

behalf of the Government, to do anything at this end that was possible to assist the great industry in which the country as a whole is so deeply concerned, on to a more satisfactory and favourable footing. Of course, the abnormal condition of extensively large holdings in England at the time cannot be given as a reliable condition to guide those concerned in preventing a recurrence, as, naturally, if there is an oversupply at any one time in London from various markets of the world, it can only be relieved by the gradual absorption of stock in order to get things back at a normal level. I am quite sure that the practical men present at the Conference are both anxious and desirous of improving the trade in every way, and should any suggestions be made to the Government, I can assure you they will be most carefully considered.—J. G. WARD." I wish to inform the visiting members of the Conference that they have been elected members of the Christchurch Club and the Canterbury Club. I announce this because, in all probability, the notification of their election will not be in time to be of any use. They are at liberty to use both clubs. We are now at resolution No. 3, and Mr. Kettle had not finished his remarks.

*Mr. Kettle.*—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I think that when the luncheon adjournment took place I was talking about the difference in retail and wholesale prices in London. It is all very well to quote the prices of New Zealand mutton, but these are taken from the "swell" shops; but go to the slum shops. I bought a leg of English mutton from a slum shop at 5d. per pound—that was in 1897. We have to consider who are the dealers in our frozen mutton. The working-classes, vast numbers, possibly millions of British consumers, are families getting 1s. to 5s. per week to spend on meat, so that if the mutton is going to be a high price these men cannot buy very much with 1s. per week. I think that establishing this committee is the proper thing to do, but I do not think it goes far enough. We ought to settle this difference once and for all. This continual quarrelling with those at Home doing their very best for us, fighting against all odds, and competition from all corners of the globe, is very much to be deprecated. There is only one country in the world which takes food, and we find that North America, China, Siberia, &c., pour all their surplus into England. We have to meet this competition, and if we are going to be conservative and adopt what some suggest, depots to concentrate the whole of our New Zealand produce into one depot, and get the Agent-General to come round and ticket every morning what the price is to be—well, the thing is too absolutely absurd. To get rid of our six million carcasses we have to sell from 16,000 to 50,000 every day. How can one staff be appointed to undertake the opening-up of that mutton, and the ticketing and certifying and pricing of it? There is no use talking about it; it cannot be done. Now, we have to consider this last slump. The trouble is that from 1898 up to 1907 we have been enjoying phenomenal prices—absolutely we have never heard of such prices in all our times. Unfortunately, at the end of 1908, or before the end of that year, there was a financial panic at Home; industries were therefore affected, and at the close of the year (December, 1908) we find there was stored up in London about two to three months' supplies of mutton that ought to have gone into consumption, simply because the industrial people could not buy it. They had not the money to buy it. At any rate, the slump took place. The industries of England were greatly affected by the financial stringency. Wool went down from 11d. to 5½d. per pound. We passed in at Napier wool at 10d. per pound, and sold in London at 5d. afterwards. There was no doubt about the fall in wool. But there was no suggestion that the people in the wool-market were acting fraudulently. Now, we have, as I said, all the other countries in the world to face, and we find from Mr. Weddell's report that in December New Zealand mutton is obtainable within 1d. per pound of fresh meat. Then, surely, we are in a pretty good position. I should like to know how much frozen meat we in New Zealand would eat? The thing has been experimented on in Napier, where a freezing institution bought up a butchery establishment, thinking to supply the town. The Hawke's Bay Club took it for one week, and then said, "No, thank you; we want fresh meat." The same applied to hotels. If we can get within 1d. or 1½d. per pound of fresh meat, those who are conducting our business at Home are doing very well for us. Now, as to the question of distribution: No doubt there are some who have been in London, and who have followed up the question of distribution; but how far have they gone? I can place on the table here to-day a copy of the distribution of one institution in London for one day, and I think it will be rather a curious thing to look at. There are pages, and pages, and pages of deliveries, and I shall read some of them to you, or hand them in, at any rate. The deliveries run from two legs up to possibly four carcasses, and five sheep, and half a dozen legs, and so on. The biggest order possibly that day was ten sheep. Those orders altogether were something like two to three thousand lambs and two to three thousand legs. In Smithfield the same institution sold from three to four thousand sheep. The whole output comes to 5,000 sheep, 2,000 lambs, and 422 legs, and 400 pieces of beef. That is the day's sale. This is for a large institution selling meat for the producer as well as for themselves. Talking about distribution, and the prices obtaining in London: I know an institution that buys half to three-quarters of a million carcasses every year. Do you mean to tell me that these people, interested to that extent in New Zealand meat, are not straining every effort to put that meat into a proper position, and to get the most money they can? Are these people who have bought c.i.f., and sheep-dealers—are they going to lose thousands and thousands, not making an effort to put the trade in a proper position? I do not think it can be possible. There are matters in the London market that want putting right, such as the settlement of claims. We have heard about insurance claims for discoloured meat, &c.; but if your agents cannot arrange these matters properly, then get agents who are able to do so. There are agents in London who will do these things properly.

*The Chairman.*—What are their names, Mr. Kettle?

*Mr. Kettle.*—At any rate, I put this on the table. We also talk about advising what is the price of meat. Here is a circular issued by the C.C. and D. Co. every week—sent out to about seven thousand butchers and co-operative associations, and in this circular the price is given of