

said that the frozen meat should be "sold" as far as possible in this way. That is, I think, the true object of the motion: that it should be sold so far as possible through an organization of producers, a farmers' co-operative company. We have in this an asset varying in value from three to five millions, and it is worth protecting. Up to the present we have absolutely got no protection from the way our produce is handled on the London market. The control there must be admitted to be very loose, and personally I have lost all confidence in the manner in which our frozen-meat produce is handled on the London market. I think, with an important asset such as this, this Conference is the right and proper Conference to take the matter into consideration, and devise some ways and means. My own impression is that you have the nucleus of the means of controlling that in this British New Zealand Meat Produce Company. It may not be large enough, but there is the nucleus; and if that was used—the principles of that company used—it would be practical and effective. The Chairman has been good enough to give us illustrations of the value of meat, but, judging from the prices we have been getting up North, his values are on a high basis, and his estimate of a million loss on a low basis. I hold in my hand the details of the result of shipments from Gisborne, showing that in 1906 the average net price per pound was 2·7d., and in those consignments there was damage to the extent of 12·8 per cent. at the other end; in 1907 it was 3·63d., with a damage of 12·13 per cent at the other end; beef for 1906–7 was 1½d., with a damage of 8 per cent.; and for mutton in 1908–9 it was 1·43d. (it did not realise 1½d.), and lamb netted 2d. From that it will be seen that it is not a million we are losing, but over that; and I have come to the conclusion that what we find in the North, we find exactly the same here in the South. I have some bills of lading from Christchurch showing that nearly every consignment of produce was marked "damaged," and I refuse to believe that, where you find it so regular that every consignment is marked "damaged," it is really damaged at all. We will never object to pay for legitimate damage, but where we see damage persistently put on from 10 per cent. to 13 per cent. we know that there is something wrong. I have it on the best authority that, where a seller was bowled out in allowing damage where no damage existed, the firm were receiving £1,700 per year for damaged meat, and for the next twelve months it ran under £3. In other words, our agents at Home had allowed £1,700 to be given to one firm alone on account of damage when in fact there was no real damage at all. When we see this, and when we see the meat-market going down and down, and the retailers paying the full price, we realize that there is something wrong. Things are not right, and they have been wrong for a long time, and we want to do something to put them in order; and if the farmers would realize the urgency of co-operation they would do some good. It is no use coming here and talking if we do not get co-operation from the farmers as a whole, and if you do not give them an organization they can use. I did not know that this British company was so active in this matter here; I am a shareholder, but I thought they were more or less dead; but I am prepared to give them my meat; but they must stop this damage or show us the cause. I might also point out that at Home, where the sales are made, I understand there is, first of all, a claim for off-colour, broken shanks, mis-shape, and so on—perhaps ½d. or ¼d. per stone allowed for that; then there is a claim for "not up to standard" or "not up to grade"; and that is after the price has been fixed. Why should we allow that? What we want to do is to knock this damage claim on the head. Butter and cheese are graded by the Government and valued at Home by the Government, and there are no claims for damage. There is no uniformity of grading here in regard to meat, and therefore no uniformity of value at Home. Our first step is to grade by the Government here; secondly, ship through a responsible organization that will protect the farmers and treat them honestly. I have been shipping meat for years past, and I can state that every time there has been damage marked I have never been able to ascertain what the damage was, except for bone-taint. The agent has never been able to tell me what the damage was. That, in itself, shows that there is something wrong. I do not wish to take up the time of the meeting further, though there are other details that I would like to go into; but I would compliment the President on his address given to us here to-day, and I think he touches the kernel of the whole position, and if the principles he enunciates are applied, it will be better for everybody. I will ask the Conference to draw a distinction between the producer and those interested in mercantile and shipping and freezing companies. They should be here to help us, and I am glad they are here; but the farmers, as producers, have to pay all the time, and when there is anything affecting business, it is at once shifted on to the shoulders of the farmer. It is the farmer every time who has to pay. I hope the resolution will be carried with an amendment such as I have indicated. We do not want to make it arbitrary to ship all meat in a certain way, but to ask the producers generally to give us all the support they possibly can. They can put the matter though the same merchants and the same banks as now, and simply say, I want the stuff sold, but sold through a certain organization. Do not alter your bankers or your mercantile firms at all, but simply ask them to sell through a certain organization. If that is done, things will be on a much more satisfactory basis. If Mr. Sheat does not object, I would suggest that the words "and sold as far as possible" be added after the word "consigned."

*Mr. Sheat* said that he had not the slightest objection to allowing this.

*Mr. R. D. D. McLean* (Hawke's Bay Agricultural and Pastoral Association).—I wish merely to indorse what Mr. Lysnar said about the British company. I was rather surprised that speakers had not referred to this previously. The reasons mentioned were the very reasons for starting the company—a Canterbury company, which has got support from the North Island as well. There are several of us using this company, and consigning through this company with successful results; and I take it that the work being done by that company, which is entirely representative of the producers, and which has got absolutely no other interest whatever than to represent the producers, is really what is wanted, and what so many farmers throughout New Zealand are trying to attain to. So that I am glad that Mr. Lysnar has mentioned it, because the existence of a company of the kind might be overlooked.