

67. Was the last butter season an exceptional one as regards range of prices?—Yes; butter touched the lowest price on record for ten years during last season. I get that from the Agent-General's cabled market reports.

68. What was the actual range of prices from the beginning to the end of last season—the one referred to by Mr. Duthie?—It ranged from £4 4s. to £5 6s. per cwt.

69. What is the difference per ton?—That is a difference of £22 per ton.

70. And how much per pound?—That works out at 2½d. per pound.

71. How long does the butter season last?—Eight months.

72. During that exceptional season, what was the greatest weekly change in price—downwards?—From £4 14s. to £4 10s.

73. What period would that downward price range from?—That is from the 4th to the 11th April.

74. What was the greatest weekly range of prices upwards?—From £4 4s. to £4 8s.

75. And the date?—From the 14th to the 21st May.

76. So that the greatest weekly variation was 4s. per hundredweight, or less than ½d. per pound: is that not so?—Yes, that is so.

77. Now, I want to further ask if that variation which you have stated cut both ways?—Yes; butter a week late in May realised an extra £4 per ton.

78. You say that butter a week late in May realised an extra £4 per ton?—Yes; £4 more than if it had been there a week before.

79. Now, during the ordinary butter season 1d. per pound, equal to about £10 per ton, would cover the total range in prices from the beginning to the end of the season?—Yes, during an ordinary season.

80. Upon the information as stated by you, would the assumption of Mr. Duthie that a delay of a fortnight would probably cause a loss in the value of butter of from 1d. to 2d. per pound—in other words from £10 to £20 a ton—be correct? What I mean to say is, in view of the fact that you have given the range of both downward and upward prices, would that assumption be at all probable?—I think from the figures it is quite impossible.

81. How many steamers are there under the control of the contractors for the west-coast service and which are available for the colony to carry on this contract?—Twenty-four.

82. Can you give the Committee their tonnage?—Their total tonnage is 220,050 tons.

83. I understand you to say that they are first-class steamers of their kind?—Yes, they are all classed at Lloyds as first-class steamers.

84. Can you give the Committee any idea of their value?—They are valued at £2,830,000.

85. Can you tell the Committee what has been the total expenditure on this line of steamers in the colony since the commencement of these contracts?—I have inquired and find it is £59,845 18s. 9d.

86. Can you say what that covers?—Port dues and pilotage, £16,252 1s. 8d.; labour, stevedoring, and cargo charges, £35,791 19s. 2d.; ships' stores, £7,801 17s. 11d.

87. What is the total amount of subsidy that the company has received for the service to South African ports up to date?—£52,750.

88. Since this company has been trading in these waters have any of the original companies given up trading to New Zealand?—No; in every case they have rather increased their services and added to their fleets by building new steamers.

89. So that the colony, in addition to the whole of the steam-services that were in operation before, has got this additional line of steamers trading between New Zealand and the west-coast ports of the United Kingdom without paying anything whatever for it?—Yes, the colony has an additional line to the west-coast ports of the United Kingdom and pays nothing for it.

90. Mr. Duthie asked what number of vessels arrived in this colony from Glasgow and Liverpool last year: This question had reference to the quantity of outward cargo brought from Liverpool and Glasgow to New Zealand. What was the reply you gave to that?—I had not looked the matter up and was speaking from memory and said there was about one vessel every four weeks, or possibly one every three weeks, say sixteen or seventeen for the year.

91. Mr. Duthie took exception to your reply, and asked you something to the effect of whether you would be surprised to know there were thirty full-sized sailing-vessels arrived from Liverpool and Glasgow last year: Have you made inquiries in order to ascertain what number of vessels arrived in the colony?—Yes, I have made inquiries and procured a return from the Secretary of Trade and Customs dated the 26th instant, and the return shows that at all ports in the colony last year eight vessels arrived from Glasgow and ten from Liverpool, making a total of eighteen vessels for the year.

92. By whom is the return signed?—W. T. Glasgow, Secretary and Inspector of Customs. [Return put in Exhibit "B".]

93. The information that was conveyed to Mr. Duthie and given to the Committee by him was not correct?—No, he was evidently misinformed.

94. Mr. Buchanan asked you if it was not a fact that an outside steamer had loaded oats for South Africa at £1 5s. freight while the subsidised company was charging £1 10s.?—Yes, that is so.

95. What is the relative position of the different opportunities of shipment?—The outside steamer referred to by Mr. Buchanan loaded at one port in New Zealand, and discharged at one port only in South Africa, whereas the subsidised service has to load at not less than four ports in New Zealand and discharge at not less than three ports in South Africa; and an isolated opportunity of shipment such as this is never considered a fair comparison with the monthly service.

96. Do you know, as a matter of fact, that the Union Steamship Company, which has a cargo service from the eastern ports to New Zealand, are occasionally very much undercut by an outside steamer being put upon the berth in competition against them?—Yes, that is so.