

at 3½ per cent. on condition that they allowed their ships to be utilized for war purposes if required, and the British Government should have a controlling voice in connection with the Cunard. That was so that we might have something outside the Americans.

51. Do you think that the Government should buy the fat stock from the farmer, and with the aid of the British Government control the meat until it reaches the consumer?—I suppose that in the circumstances there is no other way. Personally one likes to go one's own way, but Government control seems the only thing under these conditions.

52. It is the lesser of the two evils?—Yes. Before this competition from America started I was quite happy in my own way. One naturally hates Government interference, and as a matter of fact it does not do much good. It takes a long time to work up a trade, and a man who has been in the trade for thirty years knows more than the man who starts to-day.

53. Some witnesses have said in evidence that control by the Government until the meat reached the wholesale man in the Old Country would be sufficient. That leaves the wholesale man to deal with the retailer and the retailer with the consumer as they think proper?—That is the way we do our business. We have no shops or anything of that kind—we deal only with the wholesale man.

54. You have not thought it out sufficiently to give a detailed scheme?—No. I would like to consult my own people in London and get their views.

55. *Mr. Scott.*] You referred to an agreement made between the British Government and the Meat Trust that they were not to be interfered with on the London market during the war?—Yes. Of course, I did not hear that direct from the British Government. One hears these things.

56. That is the question I wanted to ask—if you can substantiate that in any way?—I usually get pretty fair information, and I do not remember what I have not thought were the actual facts.

57. You think there must be some truth in it?—Yes; you cannot get away from that.

58. That accounts for the great effort they are making and the high prices they are able to give here?—Yes, undoubtedly—that must be so.

TUESDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1917.

JAMES FINDLAY examined. (No. 29.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am the New Zealand representative of the Shaw, Savill, and Albion Company.

2. You know generally what the reference is to the Committee?—Well, I have a general idea from what I have read in the Press.

3. And the Committee in their investigations consider the shipping question must have some bearing on this. They would be pleased if you could give any general statement upon this subject?—I did not think of preparing a statement, because I hardly knew what you wanted from me. I shall be very glad to answer any questions. Of course, I might say that the shipping companies have no connection with the American meat ring. We can have no knowledge of them, because our dealings are with the freezing companies only, and not with individuals. That is quite an old arrangement between the freezing companies and the shipping companies—that we only book meat with the freezing companies.

4. That has been the arrangement for a long time?—A long time.

5. Without alterations?—Without any alterations at all.

6. Do you make this arrangement with any freezing company?—Yes; we have done so in the past. Now, when the war is on, we cannot enter into contracts because the space is not our own. During the war contracts are in abeyance.

7. But before the war did you treat all companies alike?—It was a matter of contract, but every freezing company had a contract with one or other of the shipping companies, and all on the same terms.

8. Would you express an opinion as to whether you think the operations of the American meat ring would be detrimental to the interests of the meat trade in the Dominion?—I really do not know much about the meat trade as a trade, so that my opinion, I think, would not be of much value. You have had evidence, I presume, from the freezing companies and people who know more about the trade than I do.

9. Do you recognize that shipping control would to a very large extent control the operations of any large meat companies in the Dominion—I mean shipping control by the Meat Trust?—Of course, that would be detrimental to the interests of New Zealand, but I think that is a matter that could very well be checked. Shipping companies themselves are as truly Imperialistic as any one, but if this were not so, and so long as the Imperial Government retains control of the steamers—as they can do when they are on the British register—I should think the Imperial Government could pass legislation to prevent steamers on the English register being transferred to foreigners. Control could be retained by the Imperial Government in that way.

10. Do you think there is any risk of large capitalists obtaining large proprietary interests in these companies in order to control them?—Of course, that is possible, but not easy. Even if they did acquire a controlling interest by means of share capital the Imperial Government could retain the right to say that the steamers should not be transferred to another register, and in that way they would be able to say where the ships should go and exercise some measure of control. That is how it appears to me.

11. *Mr. Anstey.*] Who fixes the freights the shipping companies charge on all kinds of cargo between New Zealand and London?—They are fixed by the companies out here.