

*Mr. Pearce* : I think you have struck the nail on the head. I think the Board of Agriculture has got the necessary machinery.

*Hon. Minister* : We cannot take our officers away from their inspecting work for which they have been employed. However, it is no use discussing the matter further with the Tonnage Committee if that Committee has carried out all its duties. There is a widespread feeling that certain trusts and other people are pushing their wares, and getting them on board in preference to others who are justly entitled to the space.

*Mr. Findlay* : It is not exactly widespread, is it, sir ?

*Hon. Minister* : I could produce correspondence from Auckland and different places complaining that they are not getting a fair run in connection with the shipment of lamb.

*Mr. Sandtmann* : What trusts are referred to ?

*Hon. Minister* : I do not refer to any, but dealers operating on behalf of large exporting companies are generally classed as purchasing on behalf of the trust. It is a peculiar position. The Government is asked to endeavour to eliminate the trusts, and it has been offered a price for all classes of New Zealand meat—beef, mutton, and lamb—on behalf of the Imperial Government, but, notwithstanding that farmers sell meat to the trusts, they are asking the Government to eliminate.

*Mr. Pearce* : And the trusts sell to the Government.

*Mr. Bullock* : The Government could stop that at any time.

*Hon. Minister* : It was thought that it might help the small farmers and companies if they were not restricted in their dealings. The position appears to be that you have no power to take any further action than to pass on the instructions, and you have no inspector to see that your instructions are given effect to.

*Mr. Wallis* : We have no control over the meat.

*Hon. Minister* : Now, here is a point where I think you have control to a certain extent. You receive certain instructions from the Imperial Government stating that you must give preference to and provide space for ox beef and wether mutton, and when you receive an application for space from a freezing company and you agree to allot space for so many carcasses of wether mutton and so many quarters of ox beef, after allotting such space you could refuse to ship any other class of frozen meat.

*Mr. Findlay* : The freezing companies are relied upon to respect the instructions.

*Hon. Minister* : All I want you to understand is this: you have passed on these instructions to the different freezing companies—whether they have carried out the request of the Imperial Government or not you are not prepared to say. In future all you can do is to notify those people of the wishes of the Imperial Government—you have no means of enforcing your instructions.

*Mr. Bullock* : We cannot do anything further than that, sir. We had to rely on the freezing companies carrying out these instructions, but whether they have adhered to them or not we cannot say.

*Hon. Minister* : As a matter of fact, the whole of the meat belongs to the owners and the mortgagors or banks until it goes f.o.b., and then it becomes the property of the Imperial Government.

*Mr. Findlay* : We have often had to ask for explanations from freezing companies when shipments of lamb were made.

*Hon. Minister* : I do not think we can get any further. The point is this: Can the Tonnage Committee give any reasons why larger quantities of lamb have been shipped from Wellington than from any other ports? I understand there have been special occasions when boats came here direct and made this the only port of call. That is a question I would like to get some definite information about—steamers that have called here specially. For instance, if you had a boat calling here and it was the only port of call, no matter how much lamb was awaiting shipment from Gisborne you could not send the boat to Gisborne. If you could kindly prepare a statement showing the number of ships that have made this the only port of call, that would probably help to relieve the minds of the exporters who think they have been unfairly treated.

*Mr. Findlay* : We will go into that more closely, but speaking from memory I think the "Thelma" and "Ceramic" were the only two.

*Mr. Pearce*.—There were several steamers that had to be limited. Though not restricted to one port they had to be limited.

*Hon. Minister* : Just dealing with the "Ceramic": She took from here 9,091 carcasses lamb, and at the same time there were 54,924 carcasses mutton in store and 5,922 quarters beef.

*Mr. Findlay* : Wether mutton ?

*Hon. Minister* : Yes; 26th March.

*Mr. Findlay* : That was the actual date of the shipment, but the allotment would be made fully three weeks before, when the instructions that a normal quantity of lamb might be shipped were in force.

*Mr. Triggs* : The allotments would not be made very much earlier, because we only knew a short time beforehand that she was coming.

*Mr. Findlay* : I think she sailed about the same day as we received the revised instructions from London.

*Mr. Triggs* : What time did she arrive here?—on 26th March. Then February instructions would apply. These instructions remain in force: "Lamb may now be shipped in normal quantities." I think you had better hand these figures to the gentlemen, sir. There is one point about Wellington we must not overlook. We often have to get large quantities of meat on very short notice. Take the "Rimutaka," for instance. She was not to lift any meat at Wellington at all. She loaded at different places, with the result that when she came to Wellington she had space for 14,000 carcasses. There are many other ships in the same way.

*Hon. Minister* : Those are just the little points. I do not know. I would be glad if shipping companies would go into the whole matter and prepare a statement showing the whole position so far as they are concerned, as a reasonable answer has got to be given to those companies who have had their ewe mutton and lamb held back. Everybody knows the geographical position of a place counts for a great deal. I do not want to make any excuses, but to give the real facts. I would be glad if information could be given concerning each company's shipments, and show very shortly and precisely that on certain dates instructions were forwarded to the freezing companies. Then I can speak pretty freely to the freezing companies if they have not kept faith with the Tonnage Committee and the requests of the Imperial Government. If they have not done so, then we will have to find means of compelling them to do what is required. So far as I am concerned, all I wish to do is to give fair and impartial treatment to all the freezing companies in the country. However, the offenders appear to be the freezing companies; but if not, then it may be as you say, due to boats coming here and having to be loaded at short notice, and taking the most convenient method of filling up the space. In regard to boats that have called at Gisborne, Tokomaru Bay, and Hawke's Bay, those ports appear to have carried out the instructions of the Imperial Government in connection with the shipment of ox beef, wether mutton, &c., and they state that other people are getting an advantage over them, and that it is time the whole affair was looked into. However, the past cannot be undone, but I would like the Tonnage Committee to make any suggestions they think would help to give effect to the wishes of the Imperial Government and a fair deal to all freezing companies.

*Mr. Bullock*.—It is very hard to follow this thing right from the beginning. We make allotments and probably steamers to go to Gisborne and Napier under different instructions that will be enforced when they come to Wellington, and the works in Wellington are holding large quantities of beef to meet the requirements of camps and that sort of thing. We have made allotments to Waingawa, and when we asked for the meat they have said they cannot fill their engagements because the beef was required for the camps. That also applies to wether mutton. The same thing applies to the Gear Company in Wellington.

*Hon. Minister* : That means, of course, if you have made certain allotments for any special freezing-works and they have not got ox beef and wether mutton, you cannot cancel their allotment and give it to other freezing companies.

*Mr. Bullock* : That, I think, applies to Wellington, which is the final port; and you cannot send the boats away not filled.