

agree as to certain matters. Well, they could have their committee, but whether they could agree is another matter. All our experience is that they will not and cannot agree. It is difficult to get two people to agree, let alone seventeen. What would happen is that each representative of a company would consider it his duty, according to his lights, to do the best he could for his particular company, and it is not at all likely that any one representative would on any one day agree in such a manner as would suit the sixteen others. Besides the proposal is a contradiction to the suggested concentration.

19. Do you consider it is necessary to have a sorting-shed at the docks through which all the meat should pass before reaching the various cold-stores?—The sorting-shed for many shipments is distinctly a good thing. That is to say, it is better than any one sorting a large number of consignments in the ship or on the wharf. But it would be an atrocious thing to compel any one to do it who is loading into barges. Take all the C. C. and D. Company's meat which comes by the Tyser boats: all they carry goes straight into the barges and up-river, and, if you made a law that everything should go through the sorting-shed, then everything the Tyser boats carried, amounting perhaps, to eight hundred thousand carcasses a year, would have to be put into the sorting-shed for no other reason than to be taken out again and placed in the barges.

20. What would that cost?—Per ton, I do not know; but the greatest cost would be the unknown one incurred through every handling causing a certain amount of damage.

21. Your experience of the condition in which your meat lands—at your Blackfriars Stores, for instance—does not justify you in having any such investigation at the docks?—Mr. Cameron said in my presence that all carcasses carried to the up-river stores in barges were damaged by being so carried. Well, while my company is absolutely distinct from the C. C. and D. Company, we are shareholders in that company, and it seemed to me to be my business to sift that assertion pretty closely, and I said I must ask him to withdraw that assertion so far as the C. C. and D. Company was concerned, or prove it to be true. He beat about the bush for some time and was evasive, and I said I would be much obliged if he would give me a straight answer. I said, "Do you withdraw that assertion with regard to the C. C. and D. Company?" and he said, "I withdraw it." Of course, the assertion should not have been made. It is a well-known fact that there is no better system than that of the barges.

22. Perhaps the Committee will allow me to supplement what Mr. Nelson has said, because it is of some importance. When the "Ionic" some years ago took Home a considerable quantity of lamb, ten thousand carcasses went up in the barges to your store. I had a parcel of 2,500 lambs in the store, but, owing to the wretched system of assessing then obtaining, I did not know that any claim was to be made on this parcel until three months after the arrival of the ship, when I received a claim for more than 50 per cent. out of the 2,500 carcasses of lamb. I then at once inquired from the shipping company the condition of other parcels of meat as well as mine on arrival of ship. They showed the "Ionic's" manifest, and I observed that ten thousand carcasses of lamb had gone up to the C. C. and D. Company's Blackfriars Store which had been taken from the same holds as mine, and that the ship's report of condition on leaving the ship of that going up to your store was not quite as good as that of mine; but, on my making inquiries from Mr. Kiel and others, they told me that the damage seen on opening them out at Blackfriars was so trifling that there was no necessity for a claim, whereas on my 2,500 more than half were awarded damage on them. I merely quote that as showing that taking the carcasses up in the barges caused no deterioration at all, whereas those carried the shorter distance were much damaged.—It has been a well-known fact that up to the present date the barge system has been the best, the up-river stores being close to the Smithfield Market.

23. What do you think is the relative merit of, say, North Island meat as against the best Argentine meat?—The best Argentine is better than the average North Island mutton. In making that assertion I would like to say that some two years ago I saw some forty or fifty carcasses hanging on a rail opposite our own stall at Home, and they were as perfect sheep as could possibly be grown. I do not say that their average is as good as ours.

24. Do you think they cut up as well?—Quite as well—perhaps better.

25. Perhaps you noticed that Mr. Cameron discouraged the sending of meat to agents at Home who were agents as well as dealers. May I ask if the C. C. and D. Company are dealers as well as agents?—They cannot buy—they are purely agents. The C. C. and D. Company's business originally belonged to Nelson Bros. It was assumed by some people that Nelson Bros. could not be honest if they handled other people's meat as well as their own, so they sold out to the C. C. and D. Company, a purely distributing company, and now Nelson Bros.' sheep are sold by the C. C. and D. Company on exactly the same lines as other people's meat, and none of the officials of the company know the difference between Nelson Bros. and other people's shipments.

26. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Have you any suggestion to make with regard to the fluctuations in price because we do not distribute our supplies sufficiently over the whole year?—No doubt an immensity of mischief has been done, but whether all that could be done to avoid it has been done I cannot say. Two years and a half ago the meat went up to an extravagant price.

27. In December last North Island mutton was quoted at 5½d. per pound?—The first time it got up very high—up to 5d.—the C. C. and D. Company lost over a thousand clients, who for the first time discovered that River Plate meat suited their trade, and those clients never went back to the company. That was about two years and a half ago.

28. The highest price previously was in February, 1901?—That would be about the time.

29. The maximum price for the best North Island meat was 4½d.?—These excessively high prices must do mischief, because a large part of the frozen-meat trade must be done with people who have only a certain amount of money to spend. If they cannot get our meat at a certain figure they must get something else. The cheap River Plate meat is every bit as good as our cheap meat.