

Wet weather frequently causes stock to travel slowly. Such being the case, the men attending upon the stock must be at call at all hours of the day and night. It is not necessary that they are working all the time, but they must be there to discharge it. This applies practically to all the works in New Zealand where stock arrives by train. Then, with regard to confining the time of work to any particular set of hours: That also would be impossible to carry out in practice owing to the fact that the quantities arriving are largely uncertain. One day at a large works the quantity might amount to 4,500 and the next day to 5,500, or, of course, the variation may not be so great; still, the quantity arriving must be killed outright owing to the fact that almost invariably there is no room in the holding-pens. Frequently the railway telephones that a train is arriving with sheep and the engine will wait while they are discharged. It occasionally occurs when this notification is given that the train is late, and in that case men have to wait. There are different causes of delay, and these are contingencies which have to be faced. With regard to the slaughtermen, they are not always certain of the exact quantity of stock that they expect—some days fewer will arrive than has been intended, and on other days a few more than anticipated. This, of course, causes a daily variation of work all through the works. Then, with regard to rabbits, hares, and fish, which come in at certain times and must be dealt with on the night of arrival owing to the deterioration in the hot weather: These rabbits are caught by the trappers, and have to be sent in to the freezing-works as the train-services permit. In many cases, in the hot weather, if they could not be dealt with as they arrive in the evening they would not be worth doing on the following morning. This would especially apply to the Saturday afternoons, as anything arriving on the Saturday would be worthless on the Monday morning. Then, with regard to the products we deal with, of course sheep and cattle are the principal. Of these, all portions of the animal immediately it is slaughtered are perishable, and it is highly essential in every connection that they shall be promptly and immediately dealt with. If the slaughtermen work their eight hours in a day, the men dealing with the by-products must work longer, as you can quite understand. If the butchers knocked off work at 5 o'clock the men washing down the slaughterhouse take three-quarters of an hour longer. Then, it takes probably from a quarter to half an hour for such by-products as inside fat, the gut, and the skin to reach the department where they are treated. Then it takes from one to two hours to place them in such a condition that they do not deteriorate before the next morning. Such being the case, you will see, if the butchers work their full time, the other men must of necessity work more. Then, with regard to the men working in the freezing-room: They must begin work early in the morning. The first thing they do is to get the cooling-room clear of the sheep slaughtered the previous day before the butchers begin to put the next day's killing into the cooling-room. The mixing of the two would be injurious. The other reason of the men working early in the freezing-chamber is that they have to get the meat loaded, so that it can arrive at port for shipment. If you take the Canterbury works, for instance, our special train leaves Belfast for Lyttelton at 6.15 a.m., so as to enable the men to be at work at 8 o'clock. At Islington the time for the train leaving is about the same. In order that the lumpers at the Port of Lyttelton can carry on their work at reasonable hours our men must work early, so as to let the different parts of the work dovetail together. At open roadsteads and breakwater harbours, where they are liable to sudden changes of the sea and weather, the loading operations have to go on continuously while the ship is at the port. This occurs very frequently at Wanganui, Patea, Waitara, Gisborne, and Napier. The vessels lying in roadsteads are subject to all the conditions of our climate, and it is absolutely necessary, if the work is to be done at all, it should be done promptly. In most of these places the works are a little distance away from the town, and it would be impossible to get sufficient labour to cope with the work when the emergency arises. Then, with regard to the perishable nature of goods and the absolute necessity for the preservation of the products: which also applies to the pig business, in which several of the companies operate together with their other freezing business. The pigs, in the same way as sheep, arrive at certain times, and must be dealt with on arrival, pork deteriorating more rapidly than either mutton or beef. The pig-market causes work for the men on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. After a certain amount of work is done on the Friday it is absolutely necessary an equal amount of work must be done on the Saturday. When the men are working at full time it is impossible to give them a Saturday half-holiday. Occasionally they get a slack end of the week, and then they can manage it. In connection with the overtime, I have recently been twice before the Arbitration Court in Christchurch. In the case of the slaughtermen, they distinctly stated to the Judge that they did not ask for any restriction of hours, beyond that they did not care to work when it could be avoided before 7 in the morning, or after 5 o'clock on Saturday afternoons. That was the only point upon which they asked the Judge to ask the companies and see if that could not be brought about. Also, they did not ask for the increased overtime in the busier season, as they recognised that the mutton trade in Canterbury was like a farmer's harvest, and had to be done at the proper time. They also recognised that the good money they made during the busy season helped them to tide over the slack season. They also stated that unless allowed to make that extra money in the busy season they could not make a living. Similar evidence was given in the fellmongers' dispute. Two witnesses from my works voluntarily went to the Court, and stated that if a restrictive amount of overtime only was allowed for the busy season they could not live. Of course, the whole of the remarks I have made apply equally to the men employed in the fat- or oleo-house. These men especially have to work after the work of the day in the slaughterhouse is completed. The same applied to the men in the gut-house, where the men get the gut. The last does not reach them till 5.30 in the evening. They have to see it properly passed through cold water, and left in such a condition that it will not deteriorate before the next morning. The same applies to the fellmongering; and, in connection with the fellmongering, if the sweating process is used for getting