

19. *Mr. Hawken.*] What is your experience with regard to the loading and despatch of steamers : is it done as satisfactorily now as it used to be done ?—No ; we have lately had a great deal of delay in connection with loading and despatching.

20. Apparently a great deal of the high cost is caused because the steamers do not get the despatch ?—That is so. I know from my own experience in connection with small coastal boats. We have run small boats here for a number of years, and I may tell you that although we have made a 20 per cent. increase in freights, we have actually made £1,000 less gross freight during the past twelve months owing to the fact that we cannot get the despatch. There is always congestion and labour troubles. In fact, labour is not doing the work to-day that it used to do.

21. *Hon. Mr. Nosworthy.*] Do you think a good class of steamers is likely to be available for charter in the future ?—Well, sir, that is very hard to say. You see we would have to compete with the large companies in getting the wool for shipment, and in connection with chartering vessels. The large companies can always fill their vessels and run them to time. If we were sure of the wool we could tender for a larger vessel.

22. And you could carry the wool at a lower rate of freight ?—Yes, possibly a 1½d. freight.

23. That is, if you were assured, say, of 50,000 bales of wool ?—Oh, undoubtedly.

24. The more wool there would be available, the better chance there would be for the farmers of the Dominion to obtain a lower rate ?—Yes, that is so. There is a large firm in London—Messrs. Andrew Weir and Co.—who are the owners of a large number of these steamers—“tramps” they are called—and they could supply whatever is required.

25. All they want to know is a certainty that they will get the wool ?—Yes, that is so. If there were 100,000 bales available, and they were cabled to, they would probably cable back in a few days saying they would be prepared to lift it.

26. Generally speaking there is a tendency for freights to come down ?—Oh, undoubtedly : there is no doubt about that. We find that in connection with coal. I think this is due to a certain extent to the competition of Japanese boats. I believe that the Japanese steamers are going to break the freight rates. They have a large amount of tonnage for which they have not got any work.

27. Not much insulated tonnage ?—No. All my arguments have been based on a ship not provided with insulated space. I have not been referring to insulated steamers. But in connection with insulated steamers I would like to bring under the notice of the Committee an advertisement which has appeared in the papers lately. I do not know whether you have noticed it or not. It is as follows :—

#### SHIRE LINE.

London and West Coast Ports, United Kingdom—Out and Home.

S.s. “ARGYLLSHIRE” sailing for London.

Cargo carried at low rates of freight. Offers of cargo, London to New Zealand, wanted.

SHIRE LINE built first steamer specially constructed for New Zealand refrigerated trade, which vessel loaded in New Zealand, 1884. Since then company has been continuously in the passenger and cargo trade to and from New Zealand.

For freight and passage apply to—

TURNBULL, MARTIN, AND CO.,  
Dunedin,  
Loading Brokers.

I consider that advertisement is very significant. You will notice that offers of cargo are wanted. It appears to me that this line of steamers has dropped out of the shipping combine, and that they are hoping to be able to continue in the New Zealand trade, as they have for many years. They provide good refrigerated steamers.

28. *The Chairman.*] They provide good steamers ?—Yes, very fine steamers.

29. *Mr. Jennings.*] They were running to the Argentine for a very long time ?—Yes, that is so.

Mr. T. R. LEES, Assistant Controller, Imperial Government Supplies Department, examined. (No. 3.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Your full name, Mr. Lees ?—Thomas Rowley Lees.

2. You are the Assistant Controller of the Imperial Government Supplies Department ?—Yes.

3. Can you give us any information in regard to the rates of freight ?—The pre-war rates ?

4. Yes, the pre-war rates, also the higher rates that were ruling during the war, and the present rates ?—The pre-war rates for wool were ½d. per pound for greasy, ⅓d. for slipe, and ⅓d. for scoured. The present rates from the 1st of March of this year are 1½d. for greasy, 1½d. for slipe, and 2½d. for scoured. The highest rates ruling during the war were—from November, 1917, to the following year—for wool, 3½d. ; for beef, 1½d. ; for mutton, 2d. ; and for lamb, 2½d. The pre-war rates for frozen meat were—beef, 1½d. ; mutton, 1½d. ; lamb, 2½d. : all less 5 per cent. The present rates are—beef, 1½d. ; mutton, 1½d. ; lamb, 2d. : all plus 10 per cent. It is not certain that these are the rates which the Imperial Government are paying. These are the rates which appear in our bills of lading. We have never received from London official information on the matter, but we understand they have an all-round rate per 40 cubic feet, and that they pay that rate whether they fill up the space or not—so that possibly these rates may come out pretty nearly the same over a period of time. I believe they pay an all-round rate per 40 cubic feet. I understand the Imperial Government have the insulated tonnage requisitioned until the 30th April next year on this basis.

5. The cargoes have to be landed at different ports ?—Yes, they have to go to any port in the United Kingdom as directed. Our bills of lading are made out to London or any other safe port.

6. What is the present position in regard to tonnage in New Zealand ?—At present we are loading ten steamers this month, and these take away about 1,000,000 freight carcasses in all. Roughly, we are getting away about a million freight carcasses per month at present.

7. That is what is being shipped now ?—Yes, and during the last three months.

8. *Mr. Forbes.*] They are coming up to the estimate ?—More than the estimate. If the position continues as has been the case during the last three months we will be half a million better than the