

129. Among the people up my way they think they are not so well treated with regard to their sheep as the companies' sheep are?—People think, if the companies have any meat of their own on the market, that they will sell their own sooner than sheep which are shipped through them. What I send Home I do not grumble about. I am satisfied with the way in which they have treated me.

130. Most of our people have frozen on their own account and "fallen in" over it. When we complain about the price of sheep the manager says, "Why don't you freeze on your own account?" And yet some of us have lost 4s. a head on them?—I have never found that to be the case. I have always done better by freezing on my own account.

131. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] How many fat sheep and lambs are there produced in your part of the country, say, within a radius of forty miles?—There is a lot of sheep produced within a radius of forty miles.

132. Could you give us any idea of the number?—No.

133. Has any effort been made by the farmers who produce these large quantities of fat sheep to work together by combination in order to get better prices in the London market by freezing on their own account?—No.

134. Has any effort been made to set up a general market for that part of the Coast, so that instead of being limited to these two Wellington companies you could attract buyers from Canterbury and give us a few thousand fat sheep?—Canterbury buyers say they cannot get the sheep frozen in the two companies' works. It is said that the companies say they have a lot of sheep of their own, and will not be able to freeze for them.

135. Do you not think, if you had on the West Coast here a market something like that of Addington—although, of course, not so large—where the breeders could look for the selling of their fat sheep, that more people would be induced to come from a distance if you could give them a steady value?—Perhaps it would.

136. Has any attempt been made to create markets in the North Island such as we have in the South at three or four different places?—Not at present, but I do not know whether the Farmers' Union will not take the matter up.

137. Do not you think there would be a difference in value if you had a combination amongst the farmers themselves in the North Island?—Perhaps there would be if the farmers combined and sent all their stuff Home. That might improve the market.

138. Do you not think that if there was a large proportion of fat sheep sent to market more South Island men would come up and buy?—I could not say. Mr. Hurse will have a better idea of that.

139. Does it not stand to common-sense that such men could go from farm to farm just as the companies' buyers do?—Yes; they would have an opportunity of buying at the sale, but they would not have the run of the different places. There is a lot of hunting-about required.

140. With regard to your sending Home one shipment, did you find that by shipping Home direct you got a materially higher price than if you had sold to the companies?—Yes.

141. How did you find your price compare with the value of sheep of the same class in Canterbury?—The sheep I sent Home produced about 2s. 6d. a head more than I could have got for them here.

142. Then, they would still be under the values of the South Island sheep?—Yes.

143. Because manifestly it would cost you that half-crown to send your sheep to Canterbury, and you just came out to what it would have cost you to send your sheep down there, excepting that you saved the carriage?—Yes.

144. *Mr. T. Mackenzie.*] You said that you studied the Agent-General's reports and the Press Association's reports as to prices?—Yes.

145. Which do you consider the most reliable?—The Agent-General's quotation is always $\frac{1}{2}$ d. under the quotation of the Colonial Consignment Company.

146. Do you think he is in anything like an equal position to the Colonial Consignment Company to give a quotation?—I do not know, but he quotes the price.

147. Do you think the Agent-General would be on the market once a year?—He ought to be there if he is sending the reports. He can send the clerk round.

148. Supposing he did, does that man ever sell a sheep?—Perhaps he does not.

149. Are these men who sell on the market going to give him information at any time that would suit him or suit themselves?—That is hard to tell. I think I could find out what the meat was selling at if I were to go.

150. If you were not in the trade—a fair average value?—Yes.

151. How would you find it out?—I would take means to do so. I would get a practical man to go round and see the meat sold in the market.

152. But the buying and selling are done privately, not publicly?—Not publicly?

153. No?—Well, they do not say that. They say they are sold on commission or by a meat-salesman.

154. No; they are all private. They buy a sheep off the hooks and make a bargain from that, so that really a man going there could not find out. With regard to the difference in the quotations, you say the price would go up with competition, and that when buyers came up from the South the price went up 1s. 6d.: would that be for the same sort of sheep?—Yes, exactly for the same sort all round.

155. Then, what proportion would the South Island buyers take?—They take any number of sheep from different places—as many as they could get freezing-space for.

156. Does the similarity of price not indicate that they make the market value?—No; they sell most of their stuff c.i.f., and know what they are going to get for their sheep when they buy them.

157. Does it not show, if both companies are buying sheep and have c.i.f. buyers, that they