

*Dr. Newman:* Already they have done it. Three or four years ago the New Zealand and other shippers were sending mutton to New York, and then later the shipping companies would not carry any more. They said our mutton would not go to New York. It is understood that the P. and O. line is the Cunard Company, and they might make secret arrangements.

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* Well, we must see that there are sufficient ships under our control when the war comes to an end to make us independent of those organizations. There is no doubt they are a menace. They are only formed with one object, and that is to protect their own interests and make large profits. So long as there is reasonable competition I do not think we have very much to fear, but self-preservation is the first law of nature, and after what I saw in England and what I have read of what took place in the Argentine and the United States we must take every possible precaution that we do not get into the same trouble here.

*Dr. Reakes:* They can kill competition.

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* Yes, we know what the system was in the Argentine. The first move was to buy an opponent out lock, stock, and barrel, make other arrangements for disposing of the output, and so close their opponents down. Those Argentine businesses not connected with the trust were in very serious financial difficulties when the Imperial Government came along, and it is helping them during the war period.

*Dr. Reakes:* I believe those difficulties were accentuated by the fact that the Americans were so able to manipulate the market in Smithfield as to make the Argentine companies sell beef at a loss for a time.

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* Yes.

*Mr. Anstey:* Do you think the Imperial Government would undertake to regulate the market at the other end?

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* I am confident it will if Sir Albert Stanley remains head of the Department.

*Mr. Anstey:* Will they not do it now?

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* They have control now.

*Mr. Anstey:* Presumably our mutton and beef does not go to the consumer at the price we sell it here, but the free meat does not.

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* That is so.

*Mr. Anstey:* Is there any reason why the Imperial Government should not take charge of that free meat?

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* Do you mean by "free meat" imported meat?

*Mr. Anstey:* Yes, released meat. Is there any reason why they should not take our lamb and supply the public institutions direct?

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* None whatever.

*Mr. Anstey:* And not release any of it at all to these companies. For instance, the camps—they are able to take all the meat.

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* There is a new arrangement coming into operation on the 1st September, which will give them the control of the retail price of meat.

*Mr. Anstey:* We have got control of the wholesale price.

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* Yes.

*Mr. Anstey:* But the Meat Trust may have it released to them, and they have retail shops, and therefore release it to themselves.

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* To a certain extent, yes.

*Mr. W. H. Field:* The statement you make is that these men have a very grave and growing influence?

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* That is my opinion. I have every confidence in the Imperial Government. Personally I do not believe the Imperial Government will allow themselves to be influenced. I am referring to influence in Parliament rather than in the Government.

*Mr. Anstey:* Do you suggest that this Committee or the Government can do anything in regard to the disposal by the farmers of the forthcoming season's meat? It is beginning to come in now. Can you suggest anything the Government can do to control that this year?

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* In addition to the control already possessed?

*Mr. Anstey:* Yes.

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* I do not know that we can do anything more than we are doing now.

*Mr. Anstey:* You know these buyers are paying more than the Government price?

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* Yes.

*Mr. Anstey:* And we as farmers are pleased to get it, but we realize we are getting it as a bribe for which we will have to pay by and by.

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* You know that the by-products are exceptionally valuable just now, and I think a great deal of the high prices is due to the gambling in by-products. For instance, pelts at 7s. each—a price unknown before.

*Mr. W. H. Field:* Do you think, Mr. Massey, that the United States Government will assist us in this matter?

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* No, I do not think so. I do not think you can expect to get any assistance from America.

*Mr. W. H. Field:* Even to accept some of our products in America?

*Right Hon. Mr. Massey:* That is a different matter. I think they would be only too pleased to get some of our products, but we could not let them have any at present.

*Dr. Reakes:* I consider it will go into the United States through the American Beef Trust.