

68. That is wholesale?—We have travellers visiting various districts in England. They call for orders, and we send the meat direct to the people who give the orders. We go past the Smithfield Market and distribute right down to the retail shops. This was what was being done before the war. Since then it has been difficult to say where the meat is going.

69. We have been told that meat goes to the London Produce Company: that is Sims, Cooper, and Co.'s London office?—Yes.

70. Have you heard or do you know anything about Sims, Cooper, and Co.'s capital—where they get their money from?—No, I do not know.

71. Have you thought out any way of dealing with the American Meat Trust in New Zealand?—It is rather a big question.

72. Have you any suggestions to make?—We have often talked it over. We have never come to any definite decision as to what steps it would be best to take. I think personally that if there is control at this end there certainly must be control at the other end also. It is more necessary at the London end than it is here.

73. You think that the Government should take some control at both ends?—Yes, both Governments.

74. Can you make any detailed suggestions? You have not thought it out?—No.

75. Do you deal in stores at all?—No.

76. Do Sims, Cooper, and Co. deal with stores as well as fats?—Yes, they do.

77. Do you know in what way they deal in stores: do they buy them and pass them out among farmers to fatten?—I think they just buy as dealers. They do not own farms where they could fatten stores—they just buy and sell again.

78. Do they let the stores out in parcels to farmers on the understanding that they are to sell them as fats to Sims, Cooper, and Co.?—I have heard that; I do not know.

79. Is not fat stock sometimes mixed with stores so that the buyer gets both?—I think that fat stock is always drafted. We do not buy fats and stores mixed up together.

80. It is alleged that in some cases buyers cannot help getting stores, because they are mixed up with fats?—I have never noticed that. There is not much fat stock sold by auction in the North Island; that is mainly done in Canterbury.

81. Where are Sims, Cooper, and Co. doing most of their store-stock operating?—I think it is mostly in the North Island. I think their buyers are in some cases on half-profits in regard to stores.

82. *Mr. W. H. Field.*] You regard the operations of the American meat companies here as a menace, do you?—Yes, if they endeavour to get control here the same as in the Argentine and elsewhere. Whether or not they intend to do that it is difficult to say. They are already in the meat trade, and naturally they want a proportion of the meat from this country. They bought on the London market up to a certain point. A lot of meat used to go Home on consignment, and was available for the trust to buy on the London market. But there is not so much of that stuff going Home now—the meat is in fewer hands. The American companies have probably taken steps to come here and have their representatives here in order to get a portion of the meat. My own firm used to buy on the London market in the days when the stuff was consigned by the farmers. Then we found that we were not getting the quantity we needed, and we had to come here in self-defence and buy on the farms. I think that is the simple reason why the trust is in evidence here now. To what extent they intend to go I do not know. I do not think that it is easy for them to get control here. I will not say “impossible,” with the capital they have got, but it would not be so easy as it was in the Argentine. There are not so many works there, and buying is done in much bigger parcels than here. It is a very scattered business here—there are many works and small parcels.

83. Are the Governments justified in taking action now?—It is a question whether it is not best to take action before the trust gets established.

84. Do you think we should take action at once?—I should hardly like to express an opinion.

86. You are satisfied they would have more difficulty in collaring our market than they had in the Argentine?—Yes, I think so.

86. You are satisfied that if our Government and the Imperial Government are sincere they can cope with the difficulty?—I have never heard any actual scheme propounded. It is a question of Government control at both ends, run on the lines of the scheme that is in operation at the present time, and the commandeered meat to be handed to English firms to sell.

87. Do you think it would be necessary to have Australia in as well?—I should think so, most decidedly.

88. Have you had any difficulty in the allocation of shipping-space?

*The Chairman:* That question was asked.

89. *Mr. Forbes.*] You freeze for outside dealers: do you freeze for Armour and Co.?—No.

90. You think that there is danger from the American Meat Trust?—Most certainly I do.

91. Do you think that your firm would treat the producers more kindly than the American firms if they got control?—If we got control?

92. If you got control of the meat trade here?—We have never contemplated getting control. I do not think it is possible.

93. You look forward to the expansion of your business?—The expansion of our business in New Zealand has enabled us to give better prices than before, when we did not have the outlet for our stuff in England. By going past the middleman at Home we can afford to give a better price here. We are in a better position than the man who has to buy here and then put his meat on the London market.

94. You are the biggest firm here—the biggest buying firm?—Probably. Sims, Cooper, and Co. and my firm are buying in most places. We have freezing-works, and probably put more stuff through than they do.