

“The committee had before it the resolutions from the conference above mentioned, which were used as a basis for discussion. After having fully considered these, the Committee passed the following resolutions :—

“*Form of Contract for Meat and Meat Products for Shipment to the United Kingdom and America.*—That the two freezing companies’ representatives be appointed a sub-committee to draft, with the assistance of the Crown Law Officers, a form of contract for meat and meat products to be shipped to the United Kingdom and America, and that the co-operation of the National Dairy Association be sought in this connection ; such form of contract to be afterwards submitted to this committee.

“*Freight Rates on Free Exports.*—That the Government be requested to provide, so far as possible, that, for the duration of the requisition upon ships, the rates of freight upon free exports should not be increased beyond the rates per pound now current, without its concurrence ; and that a strong effort should be made to reduce the present charges.

“*Government Guarantee for Advances to Growers or other Interested Holders of Meat of 1920–21 Season’s Output held in Store* (to be dealt with at such time as the Prime Minister thinks fit).—That if the grower or other interested holder wishes to forward his meat under the suggested arrangement calling for Government assistance he will inform the freezing company accordingly, and in that case the following provisions shall apply :—

“ (1.) That all meat shall be certified by the Government Veterinary Inspector, as at present, on a classification to be agreed upon.

“ (2.) That this committee, or some other body appointed by the Government, shall from time to time assess the net value of the meat delivered at the works.

“ (3.) That the company shall advance to the grower, or other interested holder, 75 per cent. of such net value, with recourse against the person to whom the advance is made.

“ (4.) That the bank will similarly advance to the company, or to the grower or holder, on receipt of the company’s certificate, 75 per cent. of such value, and will in addition advance such sums as will cover charges for freezing, railage, bagging, putting f.o.b., freight, insurance, exchange, and all London storage and selling charges, taking as security store warrants, bills of lading, or other documents of title.

“ (5.) That the Government will guarantee the bank for the full amount of such advance, taking as security a lien over such documents of title.

“ (6.) That the above arrangement shall apply to the whole of the 1920–21 season’s output.

“*Shipment of Free Meat with Imperial Government Meat.*—This committee attaches great importance to the resolution of the conference recommending that if it can be secured the producers and exporters should have the right to substitute free meat shipment, carcase for carcase, with the Imperial Government meat purchased.

“*Sheep-skins Requisition.*—The producers’ representatives on the standing Committee approve of the proposal to endeavour to get the sheep-skins requisition extended to the 30th September, 1920.”

The committee’s report was fully discussed by us, and the Prime Minister was advised as follows :—

“ (a.) The Board of Agriculture views with satisfaction that in the resolution *re* the form of contract for meat and meat products the Producers’ Committee recommend that the co-operation of the National Dairy Association be sought. The Board deems it essential that the contract for transport of our produce should embrace all our perishable products, and therefore hopes that the contract, when drafted, will be submitted to the National Dairy Association and those representing the dairy industry ; and, further, that they be asked to join, so that one contract only shall be entered into between the shipping companies on the one hand and the producers’ representatives on the other, to terminate at one specified date.

“ (b.) The Board fully approves of the committee’s resolution *re* freight rates on free exports, and agrees to the resolutions *re* shipment of free meat, carcase for carcase, with the Imperial Government meat purchased, and the proposal to have the sheep-skins requisition extended up to the 30th September, 1920.

“ (c.) The Board agrees to subclauses (1), (2), and (3) of the committee’s resolutions *re* Government guarantee for advances to growers, but is of opinion that, while the banks would no doubt advance such sums to the company for charges, &c., at their discretion, the Government should not guarantee more than 75 per cent. of the cost of such charges.”

FREIGHT RATES.

We also brought before Mr. Massey in July of last year the question of the increase of freight rates which had been recently announced, and Mr. Massey informed us that he proposed to refer the question to the Agricultural, Pastoral, and Stock Committee of the House to inquire into. In view of the urgency of the matter, the Board sent the following letter to Mr. Massey :—

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ Wellington, 29th July, 1920.

“The Board of Agriculture have made a comparison of the freight rates for produce charged under—(1) pre-war conditions, (2) war conditions, and (3) post-war conditions.

“They find that while the war rates were high, the post-war rates are higher, and the imposing of these will be a most severe tax upon shippers of produce now that they have to make their own arrangements about getting it away. From the attached table it will be seen that post-war rates are more than three times as much as pre-war rates, while it is known that charter rates are falling.”

“The Board therefore request that you would, on behalf of the producers of the Dominion, cable an earnest protest against the suggested increase of rates, for the reason that, as mentioned above, it amounts to a serious tax upon shippers now that the Imperial contract is completed.

“ Yours faithfully,

“ JAMES G. WILSON,

“ President of the Board.”