

Commissioner (Mr. Hooper) says, "I am informed that the Cardiff purchasers of the 'Rangatira' shipment were charged $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound premium on the meat over London rates, to cover extra freight. This, however, represents a small saving to the purchasers, compared with the charges for railing meat from London. The meat was also delivered *ex* ship in better condition than *ex* rail. Although the Christchurch Meat Company were the actual shippers, I understand they sold to other parties who placed the shipment. The largest local purchasers were Messrs. H. Woodley and Co., of Cardiff, who deal largely and regularly in New Zealand meat, and the River Plate Fresh Meat Company, which has considerable business interests in South Wales. The Plate companies have for some time past been selling New Zealand lamb in conjunction with their mutton, not having enough of their own to satisfy the growing demand for frozen lamb. The sheep *ex* 'Rangatira' were largely of the lower grades, and were apparently suitable for the Plate dealers' trade. Altogether, this first direct shipment of New Zealand meat to the Bristol Channel may be considered a success, and might be followed by others at suitable opportunities with equally good prospects."

147. Now, on the 7th of November, 1903, the Department received a report on the subject of the "Rakaia's" shipment, the only steamer put on direct to Liverpool?—Yes.

148. What does that say?—"Speaking generally, and apart from the rabbit question, the 'Rakaia's' direct shipment to Liverpool may be regarded as successful. It would, however, be advisable to make discharge as rapid as possible in the case of future visits to provincial ports, if this trade is to be developed without causing undue friction with established London interests. As far as I can learn, there is no immediate prospect of the 'Rakaia' shipment being followed up. The combination of circumstances which brought that vessel to Liverpool is not likely to recur frequently. There is, however, undoubtedly a good direct trade to be done in a number of New Zealand products, granted transit facilities. The organization for such trade is already largely on the spot, and the position is very different to that existing at the time of the meat-shipment by the sailing-ship "Timaru" some years back. I may here remark that a judicious and moderate subsidising of direct shipments to provincial ports is frequently advanced by traders in this country as a means by which the New Zealand Government could most effectively assist in decentralising the colony's trade at this end. Among the butter was a consignment of about five hundred boxes from the Taieri and Peninsula Company to Messrs. George Wall and Co., their English agents, whose headquarters are at Liverpool, the direct shipment in this case being especially suitable. Of a line of 2,000 boxes, comprising the remainder of the butter booked for Liverpool, about a thousand boxes were brought on to London. New Zealand butter has a strong hold in the Liverpool district, having largely won the place occupied in past years by Australian butter. The latter, however, will have an advantage if, as seems to be planned, consignments are shipped to Liverpool direct by the White Star boats at the reduced halfpenny rate secured by the Victorian Government."

149. That $\frac{1}{2}$ d. freight referred to there is shown in the correspondence which I read here to have been only temporary?—Yes, that correspondence shows that it was a temporary reduction.

150. But from the concluding paragraph, in the Acting Produce Commissioner's opinion, there is a great advantage to be obtained in the financial results by shippers of butter to the west-coast ports from New Zealand?—Yes, by direct shipments.

151. Now, assuming such a thing was attempted to be done, could any advantage of any kind be offered to any intending contractor over another tendering for a service such as was advertised for by the Government for the west coast ports of England?—I cannot see that any tenderer could have an advantage over another in such a case unless he knew what his opponent was going to offer, which was impossible, and was willing to give something better.

152. Would it have been the duty of the Department to point out to the Government—as is always done as far as my experience goes in all matters of tenders—the respective advantages or disadvantages of the tenders received, either for a steam service or anything else?—Yes.

153. Would the Department not have been bound to recommend the tender that was the most favourable to the colony in their judgment?—Yes.

154. Did the Department recommend the tender they considered the best for the colony?—Yes.

155. Was any request for information of any kind in connection with the published tenders for this service made directly or indirectly by any of the tenderers, or by people who did not tender, to the Department?—No.

156. If requests for information had been made from any one in connection with the tenders for this service, would it have been fully and freely given?—Yes.

157. Were the two published official reports of 1902 and 1903 of the Industries and Commerce Department, which pointedly directed attention to the necessity on behalf of the producers of the colony for a steam service to the west-coast ports of the United Kingdom, laid on the table of the House, forwarded to the Agent-General, and circulated throughout the colony?—Yes.

168. So that it was—unless owing to their own neglect or inattention—within the knowledge of the existing steamship companies trading to this colony that the Government of this country were publicly urging the establishment of a west-coast service to the United Kingdom?—Yes; they should have known it as the result of that publicity—they had the opportunity.

159. As the outcome of this west-coast service, is it a fact that a permanent reduction in freights upon our products has been secured to shippers to the west-coast ports of the United Kingdom?—Yes, in the cost of transport.

160. And with that permanency a regular service has been established?—Yes.

161. Do you assume it to be conceivable that any business people, or any of the producers in the country, would continue to pay the London rates and charges and rail their products from London to Liverpool, or to Glasgow, Bristol, or Cardiff, with such an opportunity for direct shipment available?—No, they would not do it.