

*Mr. J. D. Hall* (Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association).—The position with regard to this remit is one causing grave difficulties so far as my association is concerned, and those difficulties arise for this reason: Assuming we voted for it, and it is carried, and assuming that our remit (No. 3) to the effect that a committee be appointed for the purpose of protecting the interests of the producers, is carried, difficulties may arise of a somewhat complicated nature. If that remit is also carried, presumably that committee's hands will be tied to the extent of adopting this first remit. To my mind it would be more desirable that the whole question of this method of protecting the interests of the producers should be left as a matter of inquiry for this committee to be set up. That, I think, is our real business for consideration at this meeting. We do not know—I speak as a farmer; I do not know what the other people here know; I dare say they know a good deal; but we do not know, and they will not tell us if they do know it—what is really happening in regard to our meat; but I think we shall get more information from a committee. Possibly it might meet to-night and present its report to-morrow. At any rate, I am sure that this remit is put forward in the whole-hearted interests of the producers, but I am very much afraid it is quite impracticable; that is the way I look at it.

*Mr. W. A. Banks.*—Could we have an amendment to give No. 3 remit precedence over Nos. 1 and 2? I think that would meet the difficulty, and we could get the information from the committee.

*The Chairman.*—But the committee could not meet until to-night, so I think we must deal with No. 1 first.

*Mr. J. D. Hall.*—Should I be in order in moving that this be a recommendation to the committee when set up?

*The Chairman.*—Oh, yes!

*Mr. J. D. Hall.*—I move that, then.

*Mr. R. D. D. McLean.*—I second that.

*The Chairman.*—Perhaps before we shelve this question I might say this: All the speakers have pointed out the great difficulties in handling meat on the other side, and, as those firms handling the meat are represented here, perhaps some of them will give us a little information.

*Mr. F. de C. Malet* (Christchurch Meat Company).—I think the proper course would be to postpone the discussion. It is somewhat novel to remit matters to a body not yet set up.

*The Chairman.*—Yes, that is so. I think we cannot refer that to the committee until the body is set up.

*Mr. Kinross White* (North British and Hawke's Bay Freezing Company).—Several speakers have drawn attention to the enormous difference between the wholesale and retail price of New Zealand mutton in England. I had a good deal of experience in connection with retail butchering in Hawke's Bay, and I might mention that we invoice the meat to the retail shops at the wholesale price, and after trying that for many years I found out that unless we obtained about 75 per cent. more we could not make a profit. Indeed, we made heavy losses, and had to shut down altogether. There have to be taken into account enormous expenses on board, rents, bad debts, losses from theft, and so forth, which all mean a very great deal, and I found out this to our cost. Then, again, last year there is no doubt that prices went down very low on the London market, but was not that in accordance with the inevitable law of supply and demand that always comes into force in every branch of trade? And I think that frozen meat is no exception. The supply came in enormous quantities into London, and even if it had been distributed all over the year it was vastly in excess of previous years. Possibly, because the supply is not so great this year, prices will rise again. One speaker, Mr. Ensor, was inquiring who got the profits. As a matter of fact, I know that the retail butchers at Home for some years have not made much money. The last year or two they have been doing better, but one of the great firms in London who, two or three years ago, to my knowledge were mentioned as very powerful and very wealthy, have nevertheless had to ask their creditors to consider their position; and the position of the Smithfield people is very different from what it was some years ago. It would take a good deal of inquiry to find out where the profit or loss has gone. It is merely a question of supply and demand so far as I can see; and it is the same with the other farmers' products out here. Some years if there is an oversupply of grass-seed we have to take less for it, and if there is a small supply we get better prices for it. This, it seems to me, is the way the market always works.

*Mr. John Talbot* (South Canterbury Farmers' Union).—Could it be so arranged that No. 3 remit could be taken as an amendment of No. 1? I am afraid the mover and seconder may not recognize that No. 1 is scarcely practicable—at all events, carried in a meeting of this sort. The trouble is to get the information as to whether or not the consumer is getting the advantage of the great reduction we had to suffer here; that would bring about a state of things that would level the market again. You have, Mr. Chairman, asked those who have this information to give it; but the question is whether they would give it to this Conference. I think setting up a committee would be the best way to get the information; they would probably give all the information to the committee that they had at their command. Whether there is so great a difference between the wholesale and retail prices is something we should like to find out. The question of Government grading is also of interest. This committee could sweep away a lot of these remits, and go into the whole question thoroughly. I do not think it is possible or practicable to set up any sort of a company to work over the whole Dominion; it would not be practicable at all. We should have to consider what is the nature of the business done here now, particularly in Canterbury. It is suggested that the management should leave them free; there is no other way; they must be left free. The question is, could we tie the hands of the producer here, and would he consent to this? If it be said that those people who have been buying from us have not been doing their best, and do not care, because, no matter what they bought and sold, they could give so much less to the farmer, that is the only ground for interference. But, sir, I think it is a reflection on the buyers,