

30. You have no direct evidence to give us except report?—No, you cannot get anything better than that, when the three representatives of the shipping companies do not deny it.

31. We have had evidence that they are not controlled in any way by the same companies?—Whoever has given that evidence does not know the full facts.

32. In your statement you refer to a man selling two shipments of meat to Spreckles and Co. of San Francisco?—Yes.

33. You also refer to him being a reliable business man: could you give us the name?—Yes, I could if I had my notes here, but they are at home. He was a man who was running the fruit business.

34. When did it occur?—It was in 1910 when he told me, and I told some of the members of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce about it.

35. Could you give us the name? because, according to your statement, this is one of the most specific instances of where the Meat Trust has operated. If we could prove it we might get the man to give us direct evidence?—I will supply the name to the Committee.

36. I would like, if possible, for that man to give evidence before the Committee?—He lives in California. I spoke to him last in California over the wire when he was twelve hundred miles off. I do not think the getting of his name would help you more than that. I venture to say you can easily find out if you turn up the shipping records prior to the year 1910.

37. *Mr. Witty.*] Can you give us the year?—It was prior to 1910.

38. *Mr. Pearce.*] In your statement you suggest that the Committee which sat in 1914 reported in favour of making all shipping companies common carriers?—I was not quite sure of that. They reported in connection with the question of bringing the shipping under the Commercial Trusts Act.

39. I would like you to tell the Committee what advantages there would be likely to accrue if we made them common carriers by Act of Parliament, and put the meat business under the Secret Rebates and Commissions Act?—Yes, there are two things to do.

40. What advantage would be gained by making the companies common carriers?—There would be a great advantage: they could not create a monopoly, and would have to take cargo in the order it is offered or space is applied for. Take the case of a steamer loading here next month: Supposing I have a thousand boxes of cheese which I desire to go by that boat; I write to the company and say I want space for a thousand boxes of cheese; I am entitled to priority, but if the cargo offering is fairly large then the applicants who came in later are swamped out, but they must take in their order.

41. Do you think the New Zealand Government could have control of the shipping in that respect?—I think so. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction in regard to the way the loading is done.

42. That is so, and we want to find out how to stop it?—The Imperial Dominions Commission recommends that something of that sort should be done. They recommend that a Board be set up with power to see that the freight is reasonable, properly allotted, and reasonable charges are made.

43. Then you recommend that the meat business should be included in the Secret Rebates and Commissions Act?—That is very necessary, because that is a method which the trusts largely work on, and they use the mercantile interests. I consider that we cannot look to the mercantile firms in New Zealand to help us in this fight while they are getting secret commissions from these shipping people. I will undertake to say that some firms here are receiving over £100,000 a year from these trade allowances.

44. Could you name the firms?—I should say a firm like Dalgety and Co. or the Loan and Mercantile Agency Company would receive close on that amount in the way of allowances. Take the case of wool before the war: a merchant got 1s. 10d. per bale rebate, or a primage of 1s. 10d. per bale, but to-day the rebate is 6s. 11d. per bale if primage was paid on the actual freight, but instead an over-all charge is made which comes to more. I should like to qualify that in this way: the primage is now done away with, and from memory the merchant is now getting 7d. per pound for all his charges, including primage. To-day he has a consolidated charge, but if things became normal to-morrow the shipping people would pay the same rate as before; then the primage would represent 6s. 11d. per bale. They have everything to gain, and you could not expect a merchant to quarrel with a system which is giving him since the war 6s. 11d. per bale.

45. You would suggest legislation?—Yes. It is unfair to the merchant.

46. *Mr. W. H. Field.*] It is not called primage now?—No, they give an over-all charge.

47. *Dr. Newman.*] You said that the P. and O. and other steamers coming here were under the control of the Meat Trust?—No, the American Shipping Ring.

48. Would you be surprised to learn that in London about November last the object of the shipping combination was to be strong enough to fight the American Shipping Ring and have no connection with the Shipping Ring or Meat Trust?—I should question that. I should regard that as a statement made to try and mislead, because the New Zealand Shipping Company, and the Shaw, Savill, and Albion Company, and the Federal Shire line are clearly under the American Shipping Ring. There is no question about that.

49. Well, my information is first-hand and is diametrically opposed to that?—Yes, I am not surprised at that.

50. *Mr. Talbot.*] You said that the farmers are getting only ½d. per pound for meat above the pre-war rates?—Yes, approximately.

51. Is that the Government price?—Yes, less f.o.b. charges.

52. Some firms are giving more than the Government price, are they not?—Yes, principally where they are buying on the hoof.