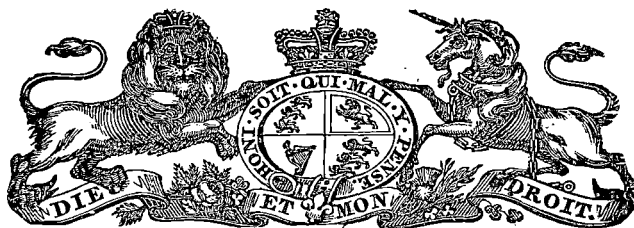


(No. 48.)



1899.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

INTERCOLONIAL CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF
AGRICULTURE, MELBOURNE AND HOBART,
JANUARY, 1899.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

Cost of printing—£3 2s. 6d.



CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE IN
MELBOURNE AND HOBART, JANUARY, 1899.

REPORTS OF CONFERENCES OF MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE, HELD
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REPORT OF THE INTERCOLONIAL CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF
AGRICULTURE, HELD IN MELBOURNE, JANUARY, 1899.

INTERCOLONIAL CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE.

The Ministers of Agriculture for the Colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland met in Conference at the Public Offices, Melbourne, on Thursday and Friday, the 12th and 13th January, 1899, the Colonies being represented as under:—

New South Wales	Hon. J. Cook.
Victoria.....	Hon. J. W. Taverner.
South Australia	Hon. R. Butler.
Queensland	Hon. J. V. Chataway.

Mr. Taverner was elected to the Chair, and intimated that he proposed inviting the consideration and discussion of the following subjects as matters in which the Colonies were mutually concerned, viz.:—

- Proposals of Mr. J. H. Geddes—Australasian Food Supply Distribution Scheme.
 - Joint Action for Reduction of Ocean Freights.
 - Direct Trade with Manchester.
 - Trade with South Africa.
 - Tick Disease.
 - Uniform Stock Quarantine Regulations.
 - Other Questions Affecting Producing Interests.
-

Proposals of Mr. J. H. Geddes.—Australasian Food Supply Distribution.

The attention of the Conference was first directed to a scheme which, as an outcome of a resolution adopted at the previous Conference of Ministers held in February, 1898, had been submitted to the various colonies by Mr. J. H. Geddes, of London, for the establishment of a depôt in London in conjunction with provincial agencies throughout Great Britain, with the object of providing for the cool storage and more economic distribution and realisation of perishable products

imported from Australia. The proposals put forward involved the payment of a subsidy by the Governments concerned to a company proposed to be formed for the purpose of carrying the scheme into effect or the guaranteeing of interest on one-fifth of the company's paid-up capital.

The Conference agreed that improved methods are urgently required in connection with the landing and distribution of perishable products exported from Australia, in the direction of providing a more satisfactory means of conveying frozen produce from the ship's side to cool storage to ensure its being kept in good condition, and of providing cool storage accommodation of such extent as would give facilities for the more advantageous marketing of the products dealt with, at the same time enabling a ready assurance to be afforded to purchasers and consumers as to the distinctively Australian origin of such products.

After careful consideration of these circumstances, however, and full discussion of the proposals in all their aspects, the following resolution on the subject was adopted:—"That this Conference, having fully considered the proposals of Mr. J. H. Geddes for the establishment of a central depôt for perishable products in London, with distributing provincial centres in various parts of Great Britain, is of opinion that for the purposes aimed at such proposals are unacceptable."

In view, however, of the great importance of the subject to Australian producers, and of the necessity of obtaining all information available as a preliminary to combined action, the following further resolution was agreed to:—"That this Conference is further of opinion that steps should be immediately taken with the object of securing better methods of handling, storing and distributing our products in Europe, and that with a view to achieving this result a representative of the subscribing colonies should be dispatched to Great Britain to make all necessary inquiries."

Joint Action for Reduction of Ocean Freights.

In introducing this question, Mr. Taverner drew attention to the fact that the currency of the existing contracts with the mail steamship companies for the conveyance of perishable products from Victoria would expire in April next, and expressed the opinion that if a guarantee could be given by the colonies conjointly for a certain specified annual tonnage of freight for a term of years an appreciable reduction would in all probability be obtained in the rates from all the colonies. A guarantee of freight to an amount to be agreed upon would, he thought, be required, and, while the payments made during the recent years of drought upon produce exported through the Victorian Department of Agriculture had averaged a considerable sum, he considered that, as the advantage of any reduction which might be obtained by Victoria acting alone would almost certainly be gained also by other colonies, the matter was one in which joint action might reasonably be taken.

Mr. Cook and Mr. Chataway pointed out, however, that their colonies were situated differently from Victoria in regard to this question, inasmuch as in the case of New South Wales the great bulk of the frozen produce exported was shipped independently of the agency of the Government, while exports from Queensland reached their destination by entirely different routes, and in different lines of vessels.

After consideration and discussion of these and other circumstances, the Conference resolved—"That, in view of the different systems existing in connection with the export trade in the various colonies, it is considered inopportune at the present time to make any joint arrangements as to the ocean freights."

It was, however, considered possible that the colonies of Victoria and South Australia might, under existing circumstances, enter into combination, and it was eventually agreed that Mr. Taverner, in conducting negotiations for the new contracts for Victoria, should have regard to the possibility of an arrangement beneficial to the other colonies, and should submit results to them accordingly, when ascertained.

Direct Trade with Manchester.

Mr. Taverner explained the steps which had already been taken in Victoria with the object of initiating this trade. A contract had been entered into by the Government with Messrs. P. M'Arthur, W. M'Millan, and J. Munro, of Sydney, representing the Gulf line of steamers, providing that all exports consigned to Manchester through the Department of Agriculture should be shipped by the vessels of that line. Owing, however, in a great degree to the canal charges and other dues imposed at Manchester it was found difficult to conduct trade profitably. The matter has been revived by communications containing proposals on the subject which had been received from Mr. A. J. Pease, of Manchester, but after consideration of these it was resolved—"That the Conference cannot agree to the proposals submitted for the opening up of a direct trade between Australia and Manchester, considering that such proposals amount to the payment by the Governments interested of the whole cost of developing the new trade. The Conference is, however, of opinion that the whole question may form a subject for inquiry on the part of the representative already agreed to be deputed to report upon the question of food supply distribution."

Trade with South Africa.

In view of the great increase of settlement proceeding in South Africa, and the opportunities and demands created for the expansion of trade in perishable products, it was considered advisable that action should be taken for the encouragement of business between that country and Australia. It was therefore resolved—"That, having regard to the desirability of developing trade between Australia and Africa, the Chairman of the Conference be requested to communicate with the Minister of Agriculture in Cape Colony with a view to ascertain—

- "1. The probabilities as to interchangeable products.
- "2. Particulars as to recent suggested tariff changes.
- "3. Present facilities afforded in that country in regard to cool storage.
- "4. Generally as to the prospects of trade between the countries, including Delagoa Bay, Durban and Beira."

Tick Diseases.

Mr. Chataway intimated that practically no fresh development had occurred in connection with the tick pest since the subject had last been dealt with by Ministers in conference. The disease had extended no further south, and the quarantine and buffer lines agreed upon between the colonies were being strictly maintained and enforced by an efficient staff of inspectors.

Mr. Butler laid before the Conference a plan showing an amendment which had recently been made in regard to the prohibitory line between South Australia on the one side and Queensland and the Northern Territory on the other, across which cattle are not allowed to pass southwards. A copy of the regulations relating to the alteration was also submitted.

Uniform Stock Quarantine Regulations.

It was pointed out in connection with this question that while uniformity already prevailed between the colonies represented as to the period for which cattle imported should be required to undergo quarantine, differences existed in the cases of sheep and pigs. It was considered desirable that all-round uniformity should be attained, and the representatives of Victoria and South Australia therefore agreed to obtain a reduction of the period of quarantine for sheep introduced into those colonies from forty to thirty days, thus bringing their regulations as to sheep into line with those of New South Wales and Queensland. In regard to pigs, the importation of which into Victoria is under present regulations absolutely prohibited, while admissions are made into the other colonies represented subject to sixty days' quarantine, it was agreed that a uniform system of admission, subject to thirty days' quarantine, should be adopted.

It was decided to print, in connection with the report of the Conference, a statement of the various quarantine periods as now proposed to be amended. (Appendix I.)

QUESTIONS MUTUALLY AFFECTING PRODUCING INTERESTS.

Various subjects of common interests were introduced and dealt with as follows:—

Quotations of Crossbred Sheep Prices on London Markets.

Mr. Cook submitted a report from the Chief Inspector of Stock of New South Wales dealing with the subject of the absence from the weekly quotations of prices of Australian frozen mutton cabled from London of any separate quotation for crossbred sheep as such. The Conference concurred with the effect of the remarks made, and agreed that the representatives of the colonies in London should be asked to take action with the objects of having proper quotations made as regards both sheep and lambs.

It was further directed that the report of the Chief Inspector should be printed in connection with the report of the proceedings of the Conference. (Appendix II.)

Brands Bill.

Mr. Cook submitted copies of an amended Bill for the consolidation of the laws relating to the branding of stock in New South Wales, in which considerable alterations had been made as compared with the Bill laid before the Conference held in February, 1898. The draft was approved of by the Conference for submission to the respective Governments, with a view to adoption, so far as practicable, in other colonies. Mr. Chataway explained that an amendment of the branding laws, somewhat on the lines of the new legislation proposed by the Bill, had recently been effected in Queensland.

Importation of Stud Stock.

Attention was called by Mr. Cook to the excessively high rates charged for the oversea carriage of stud stock imported into the colonies from abroad, payments required from the New South Wales Government, in some instances, on importations from Great Britain amounting to £100 for a single

beast. After consideration of the matter the Conference resolved—"That the chairman be requested to institute inquiries with a view to obtaining a reduction of the charges made for the carriage by sea of imported stud stock, the results of such inquiries to be communicated to the several colonies."

Anthrax.

Having in view the recent outbreak of anthrax in Victoria, the Conference decided as to the imperative necessity for uniformity of action in dealing with and extirpating the disease. Similar legislation on the subject already existed in Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland.

Gibson's Liquid Brand for Stock.

A trial of this brand, at which members of the Conference were to be present, had been arranged to take place on Friday, the 17th January, and, pending information as to results, it is not considered necessary to discuss the subject.

Fruit Export Trade.

As the Right Hon. Sir Edward Braddon, Premier of Tasmania, had convened a Conference of Ministers of Agriculture to be held in Hobart for the consideration of matters relating to the export trade in fruit, it was agreed to postpone the subject accordingly.

A cordial expression of thanks was given to Mr. Taverner, chairman of the Conference, for courtesies and attention shown towards members.

Mr. S. Whitehead was also thanked for his services as secretary, and the proceedings terminated.

J. W. TAVERNER, Chairman.
JOSEPH COOK.
R. BUTLER.
J. V. CHATAWAY.

CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE.—HOBART,
JANUARY 16TH, 1899.

Present—

The Hon. J. Cook, representing New South Wales.
The Hon. J. W. Taverner, representing Victoria.
The Hon. R. Butler, representing South Australia.
The Right Hon. Sir E. Braddon, representing Tasmania.

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Braddon was elected Chairman of the Conference.
Mr. Geo. Steward, Secretary to the Premier of Tasmania, acted as Secretary to the Conference.

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS.

Quarantine.

CATTLE, SHEEP, AND PIGS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM.

On the subject of the importation of cattle, sheep, and pigs from the United Kingdom it was agreed that the period of quarantine in Tasmania should be amended as follows:—

Cattle—Period reduced from sixty to forty days,
Sheep— " " sixty to thirty days, and
Pigs— " " sixty to thirty days,

thus bringing the Tasmanian quarantine regulations into line with the regulations in operation in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland.

Establishment of Central Depot for Perishable Products in London.

The Hon. J. W. Taverner laid the two following resolutions before the Conference, explaining that they had received the approval of the Ministers of Agriculture for the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland, in conference, in Melbourne, on January 12th and 13th, 1898:—

1. "That this Conference, having fully considered the proposals of Mr. J. H. Geddes for the establishment of a central depot for perishable products in London, with distributing provincial centres in various parts of Great Britain, is of opinion that for the purposes aimed at such proposals are unacceptable."

2. "That this Conference is further of opinion that steps should be immediately taken with the object of securing better methods of handling, storing, and distributing our products in Europe, and that with a view to achieving this result a representative of the subscribing colonies should be dispatched to Great Britain to make all necessary inquiries."

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Braddon agreed to these resolutions, Tasmania to become one of the subscribing colonies, the expense being borne by the colonies concerned on the basis of population.

Experimental Shipment.

The Hon. J. W. Taverner explained that it was the intention of the Victorian Government to conduct certain experiments during the forthcoming season in connection with experimental shipments.

Standard Fruit Cases.

It was unanimously agreed to adopt the fruit cases in present use in Tasmania (as described in sections Nos. 3 and 4 of 54 Vict., No. 29, and Section No. 2 of 62 Vict., No. 31) as the standard fruit cases for use in the Colonies represented at this Conference.

Importation of Plants and Products.

The following Regulations governing the importation of plants and products were agreed to, South Australia expressly reserving the right of absolute prohibition of vines:—

1. Plants, the products of orchards and nurseries, shall only be introduced into through the ports of
2. Importers of any plant shall notify in writing to the Chief Inspector's office, or the officer appointed to perform the duty, immediately upon the arrival of any vessel, that the following plants are now on board lying at the wharf.
3. No plant, or package containing any plant, shall be removed by any vessel until it has been inspected and a certificate obtained from the Inspector that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, no disease or insect pest named in the proclamation of date exists in an active form.
4. All plants or packages, &c., imported into shall be accompanied by a certificate from an Inspector from the exporting colony that they have undergone fumigation with hydrocyanic acid gas (or other effective method of fumigation as may be prescribed from time to time).
5. The certificate shall be in the form prescribed below:—

Department of Agriculture.

[Name of colony and date.]

This is to certify that has treated [description of article] with hydrocyanic acid gas [or other effective method of fumigation as may be prescribed from time to time] for one hour under my supervision. These cases have been branded (crown over passed).

Shipping marks.

Per s.s. [or otherwise].

Consigned to

Duty on Dried Apricots.

It was resolved—"That the Right Hon. Sir Edward Braddon be requested to bring up at the next Conference of Premiers the question of the removal of the Imperial duty on dried apricots exported from the colonies represented at this Conference, with a view to a joint request being again made to the Imperial Government upon the subject."

Shoe and Leather Trades Fair in London.

Resolved—"That it is not advisable for the colonies represented at this Conference to take part in the fair of the shoe and leather trades proposed to be held in London in April next."

This concluding the business before the Conference, a vote of thanks was passed to the Right Hon. Sir Edward Braddon for presiding over the Conference, and for the kindness and attention extended to the members of the Conference. Sir Edward Braddon, in return, expressed his thanks to the Ministers of Agriculture for having, by their coming to Tasmania, enabled him to take part in the Conference.

E. BRADDON, Minister of Agriculture, Tasmania, Chairman.

J. COOK, Minister of Agriculture, New South Wales.

J. W. TAVERNER, Minister of Agriculture, Victoria.

R. BUTLER, Minister of Agriculture, South Australia.

GEO. STEWARD, Secretary.

APPENDIX I.

Proposed Uniform Quarantine Periods for the Colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland, as regards importation of Stock from the United Kingdom.

Cattle.....	40 days
Sheep.....	30 "
Pigs.....	30 "

APPENDIX II.

Department of Mines and Agriculture, Stock and Brands, Sydney, January 9th, 1899.

MINUTE PAPER.

SUBJECT.—*Price of Australian "Crossbreds" should be quoted in the London Market separately from "Merino."*

Our latest available returns show that there are now 5,110,541 long-wools and crossbreds in the colony, and every encouragement should be held out to the owners of moderately-sized and small holdings in suitable country, on which sheep are kept, to breed crossbreds, not only because crossbreds under such circumstances when properly managed pay better than merinoes, but also because it is by keeping crossbred sheep that a profitable rotation of crops can be established, and the long-looked-for combination of tillage and grazing successfully secured. It will not pay to keep merinoes in a general way on cultivated food.

While this is the case, the form in which the weekly quotation of the prices of Australian frozen mutton, as cabled from London (see copy last Monday's quotation as it appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* of the 2nd instant), greatly militates against the breeding of crossbred sheep in the Australian colonies, inasmuch as crossbreds are quoted at the same price as merinoes, whereas it is notorious that prime New Zealand crossbred mutton has since 1884 brought 1*d.* per pound more than merino.

It may, perhaps, be said that Australian crossbreds are so inferior, compared with New Zealand, that the Australian cannot be sold as crossbreds. If this be the case it is very necessary the cause of the inferiority (if our mutton really is inferior) should be known by the breeders of Australian crossbreds, and there is no doubt but it would long ere this have been so had Australian crossbreds been sold in London as such, and their defects pointed out, as they would certainly have been by the salesmen there if they had been sold for what they really were, while, if this had been done, our breeders, knowing the reason for the comparatively low prices they received for these crossbreds, would have made the necessary effort and remedied the defects. With, however, such a confusing if not misleading quotation as they now receive, they are kept in entire ignorance as to why their crossbreds bring such a low price compared with the New Zealand; and the outcome is that, while prime crossbreds were some time back selling in the New Zealand market for shipment as high as 16*s.* and 17*s.*, ours brought no more than 8*s.* or 9*s.*; and even now, when sheep have recently been selling at lower prices in New Zealand for shipment, there is a difference of the prices of equal weight and quality of at least 4*s.* to 5*s.* per sheep. The fact is largely through the confusing London quotation; the price obtained in the Sydney market is no higher per pound for crossbred than for merino-mutton, while the lowest quotation for New Zealand crossbred mutton in London is at the very least ½*d.*, and the highest 1*d.* per pound higher than Australian merino mutton.

ALEX. BRUCE, Chief Inspector of Sheep.

The Under Secretary for Mines and Agriculture.