

the price of the Beef Trust he could not sell them at all, and did not know what to do with them. How would our farmers like that? If they do not like the prices offered by the freezing companies, they should ship Home on their own account. There is no use trying to compare Argentine and American methods with New Zealand methods. Mr. Wilson said that last year the farmers were largely responsible for the state of affairs. Last year, when the farmers were wanted to sell at a certain time at a certain price, they said the price was too low, and they would keep their stuff over a month. They kept it, and we know the result. Mr. Kettle said the main thing was to sell. My motto in London was, Sell—and repent, but sell. Why is it that the New Zealand farmers have such a suspicion of their own blood brothers? We saw a slight indication of it yesterday. They will not trust each other. Why not trust the London people? But, no, the New-Zealander thinks the London man is a robber—is always out to rob him. If you send a pen of sheep to be sold, and your pen does not get by a shilling a head what your neighbour's got, you do not call the auctioneer a robber. You say the sheep were not right, or the demand was not right. Then why not treat the London people the same? The London trade is a weather trade, and people do not understand that sometimes. Mr. Vavasour said there should be a Board of Control to fix the prices. How in the name of goodness could you fix the prices? The difference in the weather in the morning makes all the difference to the prices. If at Smithfield there is a nice bright morning, you may be short of carcasses, the sales are so good; and if it is a dull morning, there may be far too much. We have to study those conditions. It is a question which requires great judgment: it simply could not be regulated by anybody at this end. We are all working for our own and for other people's benefit, too. Is it not a fair thing to think we are doing our best. The law of supply and demand is eternal and inevitable, and the sole thing that guides us. The London people, it is alleged, do not know what is on the water, and do not know what is coming on. I have the *Meat Trades Journal*, and if you like to look up that you will find the name of the ship, and the total amount of lamb and mutton in her, and that is published every week. They know exactly the number of ships coming forward, and, in addition, every one of the mercantile firms writes Home to its agents notifications of each individual cargo. So that this information is sent Home the moment the ship sails, and the information is known at Home. The London people have been blamed a good deal, but there is one vital point that has not been touched on, and it is a very important one. The New Zealand farmer has never to take into consideration the fear that he is not going to get his money. He knows, if he sends his lambs to the freezing companies, or gives them to the bank or the auctioneer, he is going to get his money; he knows that. When we sell meat for any one at Home, we pay for it the moment we sell; but when do we get our money? There are other people here with just as much London experience as I have, and they will tell you that £200 a month is not much to lose on frozen meat. That never comes to New Zealand, but we have to stand it. The retail butcher cannot pay us cash, he does not get cash, and we have to take the risk. It is always admitted that if you have to take a risk, you have to get a bigger profit. A man says meat is selling at 4d., and it is being retailed at 8d.; but the latter is the retail price of a joint, and perhaps the man never gets paid at all. I ask the growers to think of that. Their money is sure and certain for everything that comes forward, but the London people have to stand the risk of the payment not coming in at all, although we always have to part with the money—give it up to you. I hope I have not taken up too much of the time of the Conference.

*Mr. Kinross White* (North British and Hawke's Bay Freezing Company).—I have often heard it suggested that meat in London might be sold by auction in the same way as wool. Perhaps Mr. Bennett, from his experience, might enlighten us as to the practicability of this.

*Mr. C. H. Ensor* (Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association).—After hearing Mr. Bennett speak, it seems wonderful to us growers that the London people can live at all.

*Mr. Bennett*.—With regard to Mr. Kinross White's question as to selling meat by auction: It could not be done, because meat varies so much; the lines are not the same in weight, and not of the same suitability to buyers. Then, we commence our sales at 4 a.m., although there is no meat allowed out before 5 a.m. The buyers come round and pick the meat at 4 o'clock. That could not be done by auction, because the men have to actually examine the meat. At present a man is able to examine his meat and pick what he wants. I do not think the meat could be sold by auction at all for buying large quantities, because of the personal inspection. I do not think the grading could be done sufficiently to allow this. There is also the question of where the room could be found to hold the buyers.

*Mr. J. C. N. Grigg*.—What time does the meat have to be put out?

*Mr. Bennett*.—Not before 5 a.m.

*Mr. J. C. N. Grigg*.—When is it all gone?

*Mr. Bennett*.—It is generally gone by 8 a.m.

*Mr. J. C. N. Grigg*.—I was told that the objection to the auction business was that if the meat was sold by auction the amount of stuff could not be got rid of in the short time. There would be eight, or ten, or twelve sellers, all selling at the one time. The sample would have to be shown first, and then all the selling done in the one room, and that would mean that things would be so late that the butchers would miss the morning deliveries.

*Mr. J. G. Wilson* (Wellington Farmers' Union).—I should like to support this motion very much. It does not go far enough for me, but we are obliged to take what we can get in this world. If we only bring the freezing companies together and discuss matters, we shall have done a great deal. There is the danger, as Sir George Clifford pointed out, that the freezing companies might take their own individual view, instead of that of the producers; but we shall have to watch them. I think the freezing companies will take the motion in the spirit in which it is offered. We desire them to come together and discuss these matters, and give every consideration to these suggestions. I am quite prepared to take any risk of the freezing companies combining together against the producers; I am quite sure they will not combine against the producers.