

12. You recognize that it is necessary for the Government to do something?—Yes, if they would prohibit foreign capital being put into freezing-works and arrange that the freezing-works should be controlled by ourselves.

13. Your company act as buyers as well as freezers?—Yes. At normal times we buy about one-third of what we put through the works.

14. Are the works of your company open generally for the small freezer as well as for the large companies?—Not only generally but always open. Of course, you will understand that at a time of drought, or when there is pressure and the works are nearly full, we have to allocate the space, but they are open to any one.

15. American companies or any one who comes along?—Yes. Armour and Co. came in this last year. They made application for space to freeze, and we do not see if we have an open-door policy how we can stop them. Besides, what would be the good—they would go somewhere else.

16. Have you any knowledge of Sims, Cooper, and Co.'s buying operations in the Dominion?—Yes, I have a general knowledge, because they put through a large amount, but what percentage I could not say.

17. I have a return here showing the payments made by the Imperial Government Department for the purchase of frozen meat from the inception of the commandeering scheme up to the 23rd August, 1917?—Yes.

18. That shows in round figures a payment to your company of £3,300,000?—Yes.

19. And £437,981 to Sims, Cooper, and Co.?—Yes.

20. Do you think that amount represents the whole of Sims, Cooper, and Co.'s buying in New Zealand?—I do not know their business. I could not tell you from memory what they put through our works.

21. The amount you receive is nearly seven times as much as the whole of Sims, Cooper, and Co.'s buying operations?—Yes. I do not know what they do with other companies. Are you under the impression that they do all their business with us?

22. No; that is the whole of their operations in New Zealand. Does it not strike you that that is a very small amount for Sims, Cooper, and Co.?—I told you just now that in normal times we freeze, roughly, one-third on our own account, but since the commandeering scheme came in that has increased to about 43 per cent. I am afraid I do not know enough about their business to answer your question.

23. Of that amount of £3,300,000 that your company receive, how much would be your own buying, and how much for Sims, Cooper, and others?—I could not tell you offhand.

24. Do the large buyers get any concessions from your company that smaller buyers do not get?—They do; the man who puts through so-much is entitled to get a concession.

25. Which increases according to the amount he puts through?—Yes, up to a limit, of course.

26. Have you a scale?—Yes.

27. Can you tell the Committee what that scale is?—No, I could not. That is another question which I suppose you want answered accurately.

28. Could you not tell the Committee what that scale is?—No, I could not. I understand you are wanting to get at the broad question of the trusts. Is it quite a fair thing for the Committee to ask me that question?

29. Yes, it is very material. The point is that if these large companies get large concessions from the freezing company they are able to squeeze out the small buyer by the benefits that they would get—they are able to go into the market and give more for the meat?—But we have no small buyers so far as I know, except the farmers came in themselves to protect their own interests.

30. You told us that the large buyer gets a special rebate?—Yes.

31. That squeezes the small buyer, does it not?—If there is a small buyer. You are, of course, taking it for granted that there are so many men interested.

32. It eliminates the small buyer practically, does it not?—Yes.

33. Do you make special arrangements with the different companies or on a scale?—We have a scale.

34. And every company gets treated according to that scale?—Yes, we make no difference.

35. No more and no less?—No.

36. In any way whatever, directly or indirectly?—That is so.

37. They get no advantages from the pelts, or fat, or offal?—No, that belongs to them unless we buy it—that is their own property.

38. Are those rebates or allowances shown in the accounts of each buyer with your company?—I suppose they are when they get their statements. I have never looked at them.

39. Would you have any objection to your company sending to the Committee your scale of rebates?—Well, this is a parliamentary Committee. How far does this evidence go? Is it laid on the table of the House?

40. Yes?—It is public property?

41. Yes?—It goes out to the public?

42. If ordered to be printed?—Could any other freezing company see exactly what the terms are if my company forwarded the scale to you?

43. As a matter of fact, the Committee has power to come down and go through the books of your company and see for themselves?—That is what we would be only too glad for the Committee to do, Mr. Chairman; but I take it that that is an entirely different thing to sending a report or statement to the Committee which is to be laid on the table of the House.

44. The investigations of the Committee will be laid before the House?—Yes; there is a difference.