

authority in the meat trade in England, from which letter the following is an extract: "The really important thing to-day is that the Americans are entering into Australia and New Zealand at a very rapid rate, even more rapidly than we ever contemplated. There is no doubt that Armour's have last year collared Birt's works in Australia, and it is rumoured that Ocean Beach is included—I am inclined to think correctly so. There is no doubt that Swift's have a working arrangement with Sims-Cooper. All their meat comes straight to Swift's here. We have encountered these Americans in England since the start, and we know what their keenness amounts to. I am positive that no one in New Zealand or Australia realizes what the strength or keenness of these people is. Their keenness is something intense. In the Argentine the Americans have absolutely crippled all the English concerns, and there is far more reason to suppose that they will speedily cripple most of those in the Australian and New Zealand trade. I do not think there is the slightest doubt on this point."

182. *Mr. Anderson.*] Mr. Harper, do you know of your own knowledge anything about Armour's connection with Birt, and of Birt's connection with Ocean Beach works?—No, except that Birt's in Australia have been agents for Armour's there, and that one of Birt's works has been leased to Armour's. It was supposed that these Ocean Beach works here belonging to Birt's were in some measure affected by these arrangements.

FRIDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 1917.

CECIL CLAUDE MORTON OLLIVIER sworn and examined. (No. 25.)

1. *The Chairman.*] I understand that you are auditor for Sims, Cooper, and Co.?—I am a public accountant.

2. You audit for Sims, Cooper, and Co.?—Yes. I am also chairman of directors of the Woolston Tanneries, with managing duties.

3. You understand the general object of this inquiry?—Yes.

4. The Committee would be glad to hear any general statement which you would like to make, and afterwards they will ask you questions?—I have prepared a short general statement. It is a personal statement, and it explains why I requested to be allowed to give evidence. I am a public accountant. In the course of my business I audit Messrs. Sims, Cooper's business, and I also act as chairman of directors of the Woolston Tanneries, with managing duties. I have requested to be allowed to give evidence, as I consider that it is time that certain malicious statements that are being circulated through this Dominion should be checked. I refer to the mischievous and, I might say, defamatory statements that Messrs. Sims, Cooper are the agents of the Meat Trust, or that they are financed by the Meat Trust, or that they have some connection with the Meat Trust or firms commonly associated with the Meat Trust. These statements are absolute falsehoods, and I am here to-day to request this Committee not to close until it has heard the evidence of Mr. Arthur Sims. Mr. Sims is at present in Australia engaged on important business, but I understand that he has written to the Chairman requesting to be heard.

*The Chairman:* The letter has not reached me. It seems to have been lost with the "Port Kembla."

*Witness:* Mr. Cooper is in England. Mr. Cooper volunteered for active service, but the Imperial authorities have availed themselves of his outstanding ability and have placed him in charge of a large Government Department. It is a strange thing that in this Dominion if a business is efficiently managed and thereby becomes successful trade jealousy is immediately created.

*The Chairman:* It would be strange if it were not.

*Witness:* On general principles a business man ignores attack or innuendoes which are promoted and fostered by trade rivals. To my knowledge innuendoes that Messrs. Sims, Cooper represented the Meat Trust have been current for years, but recently the rumours have assumed definite shape, more especially in the North Island since the advent of the New Zealand Refrigerating Company at Wanganui. In consequence of these statements and inquiries made by the Agricultural Department Mr. Sims followed up his publicly advertised disclaimers by the following letters to the Agricultural Department. The Government's replies are worth noting. The only comment that I have to make is that Mr. Sims's offer was not availed of. It is hardly necessary for me to mention that the offer still stands good. I want to explain in connection with these letters that I have not seen Mr. Sims lately, and that I am doing this on my own responsibility. There may be a letter missing, but you could find that out. This is a letter that Mr. Sims wrote to Dr. Reakes, head of the Department of Agriculture, on the 5th February, 1917:—

Dr. C. J. Reakes, Department of Agriculture, Wellington.

DEAR SIR,—

As you are aware, there has been a lot of vague talk in this colony by responsible and irresponsible people that the "American Meat Trust" is operating here through a firm not openly identified with it. We gather that some people have regarded the New Zealand firm so hinted at as being ourselves, and assume that statements with reference to American operations, emanating from responsible Ministers of the Crown, have really been applying to our operations. If this latter idea was so, and you think the matter of sufficient moment, we would suggest that you yourself, with some responsible official appointed by the Government, should come down to Christchurch, when we would be very pleased to let you look through all our business and the methods under which we conduct it. If the responsible Ministers' statements mentioned above referred to us, we assume that men in their positions cannot without solid foundation for such statements have made statements connected with the operations of ourselves in New Zealand in a tone which might easily justify us in considering that we were regarded as pariahs by right-thinking people. Accordingly we suggest that the truth or otherwise of the statements upon which the Ministers have based their remarks should also be probed to the bottom.