

Ward and Co. (Limited); nor am I or any one else connected with the firm interested, and never have been, as a shareholder or debenture-holder in any overseas steamship company trading to or from this country. I may be permitted to state here that when last in England there was a rumour current among the meat companies there that some of the American meat companies had acquired an interest in the Ocean Beach Freezing-works, or that some of them had purchased the works. The statement was made by some that the works had been purchased outright. I went to the headquarters of the Federal Steamship Company as a result of the rumour and asked if there was any truth in it, and was assured that there was not. I was also informed that none of the American people had any interest in the Ocean Beach Freezing Company whatever. I asked, in the event of an intended sale of the Ocean Beach works, that J. G. Ward and Co., who had worked them on the whole successfully, should have the first refusal—that is, the option of purchasing them. I was told it was not contemplated to sell them, but if it was so decided we would have the first refusal. So that it is quite clear that these rumours, which are very often circulated by commercial opponents and sometimes by scandalmongers, have no foundation in fact; in addition to which no American meat trust, or company, or firm, nor any representative, has ever done a single line of business with the Ocean Beach Company. They have neither frozen in the company nor bought from the company—nor with J. G. Ward and Co.—and we have had no transactions of any sort or kind with any of them. They do their business, as a matter of fact, with the opposing freezing company in Southland. Of course, I take no exception to that, because any company is entitled to do its business where and with whom it pleases, and there is nothing wrong in that. If they had offered to do business with the Ocean Beach Company we would have been very glad to do business with them on commercial lines. The Ocean Beach Company is a freezing company entirely. It has never exported or owned meat at any time. All persons doing business with the Ocean Beach Freezing Company have the same rates on the same quantities, and the same rebates are given without exception; and if any one came along who wanted to purchase meat or to freeze meat through that company the company would, as a matter of business, take it if the space was available, whether it was an American or a Chinese company trading legitimately in this country. I want to make it clear that I do not in any way suggest that I agree with the entry into this country of any large American meat trust or combine, because I do not. I am opposed to trusts of all kinds. Here is a fact that I wish to put on record. Last evening I telegraphed to Mr. Anderson to ask him how many sheep and lambs had passed through the Ocean Beach works this year, and his reply, received this morning, is, “Ocean Beach killed 49,594 sheep, 52,984 lambs, total 102,578. These are the figures for this season now closed.” Mr. Anderson also sent me side by side with that telegram this message: “During latter part of season Armour’s company were giving prices which other buyers could not look at. Hence our total railings this season are much below what we should have secured.” I want to say that it is within my own knowledge why the Ocean Beach works were acquired by the present owners. It was not for the purpose of meat speculation, because neither the Federal Shipping Company nor Birt and Co. speculate in meat through the Ocean Beach works. They have never provided money to purchase sheep or lambs, and they have not, so far as my knowledge goes, directly or indirectly had any interest in the sheep passing through the Ocean Beach works. As to the men who do business with the Ocean Beach works, there are a number of farmers who send sheep and lambs to the works, and these are sold by J. G. Ward and Co. to different shippers, of whom we have several. We have also the business of regular fairly large local operators. The whole of that meat goes to opposing firms in England of the American meat trusts. Anything done by my own firm, which speculates very little and only when it requires to do so on behalf of farmer clients, goes to a firm in London called Gordon Woodruff and Co. If they send out a buying order to us, or if any one else sends out a buying order to us, we would buy and ship for them, and we do so, but we have never had a buying order from any American meat company or their representatives. Personally I have not speculated in meat for nearly twenty years, and neither J. G. Ward and Co. nor the Ocean Beach Company are—nor have they ever been—traders in foodstuffs consumed by any one in this country. We never consign any meat to London or elsewhere: it is too risky. We always sell either f.o.b. or c.i.f. Those works were secured originally by Mr. Birt, of Birt, Potter, and Hughes (Limited), London—not by Birt and Co. (Limited), Sydney—for the purpose of enabling them to get freight from Southland for the Federal line of steamers. At that time the only works in existence there had an agreement to give their shipping business to other lines of steamers, and no other shipping line could go into the port of Bluff with refrigerating plant unless it could get sheep. That was the reason for the acquirement of the works. They are not used by the owners for meat-purchasing or speculation. That 102,578 sheep and lambs I have referred to is the quantity put through the Ocean Beach Freezing-works this season, and on the face of it it indicates that there are no very large operators working through it. If any American meat trust, or company, or representative were proprietors or part-proprietors in the Ocean Beach works it is obvious to any person that they would have done their business with it, and it certainly would have attained much greater dimensions. But they never have done business with it. As I have stated, if they had offered to do business, as a matter of business we would have been glad to take it. The other company were no doubt glad to take it, and in my opinion they did quite right to take it. Birt and Co. (Limited) have no money in the Ocean Beach Freezing-works, and J. G. Ward and Co. have no money in the works. We are large shippers of everything produced in Southland. We came in in that respect as an important factor from the point of view of the owners of the freezing-works, because, as is well known in Southland, we have the largest private company’s business with farmers in Southland—fully 95 per cent. of it is done with farmers. We are large controllers of freight independently of the Ocean Beach works, and I am egotistical enough to say that any shipping company would be glad for that reason to have our shipping business. On the other hand, in a business such as we have—a very large business—we are glad to be the managing agents of a freezing-works. J. G. Ward and