

15. *Mr. Talbot.*] If they are trying to secure all the good buyers, that will mean that the salaries of buyers will go up?—Yes, that may be expected. They have never made it a secret from the beginning—they are operating quite openly. They are a tremendously wealthy firm, established here, and ready to go right into the market.

16. *Dr. Newman.*] Can you tell us anything about Swift's—the National Packing Company?—The National Packing Company has really dissolved now. It was formed, I understand, as the result of endeavour to get round the operation of the United States law when the Meat Trust proper was dissolved.

17. But there are other firms, such as Cudahy and Co.?—I have no definite knowledge that Cudahy and Co. are trading here. I was told that before the war broke out a certain individual had a good chance of being appointed by Cudahy and Co. as agent in New Zealand, but owing to the outbreak of war the company gave up the idea of appointing an agent here. That, of course, is only hearsay. There is another firm operating here, not in live-stock but in buying frozen meat, which I have been told is in association with Cudahy and Co.; but whether it is really in connection with them I have no proof. So far as I know, this firm is trading on quite sound lines in a small way.

18. In regard to Swift's, what do you know about them?—So far as Swift's are concerned, we have no absolute and definite information of their operating in New Zealand at all.

19. *The Chairman.*] Do you desire not to give the name of the firm you referred to just now?—Yes. It is hardly worth while giving it under the circumstances. There is another firm operating very largely in New Zealand—namely, Sims, Cooper, and Co.—who have been reputed to be in association with Swift's. We have made a very large number of inquiries, obtained such information as we could, and we have no actual proof that they are associated with Swift's. They started in business some years ago. Messrs. Sims and Cooper both held subordinate positions in Christchurch, and they very quickly blossomed out into very large operators.

20. Can you tell us anything about the London Produce Company?—The history of the London Produce Company is this, so far as we can ascertain: I have not the actual date, but some years ago Mr. Sims went to England from New Zealand, and I understand he tried to establish himself in business in London, but apparently was not successful. Then he paid a visit to the United States. He is understood to have gone over there to see if he could do business in pelts. He came back to London, and shortly afterwards two firms—Sims, Cooper, and Co., belonging to New Zealand, and later in Australia, and another firm, the London Produce Company, which has its office in London—were formed and commenced to do business. It is quite generally admitted that the London Produce Company is really Sims, Cooper, and Co., and most, if not all, of their London business is done through the London Produce Company.

21. *Mr. Reed.*] But not all?—We cannot trace everything. Generally speaking, we look upon the London Produce Company as the London agents of Sims, Cooper, and Co.

22. *Dr. Newman.*] Is there any proof beyond vague suspicion—because Sims, Cooper, and Co. are going to deny it? Have you any evidence that Sims, Cooper, and Co. are connected with the Meat Trust?—I have no definite evidence that they are connected with Swift's.

23. Or any American meat trust?—No, nor any American meat trust. There was a certain amount of presumptive evidence, but nothing to go upon, and Sims, Cooper, and Co. deny the fact that they were connected with any American company. Some months back Mr. Sims called upon me and said he was quite prepared to give me every opportunity for investigating the affairs of his company in New Zealand, and offered me facilities for going to his bank and going through all their financial transactions, and obtaining everything I wanted in the way of information. I told him that was a thing I could not do on my own responsibility, and that he had better write me officially on the matter. I had some correspondence with him, and then I told him I was referring the whole matter to the Minister, and that is where it stands. The correspondence is at the disposal of the Committee.

24. *Mr. Scott.*] Do you know who their agents are?—Their bank in New Zealand is the Bank of New South Wales. That information acquired then has not lately been added to to any extent. Sims, Cooper, and Co. have operated very largely since, and have continued the same somewhat aggressive form of business which has always characterized their operations throughout, and is also characteristic of the average American meat firm; but the fact of their operating on similar lines does not necessarily show there is any direct connection between them, and all attempts to definitely identify Sims, Cooper, and Co. with Swift and Co. have failed entirely. That is the whole position, and, as I have already said, they have offered the Government every facility for going into their business affairs. Then, in regard to the firm of Morris and Co.—

25. *Mr. Pearce.*] Is it your opinion that the firm of Sims, Cooper, and Co. are not connected or that they are?—All I can say is that they are very astute and very clever operators, and my own private opinion is that when they started business they probably got some financial support from the United States. Of course, that is absolutely guesswork; but whether they are associated with Swift and Co. or not now I cannot definitely say. In fact, it would not be fair for me to give an opinion when all efforts to identify them with Swift's have failed. I might say that recently we have been taking note of what has happened to the meat sent Home—the meat freed for sale in England.

26. There has always been a suggestion that they were buying very freely the beef freed in England, but they could not get any advantage out of that?—No. They have operated very largely in mutton and lamb here. I will read to the Committee a communication I have received from London. It is really a personal letter from a valuable source, but it is not of so personal a nature that I cannot read it to the Committee. It is dated 12th June, 1917, and reads, "I