

53. Do you know what firms those are who are paying more?—I have heard of Sims, Cooper, and Co. giving more. They are the principal ones I have heard of. I may tell you that I am perhaps not your best witness in this matter, because they are operating more actively and giving higher prices outside of Gisborne, and I suggest that is the reason why they have not bothered about our freights. I know Sims, Cooper, and Co. have given the highest price in Gisborne.

54. Do you know what Armour and Co. are paying?—I know they have been buying in Gisborne, but they do not go so high as Sims, Cooper, and Co. In the Commonwealth Commission report on the meat-export trade it states, "The fact that, as Mr. Sims says, a great proportion of the output of his firm has gone to Swift and Co." Mr. Sims acknowledged that the greater proportion of their meat was going to Swift and Co. Of course, we know that Sims, Cooper, and Co. is indirectly the London Produce Company, and it is really the London Produce Company and not Sims, Cooper, and Co. who sell to these Meat Trust firms, and the London Produce Company is composed of four, Mrs. Sims and Mrs. Cooper being two of the four shareholders.

55. You think the trust is trying to operate here in order to get equal control over the mutton and lamb as they have over beef in other parts of the world?—Yes, I am sure they are operating, and they have a covetous eye on our mutton and lamb going on to the Home market.

56. You think they are obtaining control of the market, and that the reason for our not getting ships is owing to the trust?—Yes, that is so, by diverting them into other channels to suit their trade. Besides, if you analysed the returns for two months back, you would see there has been more meat travelling between New Zealand and England which is prohibited meat than Army and Navy meat. I make that statement, and I think the Committee should decide to inquire into that and see whether that is correct.

57. You mean ewes and lamb?—Yes, required for the civil population; and I will undertake to say that if you trace that meat at Home you will find that the bulk of it is going to the trust representatives.

58. *The Chairman.*] But does not the Government control what is shipped?—No, it is left to the Shipowners Committee, and when it gets Home it is left to Sir Thomas Robinson to check any large sales.

59. At Home?—Yes. The regulations state, "The selling agents shall disclose confidentially to Sir Thomas Robinson the names of the buyers in every case in which one hundred or more carcasses of lamb or mutton or twenty-five quarters of beef are sold to one buyer." The position is that when the meat gets Home the only person who can do anything with it or has control of it is Sir Thomas Robinson, except in the case of small sales the transactions of which are open to the London Board of Trade to investigate. Now, I have given you evidence to show that Birt and Co. act as agents for Armour and Co.

60. Do you suggest that Sir Thomas Robinson at Home controls the shipping of the lamb and ewe mutton as against the Government's representative here who sends the meat Home which is wanted for the Army?—Not Sir Thomas Robinson directly.

61. Who does that?—The New Zealand Shipowners Committee, who are aware that Sir Thomas Robinson and the other heads of the Federal Shire line and other companies at Home have got absolute control over them, and if they did not obey in a reasonable way the trust would very soon make itself felt at the other end, and probably to their detriment.

62. Do you suggest that the Government here cannot send Home meat for the Army ahead of the trust?—I suggest that they do not.

63. *Mr. Talbot.*] Have you any evidence that if they do not get this beef they may procure it elsewhere?—If you read the statement which I have produced in the report of the interview between the Minister and the Overseas Committee you will see that the position is fully explained.

64. *The Chairman.*] We can get from the Government what is shipped [*vide* Appendix B]?—We have asked for that from the Government. The Committee should get it from the Government. Mr. Triggs made certain statements in the Prime Minister's office which were not justified and not correct.

65. *Mr. Talbot.*] Your statement amounts to this: that the Shipping Ring and the trust between them are fighting the Government and sending Home meat that is not wanted?—Yes, that is so, and the freezing companies in the North have been forbidden to ship. I produce to the Committee some letters bearing upon that which confirm what I say. The correspondence is as follows:—

DEAR SIR,—

Bethune's Buildings, 20 Brandon Street, Wellington, 12th January, 1917.

S.s. "Port Chalmers": I understand that in this steamer you shipped as part of your allotment about 2,200 lambs. As you are aware, Imperial Government instructions call for priority of shipment being given to beef and mutton. I am unable to trace that your company pointed out that you would be unable to fill your allotment without the shipment of lambs, and shall be glad to hear from you in the matter.

Yours faithfully,

NEW ZEALAND OVERSEAS SHIPOWNERS COMMITTEE,

JAMES FINDLAY, Chairman.

The Secretary, Poverty Bay Farmers' Meat Company (Limited), Gisborne.

DEAR SIR,—

17th January, 1917.

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 12th instant re shipment per s.s. "Port Chalmers." I am quite aware that the Imperial Government authorities require preference to be given to beef and wether mutton over lamb and ewe mutton when making a shipment on their behalf. I have not received any instructions to let you know when this company cannot fill its allotment without shipping lambs. The returns submitted weekly to the Controller, Imperial Government Supply Department, would of course show the exact quantities of beef, mutton, and lamb in store, and I assumed that such information would be passed on to you when allocating space. However, if you would like to be advised in such cases I would be only too glad to do so.

Yours faithfully,

J. F., Secretary, Poverty Bay Farmers' Meat Company (Limited).

The Chairman, New Zealand Overseas Shipowners' Committee, Wellington.