

had large amounts in store, the statistical position would be perfectly known in England, and it would be as dangerous to have large stocks here as in London. Therefore I believe that free trade, and the common-sense of all the individuals engaged in trying to make money out of this article, is the right way to attain success. I believe that a Board of Control acting here would make more mistakes than are made now by leaving the matter to the wisdom of those men who are successively interested in the shipments. I believe that a Board of Control is a dangerous experiment, and absolutely needless under the present conditions of trade in New Zealand.

*Mr. J. D. Hall.*—I also think we ought to deprecate any reference to a spirit of antagonism. I do not think it should be mentioned here. I am sorry it has been mentioned. In business matters there must ever be the haggle of the market; but I do not think there is any real spirit of antagonism between the producers of Canterbury and that *bona fide* farmers' institution, the Canterbury Frozen Meat Company. But, as far as storage never having been refused is concerned, I think that is a mistake. It may be possible that storage has never been refused, but they have refused to kill, and that is the same thing. That was in the dry season.

*Sir George Clifford.*—I think the companies only refused to kill when the stock came forward in such small quantities that it would be ridiculous to kill.

*Mr. J. D. Hall.*—I speak subject to correction, but I think I am right, and that Sir George is mistaken. It was during the drought of 1907. It is true that there was no deficiency in storage, but that was only because the stuff was going away so fast as to make a glut. And so far as the statement is concerned that storage here is as objectionable as in London, well, the question is that there was not storage in London, or it had been booked by those astute people who knew what was going on here. If the people are in the position to say, "We have all the storage and you have all the meat, and you have got to take it out of the ship," well, the producers are at their mercy. That is possibly what occurred, and we want a ventilation of the subject. If it was not the case, well, we should like to be told so; and if we are wrong in having suspicions that the people at Home knew too much for us on that occasion, let us know exactly where we stand. So far as the Board of Control is concerned, I do not know what to think about it, but I do think it is aiming rather high; and I think, if we get the information we ask for from the freezing companies, and they tell us whether they can associate and co-operate, and give us a decided answer—we should like to know their opinion, and whether they have any suggestions to make—that will be of considerable help to the Conference. The business men are our advisers, so far as conducting the sales is concerned. We are only too glad to come to them and ask for assistance, and we hope that we shall get it without any spirit of antagonism. I think that it is the business of any institution that represents farmers to do this. If they are satisfied that the farmers, great and small, do not get consideration from the persons with whom they are doing business, it is their duty to do everything they can to help them. It is the small farmer who enlists my sympathy most, perhaps because I am one myself. They are the people who should be most considered in the development of the meat trade, and the gentlemen who occupy the position of directors of the freezing companies are not the small farmers of to-day.

*Sir George Clifford.*—Oh, yes! they are.

*Mr. Hall.*—I beg your pardon, Sir George. I did not know that you claimed to occupy that position.

*Sir George Clifford.*—I was not speaking personally.

*Mr. Hall.*—With regard to this Board of Control: I do think that Mr. Wilson's amendment is what we want. It will merely go forward as a suggestion. We cannot bind, or even make the freezing companies confer; but when they know it is the wish of the meeting they will give it consideration. There is no use saying, You are only building castles in the air; you are only throwing your money away, &c. When we have once got that Board of Control it will be time enough to consider the other matters—grading, insurance, freights, and all incidentals, which are a small thing to a small man, but all together mount up, and should be taken into consideration by the persons whom I should like to constitute a Meat-producers' Protection Association, for the purpose of reducing those fees—freights, insurance, and storage charges—to a minimum, and thereby in the end increasing the profit that must be derived and paid to the producer. We have had many conflicting statements here with regard to what the consumer in England is paying, and, as a matter of fact, I should be very sorry to give a judgment as to which was correct and which was not. One person tells us that the meat is selling at the old prices, and another says it is being thrown away at 2d.; we do not know what is being done, and we therefore want the help of an association representing farmers, desirous of finding out what is really being done.

*Mr. A. Borthwick* (Borthwick and Co.).—Mr. Hall talks, Mr. Chairman, of storage having been refused, or, rather, killing having been refused. That may be so—that the drought came on, and very large numbers came to the works. I do not think it can be supposed that the works are capable of killing all stock coming along at the height of a drought for a few weeks. We might have to kill a hundred thousand a day for the farmers. The works throughout New Zealand are large enough ordinarily, possibly too large in some cases, and they are having difficulties for that reason. I think the storage-accommodation question in London has been exaggerated. Storage was probably kept for those steadily using it, and possibly it was right it should be kept for them. I do not think the ships were stopped discharging for more than two days throughout the whole season. I think that is the first time that has occurred probably for fifteen years; and to build extra accommodation would probably be paying cost of storage for nothing; and the same remarks applying to London would apply to New Zealand. The other point about the Board of Control is this: I do not quite see what the Board of Control is going to do; but I should like to know, when the committee is being formed, is it to go into all the points on the Order Paper, or only the first two motions. Perhaps that is a question that can be put to the Chairman.