

5. We are met to-day for the purpose of hearing you, and the time you name can be given for hearing you; but I think I voice the opinion of the Committee when I say that they are anxious to hear what you would like to say about the matter especially referring to the opening of shops, and we have met for that purpose to-day?—I understand that papers relating to the opening of shops are to be laid before the House to-day, and that a special inquiry will be made into that.

Mr. Duthie: I think the general matters which Mr. Cameron refers to should be printed and circulated amongst members of the Committee in order that they can ask questions upon the various points.

Mr. Aitken: I think reading the paper before this Committee would be of little value, as members would require to have the papers in their hands to consider the various points.

Sir J. G. Ward: I think it would be better for Mr. Cameron to submit a report to the Committee, and then we could all get printed copies of it afterwards.

The Chairman: I understand it is the pleasure of the Committee that Mr. Cameron should submit a typewritten report upon what he has outlined here. The next point is that we would like to get, either from Mr. Cameron or the Premier—if we are going into the question of opening up shops—some fixed data to work upon, because we cannot decide anything practicable in connection with that matter until we obtain the fullest information.

Motion proposed, "That Mr. Cameron's report be printed and issued to each member of this Committee."

Motion agreed to.

THURSDAY, 23RD JULY, 1903.

Examination of HENRY CHARLES CAMERON, Produce Commissioner—continued. (No. 2.)

The Chairman: Mr. Cameron has expressed a wish that we should confine our examination of him to the report which he has submitted to us, and that we should take up the matter of establishing shops in England at a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Cameron: I thought if I was now examined on the subjects referred to in my report that it might be advisable to examine me afterwards on other matters.

The Chairman: I would like the Committee to take this matter as really coming from you. You are the most concerned in it, and we would like to take the subject up as you feel disposed to deal with it.

Mr. Rutherford: You say in your report, "One very serious drawback to handling New Zealand meat in London in the best condition is that the large cold-air stores are built on the river side, some miles higher up than are the docks where the meat is discharged. This necessitates handling the meat from ocean steamers into lighters, by which it is conveyed up the river to these stores. There is only one cold-air store at the docks, which is certainly a large one, having a capacity for 764,000 carcasses. It belongs to the dock company, and naturally, being conveniently situated, it is always patronised. You can well understand that frozen meat, having to be carried in these barges up-river—a journey occupying often more than a day from time of loading till discharge—is liable to considerable deterioration. The system is bad." I think we must all agree with that, but have you any remedy to propose?

Mr. Cameron: I cannot say that I have any remedy to propose. The stores are established in their present position up the river, and, personally, I do not think it would be at all feasible to have the system altered now. I merely mentioned the system to let those here know the position, and to explain that that was the reason why a good deal of the damage arose at Home of which you have all heard. I have no remedy to propose.

Mr. Rutherford: You go on to say, "A matter of very great importance, and one which proves very hurtful to the advance of trade in New Zealand mutton at Home, is the irregularity with which shipments from here arrive," &c. We know that, as a matter of fact, New Zealand shipments are irregular, because we cannot supply the mutton—in the South Island, at any rate—after, say, June. In the Argentine it appears that they can supply all the year round. Do you know whether Argentine sheep are fed all the year round? In the South Island you must feed the sheep on turnips, and give them chaff as well.

Mr. Cameron: I do not know personally how they manage in the River Plate, because I have not been there. I understand, however, that artificial feeding on turnips and chaff is not resorted to. While I refer to this matter I may remark I can understand the position as to the New Zealand meat-supply being, as I say in my report, a harvest when it is produced at the best time and most cheaply. But what I refer to particularly is the irregularity of the shipments; and if you look at the figures that I have placed before you you will agree with me that if care had been taken last year it would have been possible to place the quantities of these shipments with as great regularity on the London market all the year round as for the first seven months. What I consider might have been possible is this: if, instead of shipping the large number referred to—close on three hundred thousand—during each of the two following months, the same number of sheep had been shipped as during each of the previous seven months, say, about one hundred and sixty thousand, and the balance held in store, it would have allowed an average to be spread over the year. Say that you kept back about three hundred thousand in August and September, and held them in store for October, November, and December, when they could have been added to the sixty thousand then sent each month, it would have kept the supply regular.

Mr. Rutherford: You suggest, then, that we should extend the frozen-meat chambers. Do you think it would be cheaper to store meat here than in England?

Mr. Cameron: I do. I consider that meat can be stored in better condition in the colony than it can at Home. In the first place, New Zealand meat when killed is cooled and immediately