

164. At any rate, it is quite plain to you that with the enormous capital the American companies possess, if they desired they could squeeze you all out of existence?—They could, yes. They have the power to do it, but whether it would be worth their while to do it and reasonably easy I have grave doubts. I do not think the conditions in New Zealand are in any way parallel to the Argentine. I think the geographical conditions in New Zealand are entirely against such an operation on behalf of any capitalistic organizations. The control of the railways by the Dominion Government is also another very important factor in making such an operation difficult. This country does not lend itself except to a limited extent to any control of the factories or works. The South Island, with the long sea-border and different harbours and narrow range between the sea and the hills has produced a chain of freezing-works starting from the Bluff and running up to north of Christchurch. It would be exceedingly difficult for any concern to endeavour to bring stock from all parts of the South Island to one central point except at very great expense, and as long as the railways are in the hands of the Government they would have sufficient control to prevent the control you have mentioned. The Argentine, on the other hand, was in quite a different position, with its vast territory, and the stock having to go down to the great ports produced huge central factories, and therefore, given the necessary capital and pressure, it was possible to control the large area by controlling those central points. Here in New Zealand they would have to control forty or fifty points. I think the New Zealand producer is in such a position that he could get other works run up.

165. But if the American people wanted to get control they would not be deterred by those considerations you mention?—They might. Of course, I cannot say.

166. Your company even brings your meat very long distances in the vicinity of other freezing-works?—Yes.

167. Do you not think that by the establishment of central works in this country the American Meat Trust could, by giving higher prices for a year or two, secure the whole trade?—Permanently, do you mean?

168. Yes, by squeezing the others out and making it impossible for them to live?—Of course they might make things very awkward, but the remedy would rather lie in the producers' hands. If they chose not to accept those high prices they could maintain the position.

169. But you know you could never get the producers to do that—they will sell to the highest bidder?—Yes, to a certain extent.

170. You say that neither in the form of shares nor in any other form is there any American capital in your company?—Yes, nor has there ever been any English capital or foreign capital in the company, save the shipping debentures before referred to. It has not been asked for, nor dreamt of, nor offered. There is no more purely New-Zealand-owned concern in the Dominion to-day than my company. We have no agreements or arrangements of any description with American firms whatever. We have frozen between 80,000 and 90,000 head of stock for Armour and Co. In doing that we have only done what every freezing company in New Zealand has done. Farmers and auctioneers have sold freely to Armour and Co., and we have always taken up the attitude that our works are open to any one, and it has not been our policy to inquire who the owners were or how they conducted their business. We have at all our works the most absolute free trade.

171. Can you tell the Committee whether Sims, Cooper, and Co. are either wholly or partially an American organization?—I cannot answer or be responsible for what Sims, Cooper, and Co. are. I can only tell you this: that I do not believe they are in any way an American organization. I go further, and say that I have been repeatedly assured by the partners that they are in no way an American concern, nor are they indebted nor have they been in any way financed by any American concern, and are as independent as you and I are.

172. *Mr. Pearce.*] Have you any proof of that except their statement?—The partners told me themselves.

173. Have they proved it?—I have not been in a position to demand proof, but it is their statement, and I accept the statement as correct.

174. *Mr. W. H. Field.*] You know nothing as to their financial position to prompt you to believe that they must have looked outside of New Zealand for capital?—No. I do not believe they have looked outside New Zealand for capital, but as to that I cannot say.

175. *Mr. Scott.*] We have had some evidence here that there has been preference given to some works with regard to the class of meat taken away: have you had experience of anything like that in your works?—No, we have not experienced any preference in regard to the class of meat. We have at times conducted a somewhat lively correspondence with the Committee responsible for the allocation. Most of the stock we have had has been the class of meat that is not of the first importance for Army requirements, and we have had correspondence with the Committee last season, and we have held that they entirely misconstrued the wishes of the Imperial authorities as to what should not be sent.

176. You would not admit that any of your works got undue preference in that respect?—We have held most strongly that it has been the other way about.

177. We have had evidence which went to show that some of this meat which was not commandeered had got preference in some cases. So far as you know no preference has been given?—No. We have had certain individual allocations by certain steamers which have not met with our approval, and we have taken the matter up with the shipping people, but I would not say that any wilful wrong has been done.

178. Have you much meat in your stores at the present time?—We are very nearly full to the chimney at all points.

179. Of course, you would not have much meat that is required for the troops?—Not a great deal—some in the North Island, but not in the South. As a matter of fact, we regard our position as far as congestion is concerned as very serious.