

15. These prices you quoted for the Argentine show the prices to be really lower than they are in New Zealand?—Yes.

16. Your contention then is that this combine has squeezed down the producer to a lower price than his stock is worth?—Yes. The freights were lower from Argentine; and, further than that, what the companies were selling on their own account in England was for considerably more than the meat released by the Government.

17. We were informed by the Agricultural Department representative that the British agents there owned about 40 per cent., and that the Meat Trust got about 60 per cent.: why has not the competition in the Argentine assisted to keep prices up?—Some time prior to the war the competition of the American companies in South America was so great that several of the British companies could not carry on, and they made an arrangement with reference to the quantities which each company should handle, and this lack of competition probably follows from that. As soon as they got their quantity in view there was no object to be gained by running the prices.

18. *Mr. Austey.*] You said that the Imperial Government should regulate the market at Home. Do you not understand that the price is regulated at the present time up to the point of the wholesale disposal of the meat?—Yes, that is so.

19. You suggest that the Imperial Government would have to go further than that and regulate the retail price as well?—They could do that easily enough if they regulated the wholesale prices.

20. The retail price is not regulated now?—No.

21. It bears a very much greater relationship to the wholesale price than we think necessary?—Yes.

22. In order to do anything effective you think they have to go further than they are going now?—Yes. They do not really regulate any of the prices now beyond the price of the meat released from Government purchases from the Dominions, and that is such a small portion that it has little or no effect. Some weeks they release very little indeed, and it is only what is not required by the Army that they do release.

23. *Mr. Witty.*] They release all lamb?—Yes, but not in very regular quantities. You can quite see they have no control over the wholesale market at present, for the cablegrams show that while our lamb was selling at 9½d. the Argentina lamb, which is inferior, was selling at 11d. It is quite clear when they get in the retail shop the prime lamb is not sold at a lower price by reason of the figure at which it was bought.

24. The Government do not regulate the price of our lamb at all?—Not the retail price.

25. You suggest that in addition to regulating the price of the Australian meat they should also assume control of foreign meat?—No, I do not know that they could do that; but, as I pointed out in those figures, foreign meat is only 19 per cent., and British meat, including the Dominions and Home supplies, is 81 per cent.

26. Then you say it would not be necessary to control any meat except any British-grown meat?—If they liked to extend it to foreign meat it would be so much the better, but 81 per cent. is sufficient to control the whole lot of it. At any rate, if they controlled 81 per cent., the other 19 per cent. would be more or less driven out of the market: our trade would be expanding.

27. Then the meat released at Home at present goes into the market at very high prices?—No, not the Government-released meat. It is put on the market at probably very little more than it cost the Government. For instance, they pay 5½d. for mutton, and put it on the market at 8½d. With the storage and interest I do not think there is very much profit in what they are releasing.

28. But we have evidence here that the New Zealand lamb which is sold at 10d. per pound is being released at 2s.?—If they control the wholesale market there is no object in their doing so unless they control the retail market. They are not now controlling the retail market.

29. Would you suggest that the Government can do anything to control the retail market?—Yes. I suppose the British Government could easily legislate in that direction. I think, before very long, you will find they will be controlling the prices. I think now that America has come in they will be controlling the price of meat effectively.

30. That would mean controlling the prices at which the retailer could sell?—Yes, that is so.

31. Supposing the Government undertake to control the meat-buying here, is it necessary that they should at the same time commandeer the shipping after the war as they are doing now?—There is a certain amount of difficulty about that, because, as you know, shipping is mobile and can be moved away to other places. Unless they make arrangements which would be satisfactory to the ships, probably they would be sent elsewhere; but arrangements could easily be made with the shipping companies. I am quite satisfied that most of the shipping companies are reputable concerns, and they would be only too pleased if legislation were passed preventing them giving rebates to any one at all.

32. But could the shipping be controlled if you could get the Imperial Government to take up control at that end as well as the Government doing so here?—Only by arrangements. You cannot compel people to put boats into a certain trade.

33. *Mr. Reed.*] I understand your scheme, and of course there are some difficulties; but it may be some little time before the Imperial authorities would come in?—The Imperial authorities are already contemplating doing something after the war.

34. It is a big scheme, and there may be some delay in bringing it into effect?—Yes.

35. Do you think it would assist the country at all if the freezing-works in New Zealand were locally owned with only New Zealand capital? Would that be advantageous pending the completion of the scheme?—I have thought of this for some years, and unless you go in for such a scheme as I propose I can see no other way of control—other methods can mostly be got behind. For instance, shares could be put in the name of a New-Zealander and you would not