

154. Do you think the Government buying meat has had the effect of driving the farmers to ship on their own account?—I think since the Government has taken over there has been a desire on the part of the farmers to kill on their own account.

155. To whom do you nominate your free meat in London?—Practically all to Fitter and Sons, Gilbert Anderson and Co., and the Bristol Dominions Company.

156. Does that apply to the bulk of the meat put in on behalf of the farmers?—Yes, the bulk of it.

157. Can you give us your idea of the proportion of released meat—the Army meat—that you ship?—I should say wether mutton and beef would be, roughly, 50 per cent. of our output.

158. That would mean that half of it is released?—About half would be Army meat, and the other half ewes and lambs. I do not know what is actually released.

159. Do you get any advantage in price on account of the meat that is released—can you get any profit out of it?—No, it does not make any difference to us which way it goes.

160. With regard to the released meat, you are permitted to sell it at the other end, are you not?—We nominate those firms, and they sell it.

161. What do you get out of those firms?—Nothing at all.

162. Do you know whether those firms get any profit out of it?—They get 2 per cent., I understand, for selling it. They get that from the Imperial Government.

163. In regard to the rebates you are making, do you find it pays? You make a rebate to a large operator as compared with a small operator?—I cannot say at present it has made much difference to us, because owing to the war conditions there has been no looking for stock, and no difficulty in keeping the works fairly well going.

164. But is there less work in handling large flocks as compared with small ones?—Yes.

165. Would you say it would pay you to make a rebate to a large operator?—Yes.

166. Is that the reason why you make the rebate?—That would be one consideration, yes.

167. You told us the scale of rebates was fixed, but is it not a fact that the rebates you have been making has been a matter of arrangement between certain persons and yourself?—No, not between certain persons and myself.

168. Was it not a matter of individual arrangement in each case?—No, we lay down a scale.

169. But you do not stick absolutely to that scale, do you?—I think so, practically. As I say, we have not made many rebates owing to the conditions.

170. You said there was an arrangement made between yourself and Mr. Sims personally?—Of course, somebody has got to make the arrangement.

171. You make no rebates on lines of less than ten thousand?—I think last year we did on a little less than that.

172. Do you know if there is any combination here amongst the buyers to fix the price at which they will pay for farmers' stock?—There is, I think, to a certain extent, but I have never taken much notice of that. There is supposed to have been arrangements made in Canterbury for a good many years, but my experience was that it had not been made a week before someone smashed it up.

173. *Dr. Newman.*] Do large shippers of any sort get a rebate on anything further than ordinary charges, such as skins, pelts, and offal?—No.

174. In the busy season of last year did the small farmers complain that the space in your works was taken up by large buying firms, and that the small farmers were squeezed out?—Last year I do not think they did: at least I never heard of any serious complaints. They had no ground for it, at any rate, so far as we were concerned.

175. Did not the buying companies make arrangements with your firm to take so-much space, and in consequence were not some of the small farmers squeezed out and their stock postponed?—No.

176. Not in the busy season?—No; in the busy season I do not think we did practically anything except for shareholders.

177. Have you this last season had any big buyers freezing with your company?—Not to any extent.

178. Because they had taken the trade elsewhere?—Our shareholders stuck to us religiously.

179. Did not two or three of your largest buyers go to other firms and not freeze through your company last season?—You mean exporters?

180. Yes?—I do not know if they went to any other firms. We certainly did not do very much for them.

181. Last season the export buyers did a smaller quantity of business with you?—Yes.

182. In the season before, when the large buyers were operating, did not complaints arise from the small buyers that they had to wait and were squeezed out, while the big farmers' stock went in?—I do not remember any complaints coming to the company.

183. Did you not hear of some complaints in that way?—I may have heard of an isolated complaint, but nothing in a general way.

184. *The Chairman.*] Shortly after your company commenced operations did you buy nominally in your own name but really in the name of Sims, Cooper, and Co.?—We did pass some of our purchases over to Sims, Cooper, and Co.

185. Is it not a fact that your company's buyers went out and nominally bought meat for your company, but Sims, Cooper, and Co. paid for the meat when on the hooks?—Yes, we passed the meat over in that way.

186. Then you were nominally agents for Sims, Cooper, and Co., were you not, at that time?—We were not agents.

187. Was there not an understanding that what you bought in your name Sims, Cooper, and Co. would take over and pay you for on the hooks?—Yes.