

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 21ST JULY, 1903.

HENRY CHARLES CAMERON examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—Produce Commissioner for the New Zealand Government.

2. And your duties have been—what?—The general inspection of New Zealand produce in London. I have here a list of my duties. The duties pertaining to the office I hold include, amongst others, the following items: The inspection of New Zealand produce on arrival at the London docks, and reporting on same; specially examining dairy produce and noting full particulars concerning it, such as quality, condition, temperatures on arrival, temperatures maintained throughout voyage, how handled, getting engineers' report concerning it, &c.; calling on consignees throughout London who handle New Zealand dairy produce to get their reports on arrivals, and to hear any suggestions they may offer for improvement in the condition of shipments. I have to watch the dairy produce markets in order to report on the state of same, and to generally keep in touch with the trade. While at the docks watching the discharge of dairy produce and frozen meat, I have to make any suggestions that may be feasible to those in charge for improvements in the mode of handling. I have to visit Smithfield and other markets, and to generally keep myself conversant with the frozen-meat trade throughout the country. I have to report on the frozen-meat markets and conditions of trading, both wholesale and retail, and make suggestions for the improvement of same. I have to call on consignees of meat in a similar manner to that in regard to dairy produce consignees, and to make generally tri-weekly reports and send weekly cable messages to the colony. I have to report on fraudulent meat sales, War Office contracts, &c. These may be considered my chief duties, but they are largely augmented by having to make inquiries and to report on nearly every line of New Zealand productions, especially concerning new lines for export. These reports are not made solely at the instance of the Government Departments at Wellington, but private traders in New Zealand, recognising the value to them of my Department, from whence they can get an unbiassed and faithful report on any lines of produce in which they may be interested—so long as it is not an interference with trade relationships—communicate direct with me, and a good deal of my time has to be devoted to this work. Besides my general tri-weekly reports I frequently make special reports such as on "Direct Trade with Out-ports," "How to improve the Market for New Zealand Mutton," "The Cause of the Difference in Price between New Zealand and Danish Butter," &c. I have also on several occasions given evidence before the House of Commons Committees on matters affecting the colonial produce trade. Besides this work, there are always during summer many visitors from New Zealand in London, and I find that my assistance is often sought by a number of them in matters relating to the colony's produce. During the past year, owing to the new clause inserted by the Imperial Government in the contracts for meat-supplies for troops in military districts in Great Britain—that if frozen mutton be supplied by the contractor it must be that from British colonies exclusively—I have undertaken the inspection of meat at military stations. I have also during the winter months accepted opportunities afforded me of delivering lectures, illustrated by limelight views, on New Zealand, in various centres of England. In fact the duties of Produce Commissioner for the New Zealand Government in London are so multifarious, necessitating constant study and watchfulness, that it is impossible to specify them in actual detail.

3. I think you should now give us a statement of the position of the meat-market at Home. We have read with interest from time to time your views on this matter, and we also notice that you have advocated the opening of shops in England for the purpose of demonstrating to the public the class and quality of our meat as a means of bringing it more under the notice of the people. I think the Committee are anxious to hear what you advocate as a means of improving and amending the condition of our meat trade at Home?—What I have advocated is simply the advertisement by demonstration of the superiority of New Zealand meat in order to get it, if possible, into new channels and outlets—that is, to introduce it to a better class of customers throughout Great Britain. Where there is a great working-population there is, of course, a proportionately large employee population. These people have so far been very slightly catered for. I understand, however, that certain papers are to be laid upon the table of the House to-day bearing on this matter, and that a special inquiry is to be made concerning it. I would suggest, therefore, that my evidence on this special subject should be deferred until this inquiry is set up, when I shall be prepared to give evidence with all details on it.

*The Chairman:* The Committee, I think, are anxious to hear what you would like to say, and they will then ask you questions to elucidate further points upon which they require information. If you would rather make a statement dealing with the matter I think it would be agreeable to the Committee that you should do so.

4. *The Chairman.*] What would you like to deal with to-day?—On any matters of general produce into which you would like to ask me about. I have a paper prepared here, but it will simply resolve itself into an address on the produce trade at Home, and will occupy an hour in delivery.