

“That shops should be established in the towns of Great Britain containing over a hundred thousand in population for the sale of New Zealand meat, as an advertisement to illustrate the superiority of this colony’s lamb and mutton.”

He accompanied his proposals with details regarding the management and working of such shops. The scheme submitted by the Commissioner was, he alleged, not in accordance with that proposed by the Premier (which was not placed before the Committee). On it the Commissioner declined to express an opinion. Very full evidence was taken as to the propriety or otherwise of the Government establishing the retail sale of New Zealand meat in the United Kingdom. It was alleged by the Commissioner, among other reasons, that the scheme was rendered necessary because, in the Midlands and the North, the trade in New Zealand meat beyond a line drawn east and west fifty miles north of London was infinitesimal. Dealing first with this aspect of the subject, the evidence of one witness largely interested in the trade disclosed the fact that his company supplied New Zealand meat in one day to one hundred and fifty towns north of the line referred to. In Manchester alone his company supplied 550 carcasses to four men, and that he and other companies supplied from one thousand to twelve hundred towns, where the Commissioner stated the trade was infinitesimal. Referring to the same matter, a second witness, whose company is the largest exporter of New Zealand meat, stated that during his recent visit to the Mother-country he had traversed very thoroughly the Midlands and North, zigzagging the country, and found New Zealand meat in every town in Scotland right up to Dundee; that he had travelled extensively over the Midlands and North of England, where it also was to be seen in every town, and very prominently in Liverpool, and down the West of England. Two experiments—one a store and the other a shop—have been tried in Cardiff. The store was abandoned because the company could not get the value of their meat there. And the shop, which was commenced in 1898 with the object of advertising and securing a high-class trade—the two points sought to be secured in the proposed colonial scheme—resulted in a loss of £300 per year, and was finally abandoned without accomplishing the objects aimed at. The witness continuing said, “I was a great believer in the plan of shops, but we found that that particular trade not only required the lamb and mutton we had to sell, but also calves and bullocks that we had not got to sell. The shops also gave great offence to the trade as a whole. Whatever the necessity existing for these shops when they were opened may have been, I do not think it exists now. I think the scheme was wanted some ten or twelve years ago, but I really do not see the need for it now.”

14. Your Committee would point out that the scheme submitted to them did not contemplate the colony going into the retail meat trade permanently, but the opening-up of shops only to advertise the colony’s products. The evidence brought forward was almost unanimous on the point that the money proposed to be spent in so advertising could be expended to better advantage in other ways. That experimental-shops, no matter how successful they might be, only come under the notice of the people in the immediate locality in which they might be established, while other systems of advertising would make known the colony’s product over a wider area at no greater cost. Your Committee therefore think that, while it is not expedient to open shops for the purpose mentioned, efforts should be made to advertise New Zealand meat in such directions as promise new outlets.

15. Your Committee has come to the following conclusion on the points and questions hereinafter mentioned. Putting these interrogatively, it may be asked—

- (a.) Whether New Zealand is in a position to increase her output?—The evidence shows that the New Zealand flocks have been very heavily drawn upon, and that an increased output in the near future is improbable.
- (b.) Whether the prices now obtained yield a satisfactory return to the New Zealand grower?—The result to growers may be regarded as satisfactory.
- (c.) Whether there is sufficiently healthy competition for stock to keep prices up to reasonable values, or whether those dealing in our mutton and lamb obtain an undue profit?—That the competition within the colony and the methods of sale abroad by purely selling-agents are such as will secure a reasonable price to our sheep-growers.

16. The total beef consumed in the United Kingdom amounts to 3,200,000 cattle per annum. Mutton and lamb consumed, 21,250,000 animals, of which 12,000,000 animals represent the home-grown supply, and 9,250,000 animals the imported volume. Of the beef figures, about 2,250,000 animals are the home-grown supply, and 950,000 animals the imported quantity. To the contention that the object of opening shops is to secure the better-class trade, your Committee would direct attention to the reply made by a witness to the effect that some years ago two-thirds of the meat consumed in Great Britain was home-grown. The evidence recently taken before the Royal Commission in England is that Britain imported one-third of the beef consumed and two-fifths of the mutton. The home-grown meat might therefore be taken to indicate the source of supply of the best-class trade. Consumption by the middle-class consumer is the trade that New Zealand must chiefly depend upon, and from results it seems evident that she now largely commands that trade, the tangible evidence of which is a substantially increased output at advanced rates.

17. Your Committee in dealing with so far-reaching a question considered it advisable to inquire into the position of our great rival, the Argentine—her productive capabilities and potentialities—with a view to estimating, if possible, our ability to meet her competition, and at the same time maintain prices for our New Zealand producers, in case the Argentine should regard unfavourably our Government-aided encroachment upon the sphere where she so largely operates.