

93. *Mr. Anderson.*] Are Sims, Cooper, and Co. doing that?—I do not think they were to any extent, but they may have been. I do not know what their price was.

94. Are Armour and Co. doing it?—I do not think so.

95. Which companies were doing it?—The Gear Company principally.

96. What, in your opinion, enables these larger companies to purchase stock in your district and rail it so far and still pay more than you can pay?—That I do not understand. I think this year it has been particularly bad, and that is probably on account of the opening of the Wanganui works.

97. Do you think that those prices they pay will cause the big buyers to suffer loss?—I think if any of you have seen the Wellington Meat Export Company's balance-sheet this year it will give you an idea.

98. Or is it done in order to squeeze the smaller companies out?—I do not think their idea is so much to squeeze the smaller companies out as the competition between the bigger companies to keep their works going. I think the fact of the Wanganui company starting created the competition between the Gear Company and the Wellington Meat Export Company.

99. You do not think the American companies' buyers are causing it?—I do not know who the American buyers are, beyond Armour and Co. There is nothing to absolutely connect them with America beyond Armour and Co.

100. As far as you know it is the local buyers who are putting up the high prices?—I should say, yes—the influence of that competition between the Gear Company, the Christchurch Meat Company, and Sims, Cooper, and Co., and possibly the Wellington Meat Export Company.

101. *Mr. W. H. Field.*] Do these companies pay prices you cannot afford to pay, and at the same time make a profit?—Yes; 50s. per hundred for beef. You cannot work with ox beef at Government prices at more than 47s.

102. And yet they are paying those prices?—They were paying 50s. plus railage.

103. And what about sheep?—The same thing applies, but not to the same extent.

104. Could there be any other reason for their buying at apparently what are unpayable prices except a desire to collar the market?—I cannot say—there may be. Of course, the Gear Company might have contracts locally which would help them out of it to a certain extent, such as camp contracts.

105. Would it be only a desire to keep their works going at full speed, even although they made a loss?—Of course, there is that desire to keep the works going, but I do not see the object. If they are losing on all the stuff they might as well do less.

106. You do not think that would be a sufficient inducement to get them to trade at a loss?—No.

107. Have you enough freezing-works to deal with all the stock that comes from that district?—I think under normal conditions we have, yes. We have not had perhaps during the last two or three seasons.

108. Have you any complaint to make with regard to the allotment of shipping-space?—Well, I had cause to complain once this season. We were shipping, as requested, beef and wether mutton, and on one occasion we got no allotment practically. I complained, and the answer was that we had no beef or wether mutton in stock, and that is why we did not get an allotment.

109. How could they say that when you said you had no beef or wether mutton to supply?—As a matter of fact we had some in stock, but we had been shipping all the beef and wether mutton out, and naturally we did not have so much in stock; but apparently we were to be penalized because we had shipped all the beef and wether mutton, whereas other companies had been shipping a large proportion of lamb.

110. Does your company regard the American companies as a serious peril?—We really have not had enough experience of it yet. We only started after the war commenced, and have not felt any competition at all.

111. *Mr. Talbot.*] Do you know of any companies being squeezed out yet by big operators—any companies which have closed down?—No, I think it is a bit early yet.

112. What was the reason of the Taihape works being closed for the latter half of the season?—I have heard rumours to the effect that a lot of stock was railed past Taihape to works farther down. I do not think the Taihape works are very well situated to get the business there.

113. It would be the big buyers who would be railing the stock past the Taihape works down to Wanganui?—Yes. In the first place it is the Taihape company's shareholders, who must sell their stock before it can be done.

114. You mean they were not supporting their own company in the way they should do?—Evidently not.

115. In making rebates to big firms does your company enter into any engagement with them in writing—any secret contracts in writing?—No.

116. In dealing with big operators you have not had any request that nothing should be put in writing in regard to these matters?—No. It is not customary to put it in writing.

117. If you were told that certain companies had made arrangements with big operators secretly, and that this arrangement had not been put in writing, would you be surprised?—No, I would not be very much surprised.

118. The free meat you have in your freezing-works is nominated to wholesale people at Home?—Yes.

119. And Sims, Cooper, and Co. nominate to the London Produce Company, do they not?—Yes.

120. Have they ever requested or asked that any of your other free meat should be sent to the London Produce Company?—Yes, I think so—they probably suggested it.