

266. Then this company to all intents and purposes is Mr. J. Ogden Armour of Chicago?—You might say that is so. We are financed by him.

267. The company is practically owned by him. He could close it to-morrow, or do anything he liked with it. He owns all the shares?—I suppose that is so.

268. It comes to this: that in order that J. O. Armour may carry on business in New Zealand he has formed a private company in this way?—Yes.

269. J. O. Armour has very, very large funds at his disposal if he desires to operate in this country to a large extent: he could get very large financial means if he wished to operate largely?—I suppose that is so.

270. Would you not say that is so positively?—No, I would not.

271. Do you not know him to be a very wealthy man?—No more than you do.

272. The freezing-works, or many of them, have given you satisfaction up to date?—Yes, excellent satisfaction.

273. If the freezing-works failed to give you satisfaction there would be no difficulty in Mr. Armour establishing his own works in New Zealand?—None whatever.

274. So far as money is concerned there would be no difficulty in Mr. Armour extending his operations to practically control the whole trade of this country?—That is not his method.

275. But if it was his method there would be no difficulty?—Yes, there would be a great deal of difficulty. No man can possibly do it under the methods in which you do business in New Zealand. There are too many small companies and small freezing-works handling small lines.

276. Cannot a man with so much money at his back squeeze out these small companies if he desires to do so?—No.

277. Why not?—It would not be business to do it.

278. But if it were business to do it, could it not be done in order to get ultimate control of the industry?—I do not say that.

279. Why not: is the finance too big?—I do not think so.

280. Supposing that it would be a profitable thing to squeeze out these small companies?—I have never conducted business on those lines.

281. In your opinion could it be done?—I have not any opinion on the subject.

282. You say that your company gets no profit on the selling of the released meat after it has reached the other end?—We do not have any meat released.

283. Surely you have free meat?—We do not have any free meat released to us at all.

284. Then you have the right to nominate your ewe mutton and lamb to your agent in London?—Yes.

285. Do you get any profit on the retail sale of that meat?—None whatever.

286. Are you aware that a lot of New Zealand lamb is reaching the consumers in the Old Country at a price that represents a very large profit over the wholesale price?—Yes, sir; so I understand from the newspapers.

287. In your opinion is that profit too large?—If I knew what they are getting for the poorer parts of the lamb, as we know what they are getting for the best parts, I could tell you.

288. Have you not formed your own opinion as to whether the profit is too large or not?—It is very hard to form an opinion, because we have never had information as to what the retailers are getting for the poorer parts of the carcass. We know what they are getting for the choice cuts, but not what they are getting for the poorer parts.

289. Have you entered into any negotiations with freezing companies in New Zealand for the purchase of their works?—None whatever.

290. Which company gives you the better terms—the Canterbury Frozen Meat Company or the New Zealand Refrigerating Company?—They are both the same as far as I know.

291. These two companies give you terms which no other companies give you?—No, that is not so. All the South Island works have about the same terms. We get the same terms as everybody else gets as far as I know.

292. *Mr. Pearce.*] I do not know whether you have any knowledge of the Argentine position. I think you said in reply to Mr. Field that when the Americans went into the Argentine they forced up prices?—I said nothing of the sort. I said that prices were forced up by competition. That competition might have come from the English or from the American firms. Nelson Bros. and other English firms were established there, and we wanted to get the stuff, and the competition forced prices up.

293. You say that the general competition forced the prices up?—That is so.

294. We have evidence that they were very much higher than in New Zealand then?—Yes.

295. Then you said that the coming of Armour's into the Argentine had not done any harm to the producers there, and that the prices there were as good as those in New Zealand now?—That is my opinion.

296. But you stated that as a fact?—Did I say it was a fact?

297. You made the statement that the prices to the producer in Argentine were just as good as, if not better than, those now being obtained by the New Zealand producer?—If I said that I referred to some time ago. I have no knowledge of the present position in the Argentine.

298. You see the prices of special bullocks in the Argentine have been running from £14 to £16, and of good bullocks from £8 10s. to £10 10s.?—But what class of bullocks?

299. Well, you know that the bullocks in the Argentine are better bred and of better weights than those in this country?—Yes, that is so.

300. And these prices are not much more than half what we are getting in New Zealand?—That is so.

301. Does not that show that the policy of the Meat Trust is to reduce the prices to the producer as soon as they get control of the market?—Not at all