

impossible to ascertain at the beginning of the year what are the available supplies: you can estimate approximately; and it would be easy to arrange with the freezing companies that the Controlling Board should say how much per cent. of the mutton should remain in the stores of each freezing company, and how much should be forwarded every month. I am satisfied that some scheme like that would be of immense advantage to the whole of New Zealand.

*Mr. R. D. D. McLean* (Hawke's Bay Agricultural and Pastoral Association).—I beg to second Mr. Vavasour's motion. I presume all the remits will be considered by the committee set up. It might interest the meeting to know that I recently got a letter from Home (we have been hearing to-day the colonial opinion of the trade, so I quote this) from a man who has been Home several years. I told him various opinions as to the unsatisfactoriness of the trade out here, and asked for his opinion. He replied saying that the cablegrams had told us of the phenomenal rise in New Zealand meat, which was still maintained. Of course, it was, he said, only back to the old level, which was what he had maintained would happen directly buyers got over the scare from the enormous shipments of May. Had the ships been evenly distributed over six months, there would not, he considers, have been such disastrous prices; business was completely disorganized and trade at a standstill by that means. These violent fluctuations, he considered, did an immense amount of harm, and matters could not improve until the farmers and the speculators combined to arrange shipments each month. Storage in New Zealand would help this, though long storage anywhere was undesirable. He says it is quite impossible to regulate prices so long as the meat is sold in New Zealand c.i.f., or to speculators; and he outlines how it should be sent to London, and so forth.

*Mr. J. D. Hall*.—What is the date of that letter?

*Mr. R. D. D. McLean*.—Two months ago. The whole position is this: There was a glut last year, and a low purchasing-power; but as far as the future is concerned, we must realize and recognize this fact: that there are too many people having control of the consignments of meat, and that in the interests of the producers themselves this is not desirable. While we must make every allowance for everything that the freezing companies have done for us in the past, and the enormous amount of money they have put into the business, still one cannot help thinking that if the producers were represented, as Mr. Vavasour suggests, that would give them more confidence in what was being done. Moreover we have got to realize the great and increasing competition of these other countries, and that in order to compete against them we in New Zealand will have to concentrate our energy in the future more than we have done in the past.

*Mr. W. S. Hampson* (Nelson Freezing Company).—After giving study to this question of marketing frozen meat for some time, I have been of opinion that something upon the lines suggested by the Marlborough Agricultural and Pastoral Association will be the only way by which this question is going to be effectively solved. We cannot help outside competition—we have to face the Argentine, Australia, and the produce of other countries; but what we could do is this: I think the competition amongst ourselves might, at any rate, be reduced to a minimum. Now, sir, from very reliable information that I have received from the Old Country, I am firmly of the opinion that the market would never have got to the depths it did get to, it would never have dropped so low, had it not been for the keen competition that there was on the London market amongst ourselves—amongst New Zealand sellers and brokers. Now, sir, it does seem to me that there ought to be some method by which, at any rate, this item could be eliminated from the trade, and, while we cannot say that any Advisory Board in London or any Board of Control in New Zealand can make and fix an absolute range of price, yet I do think that it might be possible to make some such arrangement as suggested. I have roughed it out in my mind as something in the nature of a clearing-house. We might have such a clearing-house under a Board of Control in New Zealand, together with a clearing-house in London, with certain powers given to them by the freezing companies if you like, upon a certain basis, and that the clearing-house in London should from day to day make the prices of the day. I know there are difficulties with this c.i.f. & e. buying, and the buying for the retail trade in England makes certain other difficulties. We know there are difficulties, and we are not going to get things into fair shape without surmounting these difficulties. It simply means that the producers, and the merchants, and the companies will have to put their heads together, and perhaps make little concessions all round, if we are going to get a satisfactory basis for dealing with this line of produce. I believe that something upon these lines could be arranged by which London would know week by week what was being shipped from New Zealand, the brands being shipped, and so on. I do not propose that this committee should have any financial control—any control—over brokers other than fixing from time to time, either from day to day or from week to week, the prices at which New Zealand frozen meat is to be sold upon the London market. I think, in reference to that Advisory Board or clearing-house, that they should also have the power to receive any complaints, make proper investigations with regard to causes of damage, insurance, and generally supervise the proper marketing of all the frozen meat that New Zealand could send. I do not believe for a single minute that the output of New Zealand is too big for the consumption of the Old Country. I believe she can consume a very great deal more than we can send for a long time to come. I was told of a little incident at the Conference of Chambers of Commerce in Sydney, where one of your representatives was giving figures of New Zealand exports. There was an English merchant there, and he turned round and said, "Yes, very good; just about sufficient for one decent shop." I believe that is the way London looks upon our supplies; and, in spite of the fact that so much was landed in London during the months of June, July, and August last year, had we had a better system of distribution, I was told on a reliable authority, the slump would not have occurred, for, while there were ships unable to unload in London, there was storage in the North of England towns for perhaps half a million carcasses. If that is correct, I say it shows, at any rate, faulty distribution so far as we are concerned, and I hope that this meeting will give this idea a good deal of thought and examination