

*The Chairman.*—Perhaps so.

*Mr. A. Chamberlain* (Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association).—I think the committee, if it can get any information as to the way in which to get over the difficulties of insurance, will be taking a very great step in the right direction.

*The Chairman.*—The resolution is, then, that a committee be appointed, in accordance with remit No. 3, the words “six members for the North Island and six members for the South Island” being added.

Carried unanimously.

*Mr. W. G. Lysnar* (Gisborne Farmers' Union).—We have here interests represented with regard to the freezing and mercantile companies, and there may be a feeling that they will study their own pecuniary interests before the producers' interests; therefore I think it better that producers only should be represented on the committee. The Gisborne company, I may mention, have made it a rule that no commercial or mercantile man shall hold shares in the company or be a director.

*Mr. E. G. Staveley* (New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company).—As a commercial man I shall support most heartily the proposal that this committee shall be composed entirely of producers. But why limit it, as suggested by Mr. Ensor, to producers of mutton and lamb? What is wrong with the producers of beef and pork?

*Mr. A. H. Turnbull* (Canterbury Chamber of Commerce).—I heartily indorse the suggestion that the committee should be composed entirely of producers. I think it will be a useful experience for them.

*The Chairman.*—I think we want the very best men we can get on the committee, and I rather object to the proposal. There are many men who have a better knowledge of the ins and outs of the frozen-meat trade than the producers have themselves, and they should be represented on the committee.

*Mr. George Sheat* (North Canterbury Farmers' Union).—We are meeting here for information, not to teach the men who are in business; and I am sorry I cannot support Mr. Ensor's motion. We are here not to throw boulders at one another, but to enter into confidence, and if we cannot do that without casting aspersions on business men, I am sorry I am here at all, and I am speaking as a farmer. We are here to better the position of the trade. Let us enter into mutual confidence, and set up a committee composed of the best men available, and do the best we can. I am sorry the last motion has come before the Conference, and I shall vote strongly against it, and trust other farmers will feel the same way.

*Mr. H. D. Vavasour* (Marlborough Farmers' Union).—I quite indorse the remarks of the last speaker. In these matters, I am sure if it were left entirely to the farmers they would not have the special knowledge necessary that we should get if the committee met in conjunction with the merchants. If the committee were set up composed of the best men among the farmers as well as the merchants it would be much better; and even some of the freezing companies' representatives, too. I do not see any harm in that, because I take it the freezing companies should, and do to a certain extent, work hand in hand with the farmers. It is to the interests of the freezing companies to work with the farmers, and I think a combined committee would be very much better than a purely farmers' committee.

*Mr. C. H. Ensor* (Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association).—Would you expect a committee of freezing companies to go to the freezing companies for information?

*Mr. L. C. Gardiner.*—Is this amendment out of order, Mr. Chairman? I think the resolution has already been carried.

*The Chairman.*—The resolution was carried, but not the details.

*Mr. John C. N. Grigg.*—Looking round this meeting, and seeing the delegates from the North and the South, I think Mr. Ensor's motion is not the best for this meeting to consider—in fact, it is almost a slur. As far as the farmers are concerned, we came here with a full idea of learning, more than trying to teach. It seems to me that some of the persons have not a very great knowledge of this trade; and I remember meeting one of the Swifts some years ago—and I take it that they are people pretty well up in the meat trade—who said that of all the businesses he had been connected with, there was no trade so intricate as the meat trade, and so hard to govern. From the farmers' point of view, I should like to say that we have had three big slumps in our meat trade since the start. At the start the meat sold well, but in 1887 there was a slump (fat lambs were bought at from 5s. 3d. to 5s. 6d. in 1887), but the market recovered quickly, and the next year we got good prices, and we never looked back until the year 1897; then there was another set-back to a certain extent, and that was partly caused by the drought in the Northern Hemisphere forcing a large quantity of meat on the London market; in consequence, we all suffered. When you think that what meat we do export is such a very small proportion of that which comes on to the London market, it seems to me that it is out of reason to expect any holding up we can do to affect the market. It is trying to hold up the market with a very small quantity of meat. Further, the process of freezing meat is simply cutting, like the reaper-and-binder: it produces flour at half the price, and so the refrigerating processes throw all kinds of meat from all countries on to the one market. Being the first country on the frozen-meat market, we have enjoyed a good start and good prices. Our meat was good quality—moved very close to the meat at Home, indeed; but now gradually other countries are competing for the one market in the world. I almost think I would decline, as a farmer, to be one of the committee, because I should feel I had so little experience compared with what we should hope to gain from the commercial men who have given so much time, and trouble, and brains to it. There are two things that will govern this matter—money and brains.