

Government should retain control of the frozen-meat trade for a period following the signing of peace, as it is clear that surveillance will be necessary to prevent diversion of excessive quantities to other countries, even perhaps to our present enemies, to the detriment of our own kith and kin. Mr. Lewis Harcourt, in the House of Commons, recently mentioned that arrangements had been in contemplation for after-war supplies, but nothing had so far eventuated. The existing system of sale to the Imperial Government, which has been in vogue for the last two years and more, has worked very satisfactorily. It has enabled the farmer to gauge the value of his stock, and, although conditions have been abnormal, sufficient experience has been gained to prove that with a restoration of shipping facilities a stability would be given to fat and store stock values which would to a great extent eliminate speculation and make for soundness in Dominion finance. If the Imperial Government controlled the wholesale market at Home it could in turn regulate retail prices. Profiteering, which has recently been so much in evidence, would be minimized, and consumers would be supplied on the lowest possible basis. Violent fluctuations due to plethora or paucity of supplies could be bridged. A reference to the attached chart, issued by the Colonial Consignment and Distributing Company (Limited) for the year before the war, will better convey the purport of this. Another important advantage in connection with such a scheme is that, there being only one shipper of meat, the supplies could be so dealt with as to fill the steamers more regularly, thereby obviating the heavy summer and autumn shipments as against the light winter and spring exports, which operated so unfavourably to all interests prior to the war. Under the old system these objections will in future normal times be multiplied owing to there now being many more freezing-works. Another serious disadvantage of individual consignment is that when the outlook is not promising weak holders make the position infinitely worse for all concerned by forcing their parcels on an unfavourable market, thereby reducing values, which in turn become reflected at the producing end. If a modification of the present system could be arranged, figures to be paid by the Imperial Government could be settled from time to time by a committee representative of all interests. Its duty would be to fix prices on the basis of the parity of world's value, taking into consideration shortage or excess of supplies in producing-centres, also the consumptive demand generally on the Continent, in United States of America, or elsewhere. As an indication of what may happen in New Zealand if some remedy cannot be found and the trust becomes able to dominate local companies as it has done in South America, the position in Argentina may be mentioned. According to the *Pastoral Review* of the 16th July last the quotations ruling on the 1st May (the latest date available) were—Special bullocks, £14 to £15 15s.; good bullocks, £8 15s. to £10 10s.; special Lincoln wethers, 33s. 3d. to 35s.; good Lincoln wethers, 26s. 3d. to 29s. 9d.; special Lincoln ewes, 27s. to 28s. 10d.; good Lincoln ewes, 25s. 4d. to 27s. Prime bullocks in New Zealand were about the same time bringing £20 and wethers 40s. on the run. It must also be borne in mind that Argentina was getting a higher price from the Imperial Government for its frozen beef, and had a free market for chilled beef and such frozen mutton and lamb as was not required for Army purposes at figures considerably in advance of those fixed for Australasian-released meat.

3. Do you desire to say anything about shipping?—Not beyond this: that this scheme would make for regularity in filling ships. In summer we do not, even in normal times, get enough ships to cope with the pressure, and in the winter they are waiting in the harbour for the wool season to begin. But shipping, of course, does not exactly come into the scheme, although it will follow.

4. *Mr. Pearce.*] From the statement you have read I gather you are in favour of the Government taking over the whole of the meat in the country?—The two Governments, yes.

5. And the Government here would have to take the meat from the companies?—Yes.

6. You and your company are in favour of that?—I was called as an individual.

7. But as representing your company?—I have not consulted my co-directors on the subject.

8. We want some practical idea as to what form that taking by the Government will be. Would you propose that the Government buy on the hook and the companies merely handle it, or that you sell to the Government after you have bought and frozen?—That is a mere matter of detail.

9. It makes a great deal of difference as to the way in which the farmer would look at it. If there was a monopoly by the Government in buying, the Government could give whatever price it liked, and it may be as bad as the trust?—The prices would have to be fixed by the representative committee which I mention in my statement.

10. But the quality varies so?—That could always be easily arranged. The present system has worked very favourably without friction, but it would have to be modified in details.

11. Do you think it would be better in every one's interests for the companies to continue to buy, or whether the Government take it in hand and buy the whole lot, and the companies merely do the freezing of it?—That is a matter for the Government: it is quite immaterial to us. The farmer certainly had the benefit through the companies buying this year. There has been no adequate freezing-charge taken out of the farmer.

12. You, of course, suggest that they should buy here, and the Home Government should handle it at the other end. What would your suggestion be about shipping—because if the Meat Trust had a controlling interest in the shipping there still might be a difficulty?—I take it the Government would protect that.

13. That means the Governments would have to control the shipping as well?—Yes, they could not do otherwise. The Government at the present time control the shipping.

14. That is during war-time; but you must know that the Home Government seemed to be very loath to control the shipping for this meat even when they bought it. It was quite a long time before they controlled the shipping and allowed us to be charged extreme freights on wool and meat?—I think they took charge of the refrigerated space in the ships quite early.