

largest purchasers of meat in the world. That may continue for a few years, and I think it would not be too much to ask that they should arrange their methods in such a way as not to bear heavily upon this country, or help the Beef Trust to trade in this country. The thing which leads me to say that is the statement which has been made, and which is quite familiar to the public, that the largest contractors to the British Government are not New Zealand, but the American Beef Trust—supplying a larger quantity from the Argentine than we supply from here. I do not suggest that the British Government should not take meat from wherever they can get it, but I do suggest that they should see that they do not make arrangements which result in less remuneration being given to the New-Zealander for his meat than is given to the contractors of other countries. The next method of dealing with the Meat Trust which I would venture to mention is some form of combination amongst the producers of this country to avoid trading directly or indirectly with the Beef Trust. The great difficulty that is met in connection with that is the fact that the producers are a very scattered body of individuals without unity of sentiment or action in connection with a matter like this, and it is well known that a large number of them take up this attitude: “Well, the Beef Trust has come in—what is the first result? They have raised prices. All right, all our old buyers in the trade are complaining that the Beef Trust are making them pay more. That suits me. If I can get it for a few years I will take my chance of what happens afterwards.” It is a pitiable thing to say, but I believe that is the attitude of a very large number of producers; and I take it they want somehow or other to take up a different attitude—to come together in some sort of federation or combination to resist the encroachments of the Beef Trusts in this country by refusing to trade with them.

7. How would you distinguish them—how is the producer to know whether the Meat Trust is buying or not?—As far as he can go, he knows perfectly well that Armour and Co. are buyers, and that there are half a dozen other firms in New Zealand supposed to be more or less connected with the Beef Trusts. There can be no question about that. I do not say that he can know enough about their operations to be quite accurate, but generally the producers should help each other to oppose or eliminate the operations of the Beef Trust, and I think that is a reasonable proposition to put to the producer, and it is for him to find out the way.

8. Would you suggest they are not being helped by auctions—there is a lot of fat stock sold by auction?—It is impossible that any man can offhand answer the most difficult questions that may be put to him in an intanglement such as this at the present time. I would not profess or attempt to do so. It would be absurd for the ordinary man of business to attempt it, but without being able to answer all the difficult questions that may arise, one may express the conviction that if the farmers, instead of acting as they are doing now, were to make up their minds to see that their stock did not reach—

9. Practically boycott the firm?—Yes, one may put it that way; but certainly the producer has some option as to how he is going to dispose of his stuff, and if he is going to take the stand he ought to take he is going to make the methods of doing it from day to day a serious problem. He has to get in his mind that he must as an individual contribute to the destruction of this threat that hangs over the country, and not that he can go one way and expect that his neighbour is going the other way, and that he is going to get the biggest price he can get for his stuff whatever happens to the trade eventually. Equally important, to my mind, with a combination of producers in respect of the non-sale of their meat to the Beef Trust is the unification of the freezing companies into a united body, or federation, or alliance, for the same purpose. The freezing companies constitute such an important element in this trade that no progress can be made in a matter like this without their assistance. The strength of the American attack is largely in the fact that it is a unity, and acts as one power or one force. That kind of attack cannot be met by smaller powers or interests who are attacked acting each in his own way—some weakly and some strongly—nearly so well as if they are brought into a united force and wielded as a united force against the attack that is being made. Therefore I urge, as perhaps the most important feature in connection with any defence that is to be made, the federation of the freezing companies into a defensive alliance capable of acting together. I am aware that a thousand difficulties start up in connection with such a proposal, but I take it these difficulties have got to be solved or the attack must be left unmet. Just how they are to be solved is a difficult question, but I will take the opportunity of indicating my own views. They are as follow: They must be solved along the lines of business ability and business methods. The body of freezing companies contains many men who have graduated in this business from the very beginning—men who have mastered the problems of the business, and who are recognized as the heads of the meat-freezing business. I believe it is by the action of a selection from these men, and these men only, that effective action can be taken; that these men must be brought into the service of a united body—that they must be taken out of the service of the individual freezing company, which has hitherto limited them, and put in charge of the whole business. That is exactly on the methods of a large business combination known as a trust. The individual interests have got to be sunk in the common interest, and the business has got to be handled as a combination or a unity. To my mind there are no agents capable of doing that except the few men who have achieved the leading positions in the freezing business to-day, and the necessary qualifications do not exist elsewhere. I have already referred to and produced some pamphlets in connection with this matter, and I should like to refer to an anonymous paper which has been more or less in circulation amongst those interested in this matter. The origin of this paper I do not know, but I am prepared to endorse it as a memorandum worthy of attention. It is the production of some one who has an all-round knowledgeable interest in this matter, and I offer it for what it is worth. The memorandum reads,—