

make any change, especially with regard to tradesmen, and I do not think they will shift their butchers readily. The people to get at are the butchers themselves. Give them every convenience for handling the meat and they will soon take it if they can make a profit out of it.

131. Can you suggest any plan to the Committee by which the producer in New Zealand could get a better price for his stock?—The principal thing that can be done is to save losses. Losses occur principally between its shipment here and delivery to the consumers. Damaged meat does more to bring down prices than anything else. When a concession is made to the consignee for damage, or alleged damage, this consignee is able to reduce his price, and this affects the current price of frozen meat. Another thing to do is to prevent the present extortionate charges.

132. To what extortionate charges do you refer?—The charges at Home are far in excess of the charges on the meat up to the time the sheep are brought from the farmer's place and put on board the steamer. The meat is taken away from the ship in England and distributed all over London into small stores, from which it is again carted to Smithfield.

133. What is the storage charge at Home?—The charges are various. I have a list of them with me.

134. What is the freight from New Zealand?—I do not know what the freight is this season. I have not had anything to do with meat for the last twelve months, but the freight was $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound.

135. All the year round?—There was a difference during the winter months amounting to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound.

136. Do you know what the storage charge is at Home for four weeks?—I have a list of the charges.

137. Would you be surprised to learn that the storage charge is only $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for four weeks' storage as against $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb. for freight during the winter and $\frac{3}{4}$ d. during the summer?—For how long has that been the charge for storage?

138. For four years past?—I produce a schedule of the price for storage as charged and supplied by the London Docks.

The Chairman: The four weeks covers the time from the arrival of the ship.

139. *Mr. Buchanan.*] What other charges do you refer to as extortionate?—The total store charges and the expense of putting the meat on the Smithfield Market. This includes the storage for twenty-eight days after the date of arrival, and then there is rent to be paid after that.

140. What about the commission?—That is a separate charge.

141. Is that exorbitant?—No, I think it is the general charge.

142. Have you any suggestion to make to the Committee as to the distribution of New Zealand frozen meat on the London market more equally throughout the year?—I think it would be better if there was a large New Zealand store in London for holding the meat, which would not be so congested as the small stores are. A store with a capacity of ten thousand carcasses is very easily filled, whereas a store capable of holding a million would not be. The present storing accommodation in London is absolutely inadequate to the requirements of the trade. There are a number of stores, but they are not of sufficient capacity, not up to date, nor in proper positions.

143. What would you say to the repeated statement of the Produce Commissioner, lately arrived from Home, that the present storage accommodation in England for frozen meat is more than ample for all requirements?—I heard Mr. Cameron make that statement the other day, but in this way: that the total storage in London and in the country was so-much; but the consignments have to be stored in London.

144. Can you inform the Committee of any date within the last few years when the storage in London proved to be inadequate?—On the 8th June, 1901, Messrs. Weddell and Co. wrote to me: "We may mention that the ship 'Karama' came in the same day as your letter, and, the London stores being all full of meat and space for the near arrivals all booked up, it was only with the greatest difficulty that we managed to find storage-room for the 'Karama' shipment." This shipment contained only ten thousand carcasses, and great difficulty was found in getting storage on that date.

145. Do you take it that they referred to that particular store or to all stores?—I took it to refer to all stores. There was a total storage, prior to the opening of the stores at the Albert Docks, for 1,600,000 carcasses on the 31st December, 1900. Since then the Albert Dock stores have been built. The second largest is the C. C. and D. Company's store at Lambert Wharf. There was one point raised by Mr. Cameron that I would like to mention, and that has reference to branding. I am very strongly of opinion that the branding of meat is undesirable. At the present time I think the frozen meat is readily sold because many people do not know what it is. People do not want frozen meat, but they are eating it because they do not know that it is frozen.

146. *Mr. Duthie.*] You say that people do not buy frozen meat if they know it?—That is so.

147. Then how would that affect these proposed retail shops for the sale of it?—I think in that way it would have a prejudicial effect on the trade. The great thing is to get the meat before the consumer as meat. I was eating frozen lamb at a table in England, and I asked a gentleman who was sitting near if he had ever eaten frozen lamb, and he said, "No; I am a Britisher, and never eat foreign meat."

148. *The Chairman.*] Do you think Mr. Cameron's proposal means much to the retail trade in New Zealand frozen meat?—No; I think it is better to remedy the losses that we have got at the present time—viz., reduced prices on account of allowances for damaged meat and excessive London charges on account of meat being carted or lightered from steamers to all sorts of inconveniently situated and equipped stores, instead of one or more conveniently arranged and situated stores in which the meat could be properly handled for sale, or, in case of damage, boiled down, instead of being sold as a bad advertisement of the meat.