

will find there was a big margin and that they were not running full. Therefore they had broken the Imperial instructions by shipping ewes and lambs from the freezing-works, which was permissible for the purpose of saving them closing the works down. They have no right to ship any lambs or ewes except for that purpose.

17. *Mr. Anderson.*] The Tokomaru works are quite independent of any trust?—Yes, quite independent.

18. I take it from your statement that you wish the Committee to believe that Tokomaru was left out because there was really no trust meat there?—No, I would not say that. I believe there is some trust meat there, but it is so small that the trust would prefer to get away a larger quantity from other ports without being detected. I now wish to put in a copy of the proceedings of an interview between the Hon. Mr. MacDonald, Minister of Agriculture, and the Shipowners Committee dealing with this question. It is as follows:—

NOTES OF INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE HON. W. D. S. MACDONALD AND MEMBERS OF THE NEW ZEALAND OVERSEAS SHIPOWNERS COMMITTEE—MESSRS. J. FINDLAY (CHAIRMAN), G. B. BULLOCK (NEW ZEALAND SHIPPING COMPANY), PEARCE (SHAW-SAVILL COMPANY), W. WALLIS (FEDERAL SHIRE COMPANY), J. SANDTMANN, J. R. ROOPER, AND R. TRIGGS.

*Hon. Minister:* Mr. Triggs will have told you gentlemen what I wanted to see you about. There has been a good deal of correspondence lately in connection with shipments of lamb. Certain freezing companies in Hawke's Bay and Gisborne complain that they are not getting fair allotment, and that their lamb and ewe mutton has been left behind; whereas Wellington and other centres are getting a very huge shipments of lamb—and it looks very like it according to the figures we have. Wellington has been doing remarkably well. The shipments of lamb from January to April from the following works were—Gisborne, 15,000; Hawke's Bay, 51,000; and this includes the whole of the works in the Poverty Bay and Hawke's Bay districts. Coming to Wellington the figures are—Wellington Meat Export Company, 72,000 carcasses; Gear Meat Company, Petone, 151,900 carcasses; Wellington Farmers, 45,404 carcasses; Longburn, 27,000 carcasses; Feilding, 21,000 carcasses; Patea, 21,000 carcasses; Wanganui, 7,000 carcasses; Taranaki, 1,980 carcasses; Borthwick's (Waitara), 10,065 carcasses; Hawke's Bay Farmers, 4,272 carcasses; Borthwick's (Pakipaki), 9,790 carcasses; Nelson Bros. (Tomoana), 16,030 carcasses; Nelson Bros. (Gisborne), 4,733 carcasses; Poverty Bay Sheep-farmers, 4,745 carcasses; Gisborne Freezing Meat Company, 886 carcasses; Auckland Farmers, 7,922 carcasses; Tokomaru Bay Sheep-farmers, nil; Westfield works, 473 carcasses.

*Mr. Findlay:* Had they beef and wether mutton in store which they might have shipped?

*Hon. Minister:* The position is this: The companies I have mentioned say that if the instructions from the Imperial Government are that wether mutton and ox beef should be shipped, they have nothing to say against that; but the companies that have complained say that when they have loyally abided by those instructions it is not right that other companies should be permitted to ship huge quantities of lamb, while there is a large quantity of ox beef and wether mutton in store not being shipped. That is the difficulty.

*Mr. Findlay:* That certain other companies have been favoured?

*Hon. Minister:* Well, it looks like it. In the month of February it is admitted that the companies were permitted to ship lamb and ewe mutton. These are extracts from cable I have received from the Imperial Government: "On the 5th February, 1916, the freezing companies were asked to give effect to the Board of Trade's request that preference in shipment should be given to quarters ox beef and wether mutton over lamb and other classes of frozen meat." Second telegram: "The New Zealand Shipowners Overseas Committee notified on the 16th November, 1916, that instructions had been received from the London Tonnage Committee that priority of shipment should be given to meat in the following order: Beef and wether mutton (1), pork (2), ewe mutton and lamb (3). These instructions remained in force until 16th February, 1917, when the following telegram was received from the London Tonnage Committee: 'Referring my 73 lamb may now be shipped in normal quantities.' On 21st February a further telegram was received reading, 'After providing for beef and mutton and cheese you may accept lamb in any quantities offering.' Foregoing instructions are amended by cablegram of 26th March, 1917, 'Government state important should ship as much Army meat as possible, give special preference to beef, then wether mutton and cheese, while not excluding ewe mutton and lamb entirely.'

*Mr. Sandtmann:* In February instructions were that normal quantities of lamb might be shipped.

*Hon. Minister:* Yes, might be shipped. There appears to have been large quantities of beef and wether mutton in store during all these periods: that is the point. The Gisborne people, as you see, have had very little lamb shipped. They have practically all their lamb and ewe mutton still in store. I do not know who is responsible, but I know the matter is now being taken up, and an answer has got to be given to satisfy the companies that have complained.

*Mr. Findlay:* Some companies have respected the instructions and others have disregarded them.

*Hon. Minister:* Wellington evidently has taken full advantage of the position. We can understand that in the South lamb is largely predominating, and a fair amount of shipping-space for lamb from there would be justifiable.

*Mr. Findlay:* Might it not be a good thing to ask those freezing companies for an explanation?

*Hon. Minister:* They have got their explanation—they have got their lamb away.

*Mr. Findlay:* You are concerned, sir, with what has happened in the past: you probably want to take some steps to see that instructions are carried out in the future.

*Hon. Minister:* Of course. There has evidently got to be some very different system to this in the future.

*Mr. Findlay:* In so far as this Committee is concerned, we receive instructions from the Imperial Government. We have always passed them on direct to the freezing companies or else through the medium of the Supplies Department. We have allotted space in accordance with instructions. We have always done it with an eye to beef and wether mutton being in store, and I really do not think any more can be done by us. The ship's officials or even the ships' agents would hardly judge what is ewe mutton, what is large lamb or small sheep; and certainly shipping companies could not accept the responsibility of declining meat when it gets down to the boat. They have not the expert knowledge; besides, responsibility of that sort if cast on the shipping companies would mean delay with the ships. Stuff would be sent down, declined, and sent back.

*Hon. Minister:* Yes. My position is unsatisfactory: I do not appear to get the necessary information until after the shipments are made. The Committee allot space but do not appear to have any concern as to what goes on board. They have received instructions from the Imperial Government that preference is to be given to wether mutton and ox beef, and they pass these instructions on to the freezing companies. I do not know whose duty it is, but it appears as if it will have to be somebody's duty in the future to see that companies do not ship anything but ox beef and wether mutton when such instructions are given, providing they have meat of that description in store. It has been agreed by the Imperial Government, the War Office, and the Board of Trade that where freezing-works are congested and it is necessary to remove a certain quantity of lamb and ewe mutton, that may be done. But what I want to know from the Tonnage Committee is this: Does their duty absolutely end when they have a communication from the War Office and the Board of Trade that preference is to be given to wether mutton and ox beef and they have passed those instructions on to the freezing-works?

*Mr. Findlay:* We passed on all instructions we had received, and asked them to give effect to them; but we have not acted as policemen on board the steamers—we have not the machinery, sir.

*Hon. Minister:* As the meat comes down in trucks and other ways, that would be impossible.

*Mr. Findlay:* I think you will see, sir, that we have no control over the meat in the works. It is not our work.

*Hon. Minister:* The position appears to be that somebody will have to put on an inspector to control the operations.