

13. Do not Birt and Co. have anything to do with instructing you as regards running these works?—I have had instructions from no one, certainly for nine years. I was at Home nine years ago, and I saw Mr. Allan Hughes, who was chairman of the Federal Steam Navigation Company. I have not had letters or instructions of any kind. Mr. Hughes said to me in effect, "If you return me so-much you can do what you like."

14. What do you mean by "so-much"?—So-much interest on the invested capital. We have treated the works as if they were our own. We have endeavoured to do as much business as we could.

15. Whom do you ship to in London?—Any meat we have control of ourselves we ship to Gordon, Woodroffe, and Co.

16. What proportion is that of the meat from your works?—It is a small percentage. So long as we can get enough to keep us going we do not bother much about purchasing ourselves.

17. Who are the principal shippers from your works?—The firm who do most with us is J. H. Kirk and Co., a local firm in Invercargill.

18. They ship on their own account?—Yes.

19. You have no control as to where they ship?—No.

20. You absolutely deny that Birt and Co. have control of these Ocean Beach works?—Birt and Co. have never given me any instructions as to what we should do, whether in buying or selling or anything else. We deal with the works exactly as if they were our own.

21. The Committee have had evidence here from various men interested in the business that Birt and Co. were the owners of these works, and that they were agents for Armour and Co., of Chicago. In confirmation of that we have Armour and Co.'s pamphlet stating that they own a freezing plant in New Zealand. That statement is made in their pamphlet issued in 1917. In the face of this evidence do you still say these works do not belong to them?—Yes; I have no knowledge of it. The title, I believe, is in the name of the Federal Steam Navigation Company. The siding rights and everything are in the name of that company. If Armour's were interested in these works at all they would freeze there.

22. You are alluding to the New Zealand Company—Armour and Co. (Australasia) (Limited)?—Yes.

23. They declare that they are not connected with the other company represented by Birt and Co. Do you know what firm Kirk's ship to in London?—Yes. They ship to James Morrison and Co. Their business is selling; they sell to London firms; they do not consign. They try to sell c.i.f. They also sell to Gordon, Woodroffe, and Co. and to F. J. Walker and Co.

24. You say that the Ocean Beach works belong to the Federal Steam Navigation Company: have they any representative in New Zealand, any office or representative who would make arrangements with you regarding the works?—They have no representative here. The Federal line itself has an office here. The African Steamship Company represents them as regards shipping.

25. Whom do you deal with as regards the works? Have you a lease or something of that kind?—We receive a salary for managing the works. We send our returns once a year through to Sydney to be remitted to London.

26. Whom do you send to?—Birt and Co., of Sydney.

27. They do act as agents, then?—They never make any reference to us in connection with the works. They receive the papers, acknowledge them, and say that they are passing them on.

28. They represent the firm in Sydney?—They represent the Federal Steam Navigation Company there.

29. How do you know they are not representing Armour and Co.?—I do not know.

30. Then they may be representing Armour and Co.?—I do not know. I have heard the statements that are being made.

31. *The Chairman.*] Then your company, J. G. Ward and Co., have no interest in these works or the business except as managers at a fixed remuneration?—That is so.

32. The whole of the business, as far as you know, is the business of the Federal Steam Navigation Company?—Yes.

33. The title of the land is in the name of that company?—Yes, I understand so; I have not seen the title. The sidings and everything are in the name of the Federal Steam Navigation Company.

34. Are you paid a fixed amount, or does the remuneration vary according to profit?—We are paid a fixed amount.

35. To conduct their business?—Yes.

36. Have you always reported to the Federal Steam Navigation Company through Birt and Co., of Sydney?—Yes, we have always sent our report through Birt and Co. (Limited), Sydney.

37. Who arranged the original contract by which you carry on the business for this company: did Birt and Co. arrange it?—The original works were owned by Nelson Bros. I think it was about seventeen years ago the works were on the market, and the shipping company then bought them.

38. The Federal Company?—I would not be quite sure. Mr. Birt, who was largely interested in the Federal Steam Navigation Company, came over here and saw the works himself. He made the arrangement. It was not made with me. The manager for Nelson Bros. continued to manage for the new purchasers under us.

39. Then Mr. Birt made the arrangement?—Yes. He came out here. He has been out of the firm for a good many years now; in fact, I believe he is dead.

40. Do you get instructions direct from the Federal Company at Home or through Birt and Co.?—We have had no instructions at all. We get acknowledgments of reports and remittances from Birt and Co.