

9. There is another matter which the Committee had before it to-day. They requested me to ask you whether in any of your recent public speeches you have been using any evidence which has been given before this Committee?—No; but I am sometimes asked questions similar to those I have been asked here, and I answer them. I am not giving them the same evidence that I have been giving here. What I have said is printed, and you can see it.

10. Has not some of the evidence you heard here when given by Captain Pearse been given at these meetings?—All I have said is what Captain Pearse told me at Palmerston North when I met him there.

11. Was that statement given to you that Captain Pearse made here—viz., that the output of the Argentine would increase to eight or nine million carcasses of mutton and a million carcasses of lamb?—That was given to me by Captain Pearse in the Club Hotel at Palmerston North before I knew he was to give evidence here.

12. But, as a matter of fact, it was the same evidence as he gave here?—I do not remember whether he gave that evidence or not.

13. Although you were here?—Although I was here.

14. Some members of this Committee thought there was a breach of privilege committed, although I did not think so?—I can assure you that that was given to me in the Club Hotel at Palmerston North.

TUESDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER, 1903.

DILNOT SLADDEN, General Manager, Wellington Meat Export Company (Limited), examined.  
(No. 9.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You probably have seen the suggested methods, both by Mr. Cameron and by the Premier, with regard to opening shops for the sale of New Zealand frozen meat in England, and as this Committee has been set up to take evidence on this and other questions affecting the meat trade, particularly the question of distribution, we should very much like you to give us your opinion on these matters. Would you prefer making a statement to begin with, or to answer questions?—Possibly it would be better if the Committee were to question me, because otherwise I might go into matters in which you do not take any particular interest.

2. *Mr. Buchanan.*] When you were recently in England were you satisfied as to the condition in which New Zealand meat arrived at Home generally, so far as you were able to observe?—Yes, I was. I was agreeably disappointed, as a matter of fact, to find the good condition of most of the meat. As far as I could learn, there is some damage from time to time, but the proportion of it is small. You might go into Smithfield Market many times without seeing anything indicating that the meat was landed in bad condition.

3. Supposing additional storage accommodation were provided by the meat companies in New Zealand, do you think anything of a practical character could be done to benefit the trade to keep the prices at a steadier average—by storage in New Zealand to some extent, in order to distribute the year's output of meat more equally on the London market?—As far as I can see at the present time, or for the last two or three years, there has been as much meat stored in New Zealand as it was expedient to store. The meat deteriorates more or less when stored, and all the wholesalers and retailers by preference would take it fresh. They would rather take it *ex ship* than *ex store*, all other things being equal, and the storage—although it is necessary to some extent to equalise the supply over a certain period—has a bad effect upon the meat. Six months after it is killed it is not so good as it is three or four months after it is killed.

4. Do you think, then, it would be impossible, even under the very best provision for storage in New Zealand, to store meat for any length of time without depreciation in quality?—Well, I think you will find that, as with fruit, there is a greater demand for meat when it is at its best. You can keep some fruit all the year round, but you will find there is a much greater demand for it when it is fresh. In the same way there must be a better demand for meat when it is in the best condition. It is like any other crop—it is produced at a certain part of the year, and is best when fresh. It can be put on the market whenever a good enough price is offered. It may be sold slightly cheaper when there is more of it, but there is a larger consumption during the period when the meat is fresh. Then the time of the year may have something to do with it. Our heavy shipments begin to reach Home about February, and the heaviest about March. There is a large consumption about that time, and it seems to hold till about July very often, and then in July and August the demand seems to fall off a little. You cannot go by particular months altogether, because the consumption differs in particular years. I do not think any storage would have the effect of equalising the demand all over the year. There does not seem to be any want of storage here. New Zealand can now store a very much larger quantity of meat than any one has attempted to store, or than any one would take the risk of storing, unless the Government took the matter up.

5. Does the Committee understand you to say that the meat as presented for sale in Smithfield was generally in good condition as you saw it?—Yes.

6. Were you able to ascertain whether there was any obstacle in the way of free competition for the meat by butchers in Smithfield?—The competition seemed to me to be quite as keen as in other businesses.

7. Was there anything you could discover to prevent the highest price being obtained under the free competition?—There is very keen competition throughout Smithfield, but the different retailers go mostly for their supplies to the same wholesaler, as in many other businesses. What I mean is that a man engaged in the retail business does not necessarily go to all the different stalls. He generally goes to the same one.

8. But he is perfectly free to do so if he has the money?—Yes.