

companies. They must know that the shipping companies are much interested (more than people imagine) in the freezing companies—perhaps that is why it was lost sight of; but, at any rate, I hope that the shipping companies will come forward now and do what they can to put the meat trade in a better position.

*Mr. A. H. Turnbull* (Canterbury Chamber of Commerce).—Mr. Chairman, I should like to congratulate the committee appointed late yesterday on the recommendations made, and put before us this morning. I claim to know this trade from the producer's point of view, as well as from the merchant's and from the freezing company's point of view. I think the speeches yesterday displayed a littleness and a lack of knowledge of the conditions that the people concerned should have been ashamed to bring before this Conference. In regard to the recommendations of this committee, I think it is remarkable—but it is only what we might have expected from the gentlemen appointed—that they have got the gist of the matter so quickly, have got the salient features which called for attention. I would like, sir, to refer to one or two trifling matters very briefly. One speaker said the Argentine could accurately foretell what quantity of meat was going on the market. To illustrate that, I might quote the estimates cabled out from time to time, which were vastly different from the actual shipments. [Figures quoted to show this.] The Argentine, apparently, are in no better position to forecast their shipments than we in New Zealand. With regard to the recommendations made in connection with the freezing companies: Sir, it is to the freezing companies, and to these alone, that the producers can look for remodeling and reorganizing the trade. The freezing companies represent the producers. Even if they do not, and are proprietary companies, then their interests end in securing all the advantages they can to the colonial shippers, because that redounds to their own interest. Bills of lading are also a most important matter. What is known as "clause 21" in the bills trading to the west coast I consider most objectionable. It is, indeed, generally considered of such an objectionable nature that the Australian Government has overridden it—has made a special provision that no conditions should be outside its own paramount clause. Of course, we know that the colonial offices have increased their rates very much, owing to heavy losses, but nevertheless I say that the trade now is as clean and well looked after as it can possibly be. So much better has supervision become in the payment and analysis of claims that whereas 75s. 9d. was at one time the rate, insurances can now be effected at 2½ per cent., and that not only includes the risk from the time the meat is delivered at the works up to two months, but also two months at the other end. That shows that matters in that connection have been very vastly improved. The question of c.i.f. & e. contracts is also a very important one. It is to be regretted that last year a much larger proportion of the meat was not sold in that manner, because the people at the other end would then be more interested in keeping up the prices. I also agree that discharges should be better looked after. In regard to insurance and quality claims: We in Canterbury know nothing of these, nor do the companies in Wellington. Quality claims are practically a thing of the past in regard to Canterbury and Wellington. The quality claims for last season would be covered by 1s. per cent. Where careful grading is done, and first-class meat sent, good prices are obtained, the buyer is satisfied, and the transaction is ended. If you do not send first-class meat, or do not attend to the grading, the whole of the shippers must be penalized; and therefore the Canterbury and the Wellington companies deserve the very highest commendation they can possibly obtain from the producers for the efficient manner in which they have standardized their grading, resulting in their paying higher prices to the producers here. I do feel—and I speak as one knowing all points of the trade—that the matters of importance in the trade should be arranged by the freezing companies in conclave assembled from time to time. A suggestion was made that no contract should be made for a long term for freights. The people making the suggestion do not know anything about the business. Do you mean to say that any company would build high-class ships, such as we have now (for the longest voyage in the world, and the losses are extremely light)—would any company, I ask, build ships and put them in the trade without long contracts? The trade cannot be hawked about from year to year; the idea is utterly absurd.

*Mr. Orbell*.—The Australians do it now.

*Mr. Turnbull*.—Yes, and suffer for it. You have to pay extra freights from Australia from ¾d. to 1d.

*A Voice*.—Only ½d. now.

*Mr. Turnbull*.—I contend that the shipping companies have treated the freezing companies in this colony, and through them the producers of this colony, in a most liberal manner, and they have gone to an expense altogether beyond what might be reasonably expected. There is one other point in dealing with this storage accommodation in connection with the shipments which has been lost sight of, and that is this: that there is very large storage accommodation in the principal cities of the United Kingdom, and also that a considerable proportion of our trade has gone to the west coast. It is a very valuable trade for our colony, and I do hope the shipping companies will take that into consideration, and insist on having better accommodation on the west coast, for our trade there has grown immensely during recent years. [Statistics quoted to show this.] In connection with the mutton used there, it is, I may point out, a class of meat we are very glad to get rid of without loss. That trade wants looking into and improving, and I recommend it to the freezing companies to ascertain how and in what manner it can be extended and improved.

*Mr. F. de C. Malet* (Christchurch Meat Company).—I rise to mention a fact that may be of some interest to some of the members here, but not news to others resident in this district. The information may be of interest, as I say, to the Conference. Some years ago the Christchurch Meat Company found it necessary to institute a London office, and that office has been working now for some time with a highly paid gentleman at the head of it, who has been connected with freezing companies in this country. Our officers and staff at the London office are well up to their