

should now take is to combine among themselves, and in some way to have a greater control over the market than they have now.

*The Chairman.*—Do you mean an amendment, then?

*Mr. J. G. Wilson.*—Yes; I move an amendment to ask the freezing companies to secure a better control of the market. They should meet together to-night—they will never have a better time than the present—and I think they could formulate some scheme, and they would know how far they could go in the way of having control over the export.

*Mr. H. D. Vavasour* (Marlborough).—The motion I brought forward is practically what Mr. Wilson says. He has interpreted it more clearly than I had, being more accustomed to public speaking. I never suggested for one moment that it should be an arbitrary Board of Control to control the freezing companies. It is more in the way of a suggestion to the freezing companies to set up a Board with certain powers, and if they do I am certain things will be more satisfactory. I shall, however, request Mr. Wilson to draft a resolution which I can submit.

*Mr. J. G. Wilson* submitted the following to Mr. Vavasour: “That the representatives of the various freezing companies present be asked to meet together during the sitting of the Conference, with a view of association for the purpose of, as far as possible, controlling the export of frozen meat, and acting on the defensive when necessary, and generally protecting the joint interests of the producers and themselves.”

*Mr. H. D. Vavasour.*—I shall have pleasure in withdrawing my motion, and moving Mr. Wilson's instead.

*Mr. J. G. Wilson.*—I second the motion.

*Sir George Clifford* (Canterbury Frozen Meat Company).—I object to the tone of the remarks of Mr. Wilson, placing the producers and the freezing companies in a position of opposition and antagonism. Any such feeling is absolutely unfounded in this Island, whatever may be the case in the North Island. You have only to reflect upon the constitution of the boards of the freezing companies, and you will see that nearly every member is a producer, whose stake is much more bound up in the success of the trade with his own interests as a producer than as a member of the company. The spirit animating both the Canterbury companies is the prosperity of the trade in relation to all the producers. These companies can only succeed if their clients are also successful. Now, it seems to me that a Board of Control is a very, very dangerous implement to introduce into this trade. Mr. Wilson has said that the trade was in a precarious state, or going from bad to worse, or some such statement. I do not think any New-Zealander should say that. The basis of New Zealand's prosperity is the frozen-meat trade, and it should not be said this was in a bad state.

*Mr. Wilson.*—I never said that.

*Sir George Clifford.*—The basis of New Zealand's prosperity is the marvellous success of the meat trade, and I do not think that the reverses we have had in the past few months should make us less sanguine for the future. We may have more competition to face, but we shall always be ready to face that, because the quality of our meat will always be better than the quality of the meat the generality of our competitors can produce. One of the secrets of our success has been that we have had an open door and free competition. This is a most complex trade. We welcome buyers and speculators from all parts of the world to take our meat, and if we do not give them a free hand, but try to check them in their operations, we shall check their success, and the prices they can afford to pay us will be necessarily diminished. We should think seriously before altering the mode in which that trade has been conducted for so long. At present the farmer has absolutely free access to the market; if he does not like the prices the speculator offers, he can ship on his own account freely, and I do not think the producer is in the same position in any other country. How would you like it if the system prevailing in the Argentine, which has been upheld to us to-day as being so perfect, were adopted here, where the purchaser has no power to send his own stuff away—where he has to accept the price given by the large freezing companies who are speculating on their own accounts, for their own profit? It is not so here. The freezing companies are not making an exorbitant profit; some are making a profit perilously near to a loss.

*Mr. Wilson.*—Oh, oh!

*Sir George Clifford.*—In the Argentine there is nothing to prevent the profits going into the pockets of the large trust we have heard about to-day. If you establish a Board of Control and place it in the hands of the freezing companies, you are tempting the companies to make a larger profit than they ought to do, and I should be very sorry to see such a thing, because it would hamper their efforts to do what is in the best interests of the whole trade. As to the question of storage: It is proposed to store here. Now, storing here is a very difficult thing. You know this: that the freezing companies have already large storage accommodation, and that that storage accommodation is by no means inadequate to the general operations of the trade; but what you are practically doing now is to propose that the freezing accommodation should be extended at all the works. Now, anything like a duplication of the present freezing accommodation would cost half a million, and that would be an annual charge, and it would only perhaps be useful once in five years; and as far as Canterbury is concerned—and probably it is the same in the rest of New Zealand—I do not think that storage has ever been refused by any freezing company.

*Mr. J. D. Hall.*—Oh! query.

*Sir George Clifford.*—I think that is so, for our own company, at any rate, and I believe it is the case with both companies. Are our companies to spend anything from £50,000 to £500,000 for a purpose that is problematic, for something which would only be rarely required? It is said that the low prices were caused by hurrying stuff to London. I do not believe it. There was no reason to believe that the stocks in London would not be gradually absorbed as usual, and therefore that the demand would become too slack to absorb the shipments on the sea as they went forward. But I do not think we could regulate this matter from here in any adequate way. If we