

After a lengthy discussion of the existing position and the outlook for the new clip in the light of the information furnished by the Prime Minister, the following resolutions were passed and forwarded on to you :—

*Draft on Wool.*—“ That this conference of the wool-growers of New Zealand condemns in every way the iniquitous custom of ‘draft on wool’ existing in the British wool-market, whereby the grower is defrauded of 1lb. per hundredweight of the wool he sells there. Through this impost the New Zealand wool-growers are losers of over £100,000 a year. The only defence for this dishonest system is that it is an old custom. This conference of Dominion wool-growers therefore asks the Prime Minister to give his powerful assistance to do away with this abuse by instructing the High Commissioner to endeavour, in conjunction with the other High Commissioners in London, to use every means in their power to have this custom abolished.”

*Shipping-space for Wool.*—“ That, with a view of allowing wool-sales to be conducted in New Zealand, the Overseas Shipowners’ Committee be asked to inform brokers what amount of shipping-space will be available for wool during the months of November, 1920, to March, 1921, inclusive.”

*Shipping of Produce.*—“ That the Imperial Government be urged to provide the utmost number of refrigerated ships to lift meat and other refrigerated produce, and that wool be shipped if sufficient other general cargo be not available.”

*Continental Woollen-mills’ Output.*—“ That the British authorities be requested to lend all possible assistance to enable Continental woollen-mills to increase their output, and to inform the New Zealand Government if there is any way in which it can assist in bringing this about.”

*Financial Assistance for Wool-growers.*—“ That this conference expresses its hearty appreciation of the attendance of the Prime Minister at the meeting. It thanks him for the valuable information furnished, and trusts that the Government will be able to afford financial assistance in such a manner as it may be able to arrange to those wool-growers who are obliged to hold over their clip during the ensuing season.”

*Wool-growers’ Representatives on Standing Committee.*—“ That an effort be made to have Messrs. Bennett and Mabin, as representing the Woolbrokers’ Association, appointed to the standing committee which has already been set up to deal with financial and other matters connected with the disposal of New Zealand produce consequent on the termination of the Imperial Government’s purchasing contracts.”

*Representatives of New Zealand Wool-growers in London.*—With reference to the appointment of two representatives of New Zealand wool-growers in London to confer with the Imperial Ministry of Munitions as to the disposal of the remainder of Government stocks of wool, this conference recommends that an effort be made to secure the services of Mr. W. D. Hunt (now in Great Britain) to act as one representative, and that the other representative be selected by the High Commissioner in London. Failing Mr. Hunt’s services being available for the purpose, this conference recommends that Sir James Allen be requested to make the necessary arrangements to select both representatives.

At our meeting in November last we again conferred with the Producers’ Committee regarding the wool position.

Dr. Reakes (chairman of the committee) informed us that “ after a lengthy and careful discussion of the various aspects of the question it had been decided to draw up a report setting out the position, which would be published, so that growers would be able to grasp the whole situation.”

The tone of the discussion at this meeting was of a hopeful character, though the need of caution and the necessity for not depreciating market values by panicky selling was strongly emphasized.

The question of finance was discussed at length, and, after hearing the whole of the facts of the position, the Board came to the conclusion that the opinion of the committee, “ that the time was not immediately opportune for fixing any definite basis for advances,” was a sound one, seeing that at the time it was impossible to form an opinion as to what would be the actual market selling-values of the various classes of wool when the new clip came forward for sale. The Board noted with satisfaction that the stock and station agents, and, it was understood, banks also, would be willing, as heretofore, to make advances to their respective clients up to such amounts as were reasonable under the circumstances; and, having regard to the fact that the Government was prepared to stand behind the producers, the Board fully coincided with the opinion of the committee. It seemed evident that wool-growers would provide themselves a better future outlook if they withheld their wool from sale in preference to selling it at once at low figures, especially as there was ample storage accommodation for wool in the Dominion.

The following resolutions were passed at this meeting :—

“(1.) That the Board of Agriculture, in conference with the standing Producers’ Committee, are of opinion that the British Government should be requested to hold over for as long a period as possible any sales of coarse crossbred wool, so as to enable the market to re-establish itself.”

“(2.) That the woolbrokers of the Dominion (principally those selling the coarser grades of wool) be requested to agree amongst themselves as to the minimum prices which they are prepared to advise their clients to accept for their wool.”

Mr. Bennett, chairman of the Woolbrokers’ Association and a member of the Producers’ Committee, offered to circulate the foregoing resolution amongst the woolbrokers of the Dominion.

“(3.) That the Board of Agriculture, after hearing the whole of the facts regarding the wool position, is in agreement with the recommendation suggested by the Producers’ Committee as to the publication of a statement setting out the position for the information of the wool-growers of the Dominion.”

At the beginning of this year we held another meeting with the standing Producers’ Committee to hear the views of Mr. W. D. Hunt (on his return to New Zealand from England and Australia) regarding the wool position, and to discuss certain proposals for dealing with the surplus stocks of New Zealand wool in the hands of the Imperial Government, some matters connected with the meat position, and the terms of a freight contract with the shipping companies.