

1902.
NEW ZEALAND.

FROZEN—MEAT COMMITTEE:

REPORT, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDIX.

Brought up on the 30th September, 1902, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

FRIDAY, THE 29TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1902.

Ordered, "That a Committee be appointed, consisting of thirteen members, to consider the question of the export of frozen meat, and also the prices obtained for stock in both Islands of the colony, and to report to the House; three to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. Buddo, Mr. Field, Mr. Flatman, Mr. Haselden, Mr. Hornsby, Mr. Lang, Mr. Lawry, Mr. Lethbridge, Mr. T. Mackenzie, Mr. McNab, Mr. G. W. Russell, Sir W. R. Russell, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. DUNCAN.)

THURSDAY, THE 18TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1902.

Ordered, "That the names of Mr. McLachlan and Mr. O'Meara be added to the Frozen Meat Committee."—(Hon. Mr. DUNCAN.)

REPORT.

1. YOUR Committee regret that, owing to the limited time at their disposal, they have not been able to obtain sufficient evidence to justify them in bringing down a complete report dealing with the large questions relating to the disposal of the frozen meat of the colony in Great Britain and elsewhere. The present may, therefore, be regarded in the light of an interim report, and we would suggest that His Excellency the Governor be requested to set up a Royal Commission for the purpose of taking evidence upon the questions of the branding, grading, transit, insurance, freight, storage, handling, and disposal of frozen meat in the present British markets, as well as in other markets that may be available.

2. The magnitude of the interests involved, and the bearing of the trade on the well-being of the colony, will be seen from the following figures: In 1882 the exports of frozen meat from New Zealand were 1,707,328 lb.; in 1901 they had reached 191,440,971 lb.; while during the first six months of the year 1902 they had reached the phenomenal quantity of 149,058,274 lb. During the year ending the 30th June, 1902, 122,135,878 lb. of frozen mutton, 68,842,800 lb. of lamb, and 31,562,175 lb. of beef were exported from the colony in a frozen state. It is noticeable that while the mutton and lamb trade obtains throughout the entire colony the frozen-beef trade is almost entirely confined to the North Island, the exports from the South Island being only a small proportion of the whole.

3. In order to make the inquiry complete and representative of all interests involved your Committee invited representatives from all freezing companies, agricultural and pastoral associations, and farmers' unions in the colony, as well as individuals of standing in connection with the export of frozen meat, either farmers or dealers, to supply information or give evidence.

4. One of the subjects referred to the Committee in the order of reference was the price obtained for stock in both Islands of the colony, and your Committee recognised that it was expected to inquire into the complaints that have been made, especially in the Wellington and Hawke's Bay Districts, as to the smaller prices that are obtained by breeders of sheep in those districts than are obtainable in the South Island. That these complaints were justified by the evidence submitted to them your Committee regard as fully proved.

5. It was abundantly shown by the evidence of experts residing in the North Island, as well as those who gave evidence with a knowledge of the sheep bred in both Islands, that as things stand at present the bulk of the sheep produced in many districts of the North Island are not of equal value with those produced in the South. This may be accounted for, first, by the breed. The North Island is largely stocked with sheep of the Lincoln and Romney breeds, which, though tending to heavy carcasses, have not the same quality, so far as meat is concerned, as those produced in the South. On the other hand, the South Island breed of sheep has largely as its foundation the Merino ewe, from which the crosses of Leicester, both Border and English, and the Down crosses, have produced a class of sheep which for mutton and lamb is considerably superior to