

The above invitation to examine into our business is open for your Department to accept at any time they choose. All that we ask in turn is that if, after such examination, the Government find that what is apparently their present conception is erroneous, they will do us the scant justice of announcing their mistake as publicly as they have done their previous expressions about our business. We might say that it has struck us as a rather curious thing that, out of all the countries and States in which we trade, it has been left for the Government of our own country alone not merely not to welcome us, but to look askance at our operations. This is the more remarkable, as they apparently have been willing to take at face value assertions against ourselves made by people whose motives might easily be regarded as actuated not wholly by the desire to serve the best interests of the producers of this colony, and the accuracy or otherwise of whose remarks could easily have been tested by the Government.

I have written to Mr. Molineaux, Bank of New South Wales, Wellington, asking him to also give you all information in connection with the finance of our business.

It is quite possible that, once our opponents find that they will have to stand up to any remarks they make connecting our New Zealand business with the American interests, they may decide to transfer their veiled utterances to the doings of the London Produce Company in London. This is a firm whose business, as well as our own, was gone into by the Commission which dealt with this same question in Australia some two years ago. As apparently the results of this Commission, as far as we are concerned, are entirely disregarded by some people here, they will probably take the same attitude as far as this London company is concerned. Although Mr. Massey has gone into the question of the alleged "pull" which interested people in New Zealand said the American trade was getting in England as far as the distribution of New Zealand meat for civilian purposes there was concerned, and has found that, like most of the other statements, this talk was all "moonshine," we would suggest that if he wants any further information about the London Produce Company's methods of distribution, clients, &c., above what he has already got from the Imperial Board of Trade, he should go along and thoroughly examine the company's business personally, or through a qualified representative. If you think it worth while cabling Mr. Massey on this point, I would also have great pleasure in wiring the London Produce Company, asking them to give Mr. Massey every assistance in thoroughly examining their methods of business, finance, and whose money is in the London Company, &c.

Yours faithfully,

SIMS, COOPER, AND CO. (N.Z.) (LIMITED),
Per A. SIMS.

This is the reply that was received from Mr. Reakes, dated 10th February, 1917, from the offices of the New Zealand Government Requisitions Committee, Wellington:—

Messrs. Sims, Cooper, and Co. (Limited), 170 Hereford Street, Christchurch.

DEAR SIR,—

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 5th instant, contents of which are carefully noted. Your offer to give facilities for the Department to look fully into all your business transactions and into your methods of conducting business is quite a fair one, but you place the position entirely outside direct departmental action by your references to alleged statements made by honourable Ministers, and by your seeking to make the giving of these facilities for investigation the basis of a sort of bargain with the Government itself. If you so desire, however, I will take steps to have it submitted to the Hon. the Minister of Agriculture. Please let me know if you wish this to be done.

Yours faithfully,

C. J. REAKES, D.V.Sc., M.R.C.V.S.,
Director of Live-stock Division.

Mr. Sims then wrote to Mr. Reakes this letter, dated the 14th February, 1917:—

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

DEAR SIR,—

Your letter of the 10th February to hand. Will you please understand that our offer contained in our letter to you of the 5th instant to allow you to look into all our business transactions, methods of conducting the same, &c., was made, and is now renewed, without any conditions whatsoever. I quite see that, otherwise, you must consider the matter directly outside your Department's sphere of action. At the same time Ministers have made remarks, which, rightly or wrongly, people have interpreted as indicating that we were the American Meat Trust, &c., and, coming from such a responsible source, these reports have naturally been believed when similar reports, coming from obviously biased sources, have been disregarded. We consider that these Ministerial statements have done considerable harm to our business, which is a perfectly legitimate one, conducted in a legitimate way by a purely New Zealand firm, and one which we consider ought to have received Ministers support rather than the reverse.

I would be glad, accordingly, if your Department could, if they make the above-suggested investigation, then see their way to report on the matter to the Government, so as to give the latter a chance of undoing the harm they have unwittingly done us. Incidentally, too, the fact that the Government had examined our business at our request would show people that the authorities were keeping fully in touch with what was the real position of the frozen-meat trade in New Zealand.

Yours faithfully,

SIMS, COOPER, AND CO. (N.Z.) (LIMITED).
Per A. SIMS.

I do not know if there was a reply to that letter from the Government Department. I could not find it. The offer made by Mr. Sims was not availed of, and it still stands good. With regard to the Woolston Tanneries, the directors are Messrs. Sims, Reid, Cooper, and myself. The company has no connection with any American organization. Your Committee is at liberty to select any approved public accountant to inspect the books to verify this statement. My company does a large business in pelts with America. Messrs. Booth and Co., well known in London shipping circles, are the company's agents. Our chief competitor in the purchase of pelts is Mr. R. B. Beals, representing Messrs. Winslow Bros. and Smith. Messrs. Armour and Co. are reputed to have some interest in this firm. I have no doubt that with the evidence before them the Committee will be able to form their own conclusions why these rumours about Messrs. Sims, Cooper, and incidentally about the tanneries, have been disseminated, but in justice to Messrs. Sims and Cooper I would ask those gentlemen who have been misinformed and have been made use of, when they have satisfied themselves, to take the same interest in contradicting the rumours as they have done in helping them along. With regard to the tannery, a few years ago we took that business over. It was "down and out"—practically bankrupt. It was absolutely out of date in its methods, which were thirty years old. We have modernized the place, and now it is probably one of the most up-to-date tanneries south of the Line. We have increased wages about 17½ per cent., and yet our labour cost to-day is down something like 30 per cent. per article.