

68. Then do you not think that some companies may be induced to give larger rebates to exporters or to people who have stock to freeze than they would give to others, in order to induce them to bring their stock to your works?—The idea, I take it, is to get a share of the business from the man who handles the most stuff. Before the war started the business was getting into very few hands. The farmers freezing on their own account were, I suppose, not $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and naturally the company that got the big exporter's business was the one which did the business.

69. And the principle of the rebate then, in your opinion, would tend to encourage the buyers to go out and purchase from the farmer?—I do not know that it would encourage that any more, but probably the rebate would encourage the exporter to put what he did buy through some particular works.

70. Through the works that were giving the highest rebates?—Yes.

71. That, in your opinion, would not act detrimentally to the farmer or the producer?—No; I think the farmer is quite on a good wicket at the present time.

72. Do you think the operations of the trust will act detrimentally against the farmer later on?—That is another matter. I certainly do not think they have so far; in fact, it has been an advantage to the farmer, but what will happen in time to come is another matter.

73. Have you studied or had any experience of the operation of the trusts in America, or in any other country?—No, I have not. I have read what has apparently happened there. Of course, in America they practically have control of the railways, which they have not here, and cannot get. They say that in America the farmer has to take the price offered to him or leave it—there is no option; but up to the present here the farmer has been able to take every advantage of the competition.

74. Do you think Government control at this end alone would help the producer out of the difficulty?—No; I think it should be controlled right through, or the same thing would happen—the big man would get hold of the meat at the other end just the same.

75. Have you given any thought to the problem of how to carry that out?—Well, I have thought of it, but I can see no possible way unless the Government at both ends take charge of the meat and handle it right through—practically retail it.

76. To watch it right through into the consumer's hands?—That is a big question. I do not suppose any Government would undertake it.

77. How would you favour the Government purchasing the meat at this end and the Imperial Government selling it at the other end?—I do not know about that. It would be better to handle it on owners' account or purchase it right out.

78. Do you think, then, it would be better for the Government to control the meat without purchasing it—control it by regulation?—I do not see why that should not be done.

79. *Mr. Forbes.*] I take it you have not given particular study to the details of a better system of handling the meat?—No, I have not.

80. You gave us your opinion that you thought we would have lean times after the war. Do you think it is necessary that something should be done to organize the freezing industry upon different lines from what it is at the present time, or should it be left alone?—It is a question of how it can be organized.

81. Do you think there is an opening for improvement?—Yes, I think there probably is. I think in a good many parts of New Zealand the freezing-works are rather overbuilt at the present time, and there will be a danger that some of them, after shipping becomes normal in the next year or two, will not be able to keep going.

82. If they were left alone and allowed to get a fair share of the trade, the trade they were built for the purpose of dealing with, do you think they would be able to hang on then?—If they all got a share they probably would be able to hang on, with the natural development that will go on after the war.

83. If the meat gets into fewer hands, do you think that would have the effect of squeezing them out?—The fewer the hands it goes into the fewer the works it will go to.

84. Which would be the first companies to go?—I should say it would be the farmers' companies, because the farmers' companies cannot compete with the big man if it is a question of going into the market.

85. Do you think it would be a pity if the farmers' companies were squeezed out?—I should say it would be a pity for the farmers.

86. Do you think the Government should stand by and see them squeezed out without doing something?—No, I do not think so, if they can do anything to prevent it.

87. Do you think the time has arrived when the Government should take some action?—If it is possible to take action; but I do not see what the Government can do.

88. You think something will have to be done?—If it is possible, yes. I do not see that it is possible for the Government to do anything that will assist very much unless it was a question of taking over the whole of the handling of the meat, and that is a very big question.

89. You have not given any thought to the details of that?—No.

90. *Mr. Anderson.*] A previous witness told the Committee that large buyers purchased stock in the Waikato and were railing it past the Taihape works to the ports: have you had any experience of big buyers railing stock past freezing-works?—Yes, the same thing happens on our coast. They do not actually rail it past us, but there is any amount of it railed over to Wanganui or Wellington from our district.

91. What is the reason of that?—They come into our district and give more money than we can give on Government prices, and pay the railway rates either to Wellington or Wanganui. They have been giving 50s. per hundred for beef in our district.

92. *Mr. Forbes.*] Who are "they"?—The Gear Company for one—mainly the Gear Company.