

52. They would give the larger operators an advantage over the smaller operators?—I think that, as a matter of fact, all the meat-export firms get the same rebates.

53. Do the farmers get the rebate?—I do not know if the farmers would get it in all cases. In some cases they do. For instance, the Auckland Farmers' Freezing Company are giving $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on freezing-charges to everybody—all are treated alike.

54. Are the rebates given as you go along or at the end of the season?—They are given at the end of the season.

55. Do you book space for any great length of time ahead?—Hardly at all. In some seasons, when there is congestion of stock on account of drought, and there is a rush of stock at one time the companies will ask you to book space, but it is not usual.

56. Is that done to any extent by big companies to the exclusion of small operators?—I think not. When the shipping congestion was becoming acute in New Zealand we found in Canterbury that it was difficult to get space from the Canterbury companies which we had been dealing with in other years. We did not have our own freezing-works then. We were putting all our stock about equally to the works of the Canterbury Frozen Meat Company and the Refrigerating Company, and we found when we came to book space that we did not think that we were treated fairly. But that might have been on account of the fact that we were then building our own works there, and we could not expect so much consideration from them. There was no doubt that the Refrigerating Company kept a pretty good share of space for themselves. I do not say that they are not entitled to do that—the works are their own.

57. You do not think that they kept an undue proportion of space for firms like Sims, Cooper, and Co., for instance?—That firm certainly got a bigger proportion than we did.

58. Prices last year were very high: were you able to pay these high prices on account of the advantage you got in the disposal of your offal?—It did make a difference last year. The higher prices for wool and pelts and tallow enabled us to give more for stock.

59. Therefore the larger operators were able to give better prices because they would get a greater advantage out of the better prices for by-products?—No. They are all getting the same for the by-products, are they not? The wool was taken over by the Government last year at fixed prices, and this raised the price of stock.

60. When it came to shipping your produce did you have any difficulty? Were you treated the same as other firms?—At one time we were not. We considered that the Wellington companies were getting more privilege in the shipping of lamb than some other companies were getting. We got our instructions from the Imperial Supplies Department. The instructions were clear, and we carried them out. Then we noticed when we got figures—that was some time later—that Wellington had an advantage. The figures showed the cargoes from each port of New Zealand, and we saw that companies which we knew must have wether mutton and beef in their stores were shipping a very large proportion of lamb.

61. *The Chairman.*] Give us the names of the companies?—I cannot give you the names. We only got the figures for the Port of Wellington. We knew that the works shipping from the Port of Wellington must have large supplies of beef and wether mutton. We took it up with the Shipowners Committee several times, and we usually got a reply to say that the instructions had been misunderstood by the companies, or that the meat was being shipped under a misapprehension. That was the general text of the letters we got. We have several of those letters. I came to Wellington and saw the Imperial Supplies Department, and told them that we were placed at a very great disadvantage in not having lambs shipped. We had been compelled to keep our lamb in store. I said that we expected to have a proportion of our stuff shipped the same as Wellington. That brought amended regulations, so that we could ship a certain quantity of lamb. Now they have gone back to the original regulations, which state that lamb must not be shipped. Now we are all on the same footing. We cannot ship lamb until we have shipped all the beef and wether mutton. There is no doubt that some companies absolutely ignored these instructions in the past, and that the shipping committee did not see that the instructions were carried out.

62. *Mr. Talbot.*] They are attending to that now?—Yes, I think so.

63. Do you regard the American Meat Trust as a menace to New Zealand interests?—Yes, certainly.

64. You think the trust is operating in New Zealand?—We know that Armour's are operating. We know that Swift's have bought meat in New Zealand. We have no information regarding the other firms who are supposed to be in the trust?—Wilsons and Morris.

65. There is no trace of them?—No.

66. Through what channels does the trust operate?—I was Home in England in 1914. I know that at that time a great bulk of Sims, Cooper, and Co.'s purchases were being distributed to Swift's in London. I watched the discharge of vessels at the docks in London. I knew the brands of the various companies. When meat is being discharged from the boat at Home there is a blackboard on the wharf, and the brands are put on the board to guide the men in sorting the meat. I knew that "Dominion" and "Nikau" were the brands of Sims, Cooper, and Co. The meat was being removed to the cold stores by barges, trains, and lorries. Opposite the brands of Sims, Cooper, and Co. the name "Swift's" was written. I saw the meat going into stores, and I saw the company's meat on Swift's stalls in the London market. There is no doubt about that—it is quite a recognized fact by anybody in the trade. It was done quite openly.

67. Have Swift's got their own retail shops in England?—I do not know whether they have. They have a big distributing business in England. They are distributors in England the same as we are ourselves.