

162. Not at the start?—In order to define a trust it would be necessary to have some regulation as to what firms are to be declared "black." There would be no objection to what you have stated. I would suggest that it would be a very good thing for the Government to say that all buyers and exporters who are not *bona fide* farmers are to have licenses. You spoke of the big retailers at Home—they get licenses; but take a firm like Armour and Co., there would have to be legislation to prevent their getting a license. Why should you be afraid to refuse Armour and Co. the right to get meat when you know that their operations have been detrimental to the pastoral industry in other countries?

163. You were at Home in 1910 and 1913, were you not?—In 1912. I arrived back here in 1913.

164. On that occasion did you go Home on your own account or in the interests of your own business?—No. On the first occasion I went Home as the Mayor of Gisborne to float a loan and buy material for some big works. At that time the question of the trust was being discussed in the Dominion, and the Farmers' Union passed a resolution asking me to investigate it, and it was in consequence of that request that I went into the subject. I went through America purposely in order to inquire into the trust.

165. And since that time you have followed it up?—Yes, as far as I could; but my health has not been too good, and I have had to retire from public life.

166. During those visits were you acting as an agent?—Not in any way. I paid my expenses out of my own pocket. I got the people I represented to establish the Bristol Producers' Association, which was to handle the produce outside of London, independent from the trusts and that sort of thing.

167. Is that association in existence now?—Yes.

168. And is the meat going Home to that association?—They are getting portion of the released meat.

169. Has it been successful?—Yes, and it has paid a dividend ever since it has started.

170. Would it be possible to establish other combinations such as that?—That is what is required, and it was with that object that the association was formed, in order to get firms to attend to the purchase, hand the produce to the retailer, and eliminate the middleman. I have never received a sixpence from the Bristol Association or any other association in connection with these matters.

171. There has been a good deal said in regard to the personnel of what is called the Distributing Committee. I understand that Sir Montague Nelson is connected with the meat business?—Very largely. He is the head of the Colonial Consignment and Distributing Company, large dealers in meat.

172. I have not heard it from you that Sir Thomas Robinson is connected with the meat business?—He is connected with shipping and other things. He is also connected with Birt and Co., so that in a way he is interested in meat.

173. But not directly interested as an individual in the retail business?—No, not to my knowledge.

174. It has been rumoured that he has a direct interest or is the owner of retail shops in London?—That is very possible, just as Birt, Potter, and Hughes would be. In the pamphlet issued by the New Zealand Producers' Association it states, "Birt, Potter, and Hughes (associated with and control Knowles and Perfect): Shipowners; buy and sell all sorts of meat; has stall on market; sell on commission or otherwise."

175. Do you know that Sir Thomas Mackenzie has taken an active interest in the work of the Distributing Board?—Not more than I have been able to judge by the cables. I repeat that I think it would be in the interests of the Dominion if Sir Thomas Mackenzie was not on that Committee.

176. How often does the Committee sit?—I have no knowledge.

177. You do not know if Sir Thomas Mackenzie can afford the time to sit on that Committee?—No. I assume it would require a deal of attention and time, which he possibly may not have available.

178. *Mr. Anstey.*] Is it or is it not almost as important that prohibited meat should be shipped to feed the civilian population as well as the Army meat?—That is a question I would not venture to give an opinion upon. I would take the Imperial instruction that they consider that the Army meat is of the first importance.

179. But do they not require the meat for the civil population almost as badly as they do for the Army?—No, because there is a great proportion of the meat which is home-grown, which the Imperial authorities could not get control over very quickly, available for the civil population.

180. You differ entirely with the proposal to ship this prohibited meat?—I do.

181. You said you had been refused space for the purpose of supplying Army meat?—No, not Army meat—civil-population meat.

182. Is it not probable that the reason why they refused you the right to ship lamb was because instructions had been issued to ship a large share of Army meat?—That is so, but they did not apparently extend their refusal to others.

183. You had not previously shipped a large quantity?—No, we had not, for we only started in December killing properly. I have prepared a statement showing the ships that have been used in our trade and the number of trips they have made. I have obtained information from the *Trade Review*, and if those publications are correct and reliable then they show that there is extremely less control over those ships than one would imagine. I think this statement will show the necessity for changing the Shipowners Committee. Some of the ships made only one