. (No. 7.)

1. *Mr. Aitken.*] I notice by your report that you state that New Zealand mutton is practically only known in the South of England, except for the monthly circulars that are issued by certain firms, and you recommend that we should take some steps to make it known in the midland counties and manufacturing districts of Great Britain?—That is, so far, what I say. Speaking generally, if you draw a line across England fifty miles north of London you will find that by far the larger proportion of our meat is sold south of that line. Of course, in the Midlands and in the North there is a quantity sold, but, comparatively speaking, a very small quantity, and not at all commensurate with the large populations in those districts.

2. Where do those districts receive their supplies from?—The North of England and the Midland counties are generally supplied with River Plate meat. The supplies of New Zealand meat which go to them, and which are only in small quantities, are supplied from London principally.

3. What remedy do you suggest to bring about an alteration in the circumstances you have drawn attention to?—In watching the distribution of New Zealand meat in the Old Country, which I have done pretty closely for a number of years past, I have found that it is well known throughout the country by repute. There are in several of the large towns small quantities of New Zealand meat to be occasionally met with; but I have found that, owing to this reputation of New Zealand meat, the retailers who are selling Argentine meat sell it as New Zealand meat. I have found that many people, who, owing to their knowledge of the repute as to the quality of New Zealand meat, are desirous of getting it, do not get it when they wish it. They very often get River Plate meat instead, and that I consider is very detrimental to the increase in sale of our New Zealand meat. I also know that there are throughout the provinces many butchers who are desirous of pushing New Zealand meat in an honest manner, but who, owing to the fraudulent competition of butchers who retail River Plate meat as New Zealand meat, find they cannot make headway and cannot push the meat. They have informed the Agent-General and myself that if there was any means by which New Zealand meat could be guaranteed to the consumers throughout the country, they would push the New Zealand trade much more than they do now. My suggestion, then, comes to this: that, having heard that the competition of the River Plate meat is likely to increase in consequence of several new companies starting in the Argentine, and feeling that our meat will suffer gradually from the competition of that increasing quantity in England, some attempt should be made to specialise our meat in those districts where it is now not largely distributed. With that object I recommend that the Government should open in each large town having, say, over one hundred thousand inhabitants, a small well-appointed depot where New Zealand meat could be displayed in an attractive manner, where it could be advertised from, and where it would be sold to the better class—or what, perhaps properly, I may call the wealthier class—who at present very often ask for it, but who usually have other meat supplied to them instead. The proposal I make is a small one for advertising purposes solely. I do not ask or urge that the Government should open shops all over the country and trade in competition with the butchers. I merely desire that our meat should be introduced to the wealthier class of people in an attractive manner, giving a guarantee from the Government that it is New Zealand meat. This demonstration would, I believe, increase the distribution of our meat amongst the higher class of butchers.

4. But the middleman comes into the question, and do you think he is going to view the opening of these shops with satisfaction? Would he not put a ban on New Zealand mutton of all kinds?—The proposal I make is directly in the interests of the wholesale man. By this advertisement we create a demand among the wealthier people who reside in the suburbs and in the large towns where I advocate opening the shops. By the introduction of our meat to these people the butcher will be induced to supply it to them when it is asked for. Having a demand for our meat the butcher will stock it. He will find that it will pay him to do so, and then he will have to go to the wholesale man for his supplies. You will notice in my report that I intend to keep the prices high. My object is that the retail butcher shall see that we are not going in for a cutting trade, but that we are going to demonstrate our meat as of high-class quality and of fairly high value. When the butcher sees that we are keeping our price up it will induce him to sell at our price. He can even sell a shade lower and then have a fair profit. I maintain that the result of creating a high-class retail demand would be to benefit the wholesaler, as well as the retail butcher.