

136. Could not a position like that be taken up by only one agency handling the whole of the meat?—In the steps I have suggested so far that phase is not covered. That was a phase that I thought would be better left alone. I would suggest trying the scheme I have put forward. If it works right let it go on; but, if not, then it would be better for the Government to take the thing over.

137. It does not appear to you as possible in any other way to deal with the trust and the question of their coming here as ordinary operating agents and genuinely offering a higher price to the farmer?—I would treat a trust in the same way as I would treat a German—they are the same. The Government forbids us dealing with the Germans to-day, and after the war there will be various restrictions. It is necessary to put some curbing restriction on the trust just in the same way as a curbing restriction is put on our country in regard to dealing with an alien enemy.

138. I have not the same objection against the American as you have against the German. Supposing you eliminate the American trust you may build up a British trust: is there any difference then?—Not so long as it is controlled by the right people—not for the purpose of money-making, but for the benefit of the producers.

139. But would you find a British trust animated by any different desires?—No, they are equally bad.

140. As far as we are concerned in New Zealand, if we handle the position here, then the question of fixing it up at the other end would arise?—Yes, that is so, and what I suggest is that we should sell through an independent committee which is not associated with the meat or shipping rings. We would have to choose the small retailers throughout England to dispose of the meat. There are any number of firms at Home with fifteen hundred shops, and that is not in our interests. We want to sell through the small retailer, and not the multiple-shop owner.

141. Do you not think it would be better for us to distribute our produce proportionately amongst them all?—Do you mean the big trusts too.

142. Yes, the big trusts too?—No, I do not. We know their aims and objects and the result of their work in other countries, and we are frightened of them. We do not want to do any business with them.

143. You would not sell to the trust shops at Home?—No.

144. Would you sell to Borthwick and Co.?—So far as is known they are the trust.

145. Would it not be possible for them to have a British firm acting for them if they found any scheme was disadvantageous to them?—Yes. The trouble is to find a firm which is not in some way or another mixed up with the trust or under their control.

146. In regard to the method of nomination, you say that the farmers do not use their nominations?—The average farmer does not.

147. Then the nomination falls into the hands of the freezing companies?—Yes, that is so.

148. And the freezing companies nominate the meat?—Yes.

149. And the freezing companies get the profit?—There is no profit from it.

150. There is the profit which goes to the private firms?—My experience has been that our company has made no profit out of it. Of course, we have to nominate through people whom we consider are independent of the trust.

151. You have not attempted to make any profit from the nominations?—No.

152. Do you think the Government should control the freezing-space for the coming season on account of the risk of the trust mopping up all the space?—That is a very doubtful question. Of course, in the past there has been very good justification for that, because a lot of the old freezing-works allowed their space to be booked up for a long period ahead by the large buyers and Meat Trust people, but during recent years new companies have come into existence, and that has been done away with. If that had continued I might advocate that at this juncture we should wait and see.

153. Until it is too late?—I do not know. I am sure the trust has no dominating control in our district.

154. You anticipate that the freezing-space for the coming season will be taxed to its utmost?—Yes.

155. Do you not think that under the circumstances there should be some control in order to see that the *bona fide* farmer is able to get his meat into the factory?—If it is the experience of others that they are losing that right I would say Yes; but, if that is done, then legislation should provide for preference to be given to the shareholder of any particular works.

156. Do you not think it would be a wise thing for Cabinet to set up some Board in order to provide that the space is not monopolized by some policy?—Yes, personally I would have no objection to that. There is a great fear against Government interference, but I think if the Government had a controlling voice it would be a good thing.

157. A sort of Government regulation?—Yes.

158. *The Chairman.*] That is, to get over the trouble you complained of with reference to the ship "Port Chalmers"?—Yes, it would absolutely get over that difficulty.

159. *Mr. Scott.*] There has been a good deal said about trusts: how would you define a trust?—I would define a trust as a body of men who have proved themselves to be a menace to the pastoral industry in any part of the world.

160. That is, the existing trusts?—Yes.

161. Supposing a number of retailers in a town in England combined in order to send a buyer out here to purchase meat for them, and then send it direct Home to them, would you call that a trust?—Not necessarily.