

115. You told us that you had released to you some 928,000 carcasses of meat in London: what proportion does the released meat bear to the Army meat that you shipped?—Pretty large: I could not give you the exact figures. Most of our southern works depend almost entirely for their output upon lamb and ewe mutton, and those are the two classes of meat which have been released. I gathered from the cabled information I had from London that none of this season's meat has been released yet—that is to say, none of the arrivals in London from this present season have been released. As the company's total runs to between 500,000 and 600,000, and we have had 900,000 odd carcasses released to us, I should say the greater portion of the lamb and ewe mutton has been released.

116. Could you not give the proportion of that to your total output—because it is asserted that it is out of the released meat that the undue profits are made?—I could not give you that information here.

117. Have you the figures of the total?—For this present season only. A few years prior to the war the quantity of the company's own meat ran from 490,000 up to—the biggest year—about 690,000. I am told from London that none of this year's meat has been released. The commandeered started in March, 1915, and we have had 900,000 carcasses released, so that I think the great bulk of our meat has been released except beef.

118. And you say that in proportion your company had about two-thirds of the total released?—Yes, I think, quite.

119. Would that represent about the same proportion of meat released to the shippers whom you freeze for?—I do not think I could say that.

120. If that was correct, Sims, Cooper, and Co., who froze 491,000 carcasses, would have two-thirds of that released at the other end?—It might be so—I have no knowledge.

121. It is important, because it is out of the released meat that the undue profits are being made?—I do not know. We have handled that meat on trust account for the Imperial Government, and have sold the meat to over forty British firms, and on none of that meat has it been humanly possible for us to obtain one fraction of profit.

122. But assuming a firm had retail shops, it is possible, to make undue profits out of the released meat?—It is possible. As far as I know of Sims, Cooper, and Co.'s business they are not in a position to do that. Of course I cannot vouch for that.

123. But in the case of Swift and Co. and Armour and Co., who have retail shops, it would be possible for them to make undue profits out of the released meat?—If the profits have been made which have been mentioned.

124. You said you had given rebates, which have been increased perhaps 100 per cent. It would appear that you are giving rebates to buyers who are actively in opposition to you in the open market to buy?—We have always done so. We have never wished to buy the whole of the output passing through our factories. At times that is a very speculative and risky business, and we have never sought to feed our works entirely by the company's buying. We have always wished to be buyers, but the works have always been open, and are to-day open, to any farmer or any one else who chooses to put stock in.

125. Does that arise from unwillingness to find the money to keep the works going?—No.

126. If you had no rival buyers you would have to buy all the meat?—Yes, or it would have to come to us for freezing on account of individual owners.

127. Do you know if these private shippers have any advantage as regards the offal or other means of disposing of the meat which would allow them an advantage as against the small farmer himself?—I would think so, yes. I think they would have an advantage in the skins.

128. In what way?—I understood the Government took all the skins?—That is so, but it is practically impossible for any factory to keep the skins of every shipper separate. It would result in the most extraordinary accumulation of little broken lots, so that in the main any operator who was in a position to deal with large lines of skins is rather in a better position than the man with a hundred and fifty or two hundred.

129. Is there any advantage in respect of tallow?—No.

130. In regard to the rebate you give to buyers, is that sufficient to enable them to give more than others—would it be sufficient to enable them to give the farmer 3½d. more than he would realize in the works?—It might, but there would not be much for the buyer.

131. It has been said that the buyer is giving more than the legitimate worth?—I have heard that stated.

132. Are the advantages which they possess sufficient to account for that?—Yes, but there would not be much in it.

133. If these people are getting rebates there is nothing illegal in handing them to the farmer; but it is said they are giving an illegitimate price to the farmers because they must have some advantage somewhere?—Yes, I have heard that stated.

134. Mr. Reed asked you in regard to Sims, Cooper, and Co. acting for your company in Australia: have you any agents in Australia?—No, we do little business in Australia.

135. In regard to their engaging butchers for you, it would be just a matter of a firm doing the business for your firm?—Yes, simply that the firm would be severely handicapped if we could not handle their frozen meat, and they secured the butchers for us on account of our difficulty in getting them.

136. They had the opportunity of engaging these men?—They were a friendly firm operating largely through our factory, and we communicated with them in order to get hold of certain butchers. We communicated with the secretary of the Butchers' Federation in Wellington and also with Australia. Sims, Cooper, and Co. were in turn indirectly interested, because they are large freezers in our works, and any dislocation of our works was not to their interests.