

250. Do you sell meat through Swift and Co. or any other American firm in London?—No.

251. Do Sims, Cooper, and Co.?—I could not tell you.

252. In view of the fact that there are forty meat companies, many of them very weak, do you not think it would be very easy for the Americans to force the prices up all over New Zealand in two or three years' time, so that practically all the small companies would be ruined one by one?—It is feasible.

253. Do you not think that if there were one or two strong companies in New Zealand it would be harder to fight them than forty small weak companies?—I do not think two or three would be sufficient.

254. *Mr. Dickie.*] You can see from the trend of the questions that the idea prevails that all trust meat is connected with Sims, Cooper, and Co.?—Yes; and, further than that, although it was said that the Committee was not hostile, the trend of the questions is deliberate that we are connected with Sims, Cooper, and Co., and Sims Cooper, and Co. with the American Meat Trust. That is the position—I am quite aware of it.

255. Do you deny that you have any connection whatever with them?—I do.

256. You give secret rebates to Sims, Cooper, and Co., do you not?—We do not.

257. Have you given any greater rebates to Sims, Cooper, and Co. than you would give to, say, Nicholl Bros.?—No; it all depends on the quantity.

258. When Sims, Cooper, and Co. are negotiating for an arrangement as to rebates is anything put in writing—do they write to the managing director?—No.

259. Is it not a fact that when Sims, Cooper, and Co. desire to make any arrangement as to rebates they meet one of the directors alone and verbally an arrangement is made?—No; naturally the general manager arranges all those things.

260. But there is no one else present?—I could not tell you that.

261. Well, there is nothing in writing?—You mean to say that we have nothing in writing confirming those arrangements?

262. The reason I ask the question is that it has been stated that when Sims, Cooper, and Co. are negotiating as to rebates there is nothing in writing. You say your company gives no secret rebates?—Yes.

263. Are the arrangements confirmed in writing, or are they only verbal?—As far as I know there is a record of all arrangements.

264. Seeing that Sims, Cooper, and Co., according to the list we have, exported £437,981 worth of meat, the question was put to you, was it not strange that these two men should have come into such prominence in so short a time—in fifteen years or less—when Mr. Sims and Mr. Cooper were employed by the Christchurch Meat Company?—By the Canterbury Frozen Meat Company.

265. And then you said, "There are such men as two bank clerks—there are Nicholl Bros.?"—Yes.

266. We know they have been freezing: all they have done is £55,000 worth of business this year?—But is that the limit of their operations?

267. Then there is Clarkson Bros., who have been in existence for about thirty years, and their operations have amounted to only £23,000?—Yes.

268. You were inferring that there were other men who had come out of offices, and you were leading the Committee to believe that those men were doing a large business, which they were not?—No, begging your pardon, you are taking in the commandeering-period, which is entirely wrong. You must take the normal period.

269. How is it that Sims, Cooper, and Co. during the commandeering-period do business to the extent of £437,000, while others only reach £55,000?—Because they have gone on and others have stopped.

270. That would lead us to believe that others were losing money while Sims, Cooper, and Co. were determined to go on?—Why should we stop? We may not be content to be fed. It is entirely owing to the meat being commandeered.

271. Are you giving Sims, Cooper, and Co. greater concessions than other men are getting?—No.

272. *Mr. Forbes.*] In regard to the operations of the Meat Trust, you thought that foreign companies should be prevented from acquiring freezing-works?—Yes.

273. Take the Queensland system of licensing freezing-works: do you think that system ought to apply here—that the freezing-works should get their license from the Government after the Government had information as to their capital and other things?—The license rests entirely with the Government, and the system could be started here. Of course, you are a parliamentary Committee, unfortunately, and if I gave a straight-out opinion I would say that anything the Government has to do with—well, there is a mess.

274. We have had some instances of Government action—for instance, the commandeering of the meat: has that been successfully carried out by the Government?—The Government have had very little to do with it.

275. Is there anything you could point to that could be improved upon?—No, but over and over again there have been recommendations and suggestions put forward from my office.

276. You are quite hopeless of any improvement being effected?—Yes.

277. Do you think this unrestricted building of freezing-works is a good thing for the trade—people being dissatisfied and starting other freezing-works: is that going to be good for the industry?—Well, we have about half a dozen in North Canterbury: I think it is a very bad thing.

278. That has multiplied very considerably of late years?—Yes.

279. Do you think the industry wants all these freezing-works?—No, I certainly do not.

280. The North Canterbury works were started merely owing to dissatisfaction?—Yes.