

15. But this was five years ago, was it not?—Yes, in 1912; and the position has not altered since then in that respect. I can give you a lot of facts showing how incorrect the leading men of London have been in regard to their statements, statements which they have had to withdraw. I met a Committee on the Smithfield Market much larger than the Committee in this room, and I made the Chairman of that Committee withdraw three statements in three-quarters of an hour.

16. In your statement you say, "Sir Thomas Robinson, I might point out, is also largely interested in shipping, and is one of six of the registered shareholders of the Federal Steam Navigation Company (Limited)": do you know that Sir Thomas Robinson was the Agent-General for Queensland?—Yes.

17. It has been stated that he is now agent for the meat sent from Queensland—and, of course, Swift and Co. largely control the beef from Queensland—and it has been stated that he is now agent for them in London: can you give us any evidence in connection with that?—I can give you evidence to this effect: that, as I understand it, all the meat for Armour and Co. is shipped under the name of Sir Thomas Robinson.

18. But Swift and Co. own works in Queensland?—Yes.

19. Can you give the Committee any actual evidence as to whether Sir Thomas Robinson is acting for the Meat Trust in England?—For Armour and Co., yes.

20. But Swift and Co. control the meat there?—They are so intermixed that you cannot really tell where one begins and the other ends. I should like to quote from a letter from a firm of solicitors, one of whom is a director in the firm of Birt and Co. in Australia, which reads as follows:—

On referring to the "Stock Exchange Official Intelligence," an English publication (1915), it appears that G. T. Hayeroff, H. G. Bedell, and C. J. Cowan were directors of Birt, Potter, and Hughes (Limited). From the same publication it appears that Sir Thomas Robinson and G. T. Hayeroff were directors of the New Zealand Shipping Company (Limited). You will no doubt know whether this company is interested in the Federal line of ships. Our further inquiries go to show that in all probability Birt and Co. (Limited) would be Armour's agent by virtue of correspondence and not necessarily by power of attorney. We hear that E. O. Cox is the chairman of the Imperial Government Meat Export Shipping Committee here.

You will understand we are unaware of the reasons for your inquiries.

Having regard to previous cable and reports, when we found that Robinson did not appear as a director of Birt, Potter, and Hughes (Limited) in any publications, we asked our friend to whom we referred to make sure that Robinson was a director of the last-named company, and to-day we are informed that he is not quite sure about the directorship and that he is making further inquiries, but he says everything has to go through Robinson's hands. We therefore cabled you to-day as follows: "Further report not conclusive that Robinson director of Birt, Hughes, Potter, but informant says everything goes through Robinson's hands. Advise you cable London."

21. It is shipped from Australia, and goes through Sir Thomas Robinson's hands in England?—Yes. I understand that they ship it, and the person who receives it at the other end is Sir Thomas Robinson.

22. Have you any direct evidence of your statement that Sir Thomas Robinson controls Birt and Co.'s meat which is sent Home from the Australasian Colonies?—No, I have not, except that Birt and Co. is partly owned by the Federal line, of which Sir Thomas Robinson is one of the shareholders.

23. You have no other evidence except that he is a shareholder in that company?—Except that he acts in connection with the management of it. He controls Mr. Owen Cox, who is the representative in Australia for Birt and Co., and Birt and Co. is mainly owned by Birt, Potter, and Hughes, of London, who are large meat-dealers.

24. In your statement you say, "The Federal Shire line, the Shaw, Savill, and Albion Company, and the late New Zealand Shipping Company were all under the control of the American Shipping Ring": have you got any proof that you can give to the Committee for making that statement?—Well, that has been stated in the public Press, and they have never contradicted it.

25. We cannot take newspaper reports: have you any direct evidence?—I may say for the information of the Committee that I gave evidence on this question before a Committee which dealt with the question of shipping, and when I was before the Committee I asked that the shipping people should be represented there. Mr. Wallis, the head of the Federal Shire line, asked me how far I was bringing his company into the matter. I told him I was going to say that his company was under the control of the American Shipping Ring, and he replied, "Then I am afraid I cannot contradict you." That was a private conversation. The representatives of all the companies except the P. and O. were present when I gave the evidence, and not one of them contradicted the statement.

26. But they were not in the room at the same time as you were?—Yes, they were. I asked that they should be in the room at the same time. I will take my oath on that, and they cross-examined me.

27. I want to know if you have got any other evidence?—It is general and public report both in England and here.

28. Only report?—I can carry it a little further. When I was in England I was negotiating with the head of one of the shipping lines for certain concessions, and he said to me, "When will you be back in London?" I said I would be back at a certain time. He said, "I will have to see the other shipping people about this," and I gathered from what he then said he had to consult the trust. I said, "They have nothing to do with the West of England—you are right on your own." He said, "I cannot say that—that is not the position: I can do nothing without consulting them," and he mentioned to me the name of a person who was at the head of the American shipping.

29. You have said that all these people were under the American Shipping Ring: they may only consult them?—They have the dominating power.