

*Mr. W. Murray* (Christchurch Meat Company).—I should like to ask a question: This remit says "that frozen meat should be consigned," &c. Before giving that consideration, might I ask if it is the intention of the framers of this remit that that should be taken to mean "all frozen meat"?

*The Chairman*.—Will the mover of the resolution give some explanation?

*Mr. Roberts*.—Not all frozen meat. We do not understand that all farmers are going to send their meat in this way. We want sufficient meat sent to have an influence. We do not expect that each and all the producers in the country will agree to send their meat through a company, but we do expect that a sufficient number of the producers will send their meat through the company to have beneficial effects on the market.

*Mr. C. H. Ensor* (Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association).—I should like to say a few words on the subject. Of course there have been certain causes leading up to this meeting, and one of those causes has been the feeling that the producer has not been getting sufficient money for the stuff placed on the London market—that is, sufficient money in comparison with the price that the consumer has been paying for that mutton; and the feeling has been that there has been some considerable influence at work between the producer and the consumer. It was as much to discuss what that influence was that this remit was brought up to-day as for any other reason. It is very difficult to find out what the consumer is paying for his meat at Home, but at the same time we get little flutters of information on the subject. In the June issue of the *Pastoralists' Review* the reporter of the meat notes stated that a journalistic friend of his usually bought English mutton at 1s. 2d., but was induced to buy New Zealand mutton at 8d.; the wholesale price at the time was 3½d. There appears to be a considerable difference there. On the 13th October a cablegram was sent to New Zealand through the United Press Association that a Conference of representatives of the London Borough Councils had resolved that the meat-supply of the metropolis was unsatisfactory, and had asked the Government to relax the restrictions on the importations of cattle for immediate slaughter. When that message was sent here, we were told that our mutton was an absolute glut on the London market. Again, in the *Weekly Press* of the 5th June two interviews appear, both written by New-Zealanders, one by Mr. Evans, a son of the president of the Farmers' Union. He had been seven years in Wales, and says that frozen lamb was retailed at 7½d. to 9½d. for fore and hind quarters. The other writer states that when lamb and mutton were so disastrously cheap to us there was no reduction to the consumer, and he thought the only way for New Zealand producers to put the trade on a proper footing was to have shops of their own in London. This writer also quoted Mr. John Cook, who was largely interested in the production and shipping of meat, in confirmation of this. Mr. Cook emphasized the difficulty of obtaining satisfactory management of shops, but seemed to think that that difficulty need not be considered insuperable, and he definitely expressed the opinion that unless some such scheme as this were arranged it would be impossible to have frozen meat and lamb honestly put before the British public. We have been told that the market was glutted. Now, if that were true, why has not the consumer been getting the benefit of that cheap meat? When there is a genuine overproduction of any commodity such as wool or wheat, the price to the consumer is lowered in proportion, and by that means a large amount of that commodity goes into distribution, and the price practically rights itself, the consumer receiving the produce at a cheaper rate. For one particular period we were told that the market was glutted, and a fall took place which robbed the farmers of practically one million. Who got the benefit of that? If the consumer did not get it, who did? We have not got it; we are here to look for that £1,000,000. It is gone, so far as we are concerned, and the consumer did not get it, and I think it is only right that we should try to find out into whose pockets that £1,000,000 has got. There appears to be reason to suppose that the American Beef Trust is trying to keep down the price of meat, in order to take over the Argentine factories at a low rate. We notice that a million people are "striking" against eating meat, so the trust is evidently at work. The Board of Trade also met to try and find out if the market were affected by foreign companies, and a commission was set up to inquire into the fall of prices. In its report the Board of Trade stated that no combination existed in New Zealand or Australia; but in the United States a combination does exist between Armour and Co., Swift and Co., Morris and Co., and the National Packing Company. We have heard a good deal about that from time to time, but have not had much idea what they are doing; but they are doing something, and the committee naturally conclude that there can be little competition to the full extent between English companies representing those firms. It is impossible that there should be combination in America and competition in England. The report also stated that the committee, in examining the representatives of the companies, found a condition of ignorance so remarkable as to imply grave doubts of its genuineness. The logical inference was that the same combination existed in England as in America, only to a minor degree, with different conditions according to the different circumstances. New Zealand was not concerned with this until America wished to cut into the Argentine works, making that strong trust handle the same articles as ourselves—articles on which the prices came down so disastrously low last year; the trust hoping thereby to lower the capital value of the Argentine works not yet acquired. They have already absorbed nearly two-thirds of the Argentine works, and once they gain control of those they gain control of the trade, unless we make some combination here. I am certain that this country is strong enough to form that combination, to control the output of meat and lamb, and thereby to restrict the operations of the Beef Trust. (At this point Mr. Ensor was proceeding to compare differences in price of various grades of meat when he was interrupted by the time-bell.)

*Mr. W. G. Lysnar* (Gisborne Farmers' Union).—This motion has my support on the principles laid down by it, but there is an amendment that I think should be provided, and that is that it is not intended (I take it) that the whole of the frozen produce could be absolutely consigned to one particular source; I would suggest that, instead of the word "consigned," it should be