

has got to be there, and to take that business in hand itself. I do not think there is any business connected with the colonies where that amount of value is intrusted to any other body than the virtual owners, who stand to make profit or loss out of the operations that are being carried on; and in a sense it is not at this end but at the other end that the profits and losses of the freezing companies are made. It depends upon the price they get in London, and whether they get the uttermost price and the best conditions, as to whether the business is going to be profitable at this end or not. The volume of these companies' capital is sufficient to pay the expenses of such an establishment, and at present where is the commission on this £500,000 going? It is going to build up the goodwill of some concern in London, while it ought to be going to build up the goodwill of the concern which is making the profit or loss upon the carcasses. To show that it is going to build up the goodwill of another concern, take an instance like this: I am acquainted with a case where a producer from this colony went to London with his account sales for produce in his hand, and he said to the agent who had sold the produce in London—an agent of high-class standing and the best repute—"I want to know who bought this produce of mine." "What do you want to know that for?" said the agent. "I want to go and see him, and talk about it, and ask him some questions," was the reply. And the answer was, "No; that information belongs to us; that is our affair." Well, whether that be true or not, I think that most people, when they come to consider it, will admit that it is the business of the freezing companies handling these cargoes to know all that is to be known about them not only up to the time of their being sent Home, but up to the time they go into the consumer's hands, and make an absolute study of the business from the beginning to the end. The whole expense of this, I again say, may be very easily covered out of the commissions which are at present paid for the handling of the produce. Perhaps in some respects the principal matter standing in this Order Paper of ours is the question of control. Much has been said and thought about the control of the meat trade. I think Mr. Murray in speaking yesterday finally disposed of that, and showed the impossibility of anybody controlling the sale of the meat. There is no room, in my opinion, for control, but there is in some minor respects, at any rate, I think, room for regulation rather than control. For instance, it has been notorious in connection with this meat business (I have happened upon it in London over and over again) that in one week they will have as many as four steamers arriving from New Zealand with large quantities of meat. Now, sir, there is nothing that staggers the market so much as these heavy arrivals all at once. We have heard already about the particulars of the shipments afloat being known in London. Well, any merchant will bear out what I say, that statistical information does not always affect the value of produce. Very often when the statistical position is going up, and up, and up, the value is going down, and the opposite is often the case too; but there is one thing that does affect the price—and most affects the price of a perishable article—and that is the congesting at one point of more than can be handled by the ordinary appliances for handling it; and it is when these huge arrivals take place, when everybody is wanting to sell, that the most severe pressure is put upon the market, and that the lowest prices are reached. I therefore suggest as well worthy of consideration of the trade whether you could not do the same with meat as with butter and cheese—make it arrive in London in periodical shipments every five, or six, or ten days, or whatever may be considered necessary, for so many months at a time—at any rate, deliver the stuff in London gradually.

*Mr. M. C. Orbell* (British and New Zealand Meat Company).—In this recommendation I notice that one question—it is a very important one—has not been referred to, and that is with regard to the carrying or shipping of our mutton and lamb. I am surprised it was not referred to yesterday. I do not think any gentleman referred to it at all. We know that the shipping interest looms very largely in connection with this trade, and without their assistance we cannot expect to regulate the trade as it ought to be regulated. I must refer a moment to the cold-storage question, because the shipping companies are greatly interested in the quantity of stuff we have in our works here. It has been argued that we want more cold-storage. My opinion is that if the stuff is frozen, and taken away as it matures, there will be no glut in these works or in the London market. We have accommodation in the colony for one-third of the output of New Zealand; in Canterbury we have about the same, and in London very nearly the same. In view of those facts, I think that as to the stuff, if taken when frozen and sent forward judiciously, there will be no complaint about storage. I am convinced that if that were done, as I say, there would be no glut. I think that in great measure the glut last July was caused by the shipping companies—they were in a measure responsible. The shipping companies are the only people who can assist us in this matter. They have assumed control of the shipping from the very start, and very wisely so. I think that the freezing companies can do more for us now than any other proposition, but with the aid of the shipping companies. I do not believe you can propose any scheme that may not interfere with some vital interests of other associations—mercantile houses, and so on. There is very little hope of carrying out any such thing to advantage. I agree that the freezing companies should make arrangements with the shipping companies, but I do not believe in their contracting for five years to carry stuff; I think that is a very wrong and unwise policy. I have no doubt that the shipping companies will fall in with ordinary business proposals, but we find that last year there were five vessels loading up all at the same time, running round the colony at the same time: that showed that there was more stuff in the works than there should have been. Had the stuff left the colony when it should have left, there would have been no five vessels leaving the colony at the one time, and no glut in the market. I think the freezing companies should take the initiative in this matter. At the Conference in Wellington Mr. Nelson said that the freezing companies were the custodians of the trade, and the sheep-farmers had to listen to what they had to say; that the freezing companies had to lay down the lines on which the farmers went, and stick to them. I say the freezing companies can do a great deal for us in connection with the shipping companies. I am surprised that the committee last night did not say something about the shipping