

departure in New Zealand these steamers call at several ports in Australia, loading there, then calling at several ports in South Africa, discharging and loading there, and then proceeding to London. Neither shippers here nor buyers in Great Britain of dairy-produce like a long voyage for their goods, and the saving of railage between London and Liverpool or Manchester is a small matter compared with a voyage of eighty to ninety days, as against forty-five by the direct fortnightly steamers. Since starting, this line has only carried 1,264 boxes, or 31½ tons, of butter to Liverpool, which is evidence that it is not of much use to the dairy industry?—That statement is not accurate. The writer has increased the length of time taken by these steamers, which is sixty-six to seventy-seven days, not eighty to ninety days, as stated; and he has reduced the number of days taken by the direct boats to forty-five, and it ought to be forty-eight as an average. Naturally, people like to get their stuff carried as quickly as possible, but the fourteen days extra is less of a disadvantage than to have the stuff landed in London and pay the additional rate to the west-coast ports.

154. *Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] Mr. Munro, with regard to the question put by Mr. Duthie about the conditions in advertising for this service, did any of the representatives of the local shipping companies, either the Shaw, Savill, and Albion Company, the Tyser Line (Limited), or the New Zealand Shipping Company, ask for any further details than those stated in the advertisement before tendering?—No.

155. Did any one ask for further details?—No.

156. No amended conditions were suggested or asked for by any of the shipping interests either in or out of the colony?—No.

157. Is it not the case, in setting out the skeleton conditions for a steam service, that anything in addition offered by the steamers must be something gained by the people advertising for the service?—Yes.

158. What I mean to say is: if all the conditions advertised in the tender are complied with and something further is offered, then it must be an advantage to the people who are advertising?—Yes; it must be an advantage.

159. Now, I want to come to the question of the outward cargo, upon which Mr. Duthie has specially dwelt. Do you know what the intention was when tenders were publicly advertised for? Was it with the object of getting an outward service from England, or of obtaining a reduction in the rates of freight for the benefit of the producers in sending their produce to the west-coast ports of England?—The object, I understood, was to secure a service and to lower the rates of freight from New Zealand to the west-coast ports of the United Kingdom.

160. For produce from the colony?—Yes.

161. Now, is it a fact that for years past the producing interests in different parts of the colony have been urging the establishment of a steam service direct to Liverpool, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Bristol?—Yes, that is so.

162. Have you ever heard any of the merchants, either in Wellington or elsewhere, advocating or suggesting that efforts should be made to establish a steam service from Liverpool, Glasgow, Cardiff, or Bristol?—No, I never heard it suggested.

163. Have any suggestions been made by any merchants in any part of New Zealand to the Department to assist in obtaining a direct service from the west-coast ports of the United Kingdom to New Zealand?—No.

164. I want again to refer you to the annual reports of the Department for 1902 and 1903. In the annual report of 1902 the following statement is made: "In my opinion steps should be taken to secure the discharge of frozen meat at Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow, and also at South African ports. This would relieve the pressure in London, open up other extensive markets, and to some extent do away with the enormous number of London brokers and salesmen who, by their competitive efforts, are prejudicing the values that should obtain. By making London the one port of discharge it is no doubt a great advantage to the steamboat companies who freight the meat, yet freights on this product are no lower, relatively, from New Zealand to London than from those countries which have the opportunity of shipping their meat to other ports. Unless some combination is effected regarding the disposal of New Zealand meat, the Government should, in my opinion, for the benefit of producers, consider the situation with a view to bringing about better conditions both as regards disposal and regulation of supplies. Any increase in the number of ports of delivery of frozen meat would carry the same advantages to our exports of butter; cheese, frozen rabbits, flax, and other produce." That report was laid on the table of the House?—Yes.

165. It was circulated throughout the colony?—Yes, to every Chamber of Commerce and farmers' club from one end of the colony to the other.

166. To every Chamber of Commerce in the colony it was sent?—Yes.

167. Was it sent to the Agent-General in London for distribution there?—Yes.

168. Was any suggestion made by any of the direct lines to conform to the recommendation made in that report to establish a direct service to the west-coast ports of the United Kingdom?—No.

169. Was any suggestion at any time made by any Chamber of Commerce for an outward service from the west-coast ports after the publication of this report?—No.

170. Now, in the following year, 1903, the following statement appears in the annual report: "*A Wider British Market wanted.*—Under the previous heading I remarked on the urgent need of increasing the ports of discharge for frozen meat. But this observation does not apply to meat alone; it most vitally affects the dairy-produce business and the export of such important lines as wool, flax, and tallow. It is absolutely necessary that a more extended distribution of New Zealand produce throughout the United Kingdom should be organized as quickly as possible. Facilities should be given for the shipping of products direct from this colony to Liverpool, Bristol,