

11. Do Sims, Cooper, and Co. take the bulk of their live-stock past your freezing-works down to Wanganui to the New Zealand Refrigerating Company's works?—Yes. The trouble last season was that Sims, Cooper, and Co. made the pace so hot for prices that the local company was forced out of the market and closed down half-way through the season. That is the Taihape company. Sims, Cooper, and Co. were giving more than was in the stock based on Government prices. The Taihape company, which was buying, could not give the prices without incurring a severe loss, and they had to close down.

12. Under ordinary conditions would it not pay the buyer better to freeze at your works and then rail rather than take the live-stock down to Wanganui and kill and freeze there?—The question of railage comes in. As it stands at present I think there is a slight advantage in favour of railing the live-stock. I think, speaking from memory, our railage on frozen stock to Wellington costs us about 0·178d.

13. You have only been with the Taihape company for six weeks?—Yes.

14. Were you connected with any other company?—Yes, the Hawke's Bay Farmers' Meat Company, at Wakatu, for about four years.

15. *Mr. Pearce.*] You probably have had more experience of the business in Hawke's Bay than in Taihape?—That is so.

16. Did the Hawke's Bay Company freeze on farmers' account?—Yes. About three months after they commenced operations the Government commandeering scheme came into effect. They were buying nominally in their own name, but really for Sims, Cooper, and Co. Their buyers went out and purchased the meat nominally in the name of the company, but Sims, Cooper, and Co. paid for it when it was on the hooks.

17. How did they arrange the freezing-charges—did they buy it per pound on the hooks?—They gave us their cheque for the price at per pound, and we then froze for them on the usual scale charges.

18. You bought, and if you bought too dear you had to sell at a loss?—We had nothing to do with the question of price at all. The price they gave to us was the price at which we purchased.

19. You had a right to buy at whatever price you liked, and they took it over?—They gave us a price, and we had to purchase at that price.

20. What number of sheep did you kill there in the season?—In the season just completed I think we put through 170,000, and the previous year about 250,000.

21. The whole of that went to Sims, Cooper, and Co.?—No, not the whole of it. In the season just concluded I suppose there is very little of it theirs, but last year probably 25 or 30 per cent. would be theirs, and in the season before a still greater percentage. When the Government commandeering scheme came into effect I went to the shareholders and recommended them to put their meat through on their own account, and this year I suppose 97 per cent. of them have been doing so.

22. When you were dealing in this way with Sims, Cooper, and Co. you were secretary of the company?—Yes.

23. To whom was the meat consigned?—The London Produce Company.

24. In what way were you paid for this meat?—In the ordinary way by the Imperial Supplies Department.

25. I understand you were buying for Sims, Cooper, and Co. before the Government commandeering scheme started?—Yes, but apparently they had a firm of stock agents in Hastings to pay us.

26. What firm? De Pelichet, McLeod, and Co.

27. And were there any rebates?—Sims, Cooper, and Co. got a rebate on the freezing-charges at the end of the season. They got a special rebate.

28. Will you state what the rebate was?—I could not from memory, but I could supply it to the Committee later.

29. Will you send the Committee those figures?—Yes.

30. What the total freezing-charges were and the general conditions in regard to the rebates?—There were no signed conditions.

31. Not in regard to *offal*?—No.

32. Did Sims, Cooper, and Co. object when you advised your clients to freeze on their own account, and try to compete against you?—No. They kept out of the market pretty well. I believe an arrangement has been arrived at between the company and Sims, Cooper, and Co.

33. *Mr. Anstey.*] You said your present company had to close down during the latter half of last season?—Yes, at Taihape.

34. Owing to keen competition?—Yes.

35. If that keen competition continues is it likely to close you down altogether?—Yes, I think it would, probably. The Taihape Company is not financially in a position to do much buying.

36. Do you think that keen competition is organized for that purpose?—That was the prevailing opinion amongst the directors last year.

37. Have you ever had an offer to purchase the works?—Yes, by a representative of Sims, Cooper, and Co.

38. And apparently this competition is carried out for the purpose of breaking your works?—Yes, I take it so.

39. *Mr. Talbot.*] You say that at Taihape the farmers gave up putting their meat into your works?—Yes. I think there are only three shareholders who put their meat through on their own account at the Government price.