

growers. There is no monopoly in Southland. Neither the Southland Company nor the Ocean Beach Company has ever entered into any arrangement for the prices of meat, and I do not think they ever will. They agree on the freezing-charges and on the rebates to those who freeze with them. There are other freezing-works comparatively close, too, in neighbouring districts. There are the Balclutha works and the refrigerating-works at Burnside. As a matter of fact, in the freezing-charges, if the two Southland companies had run a riot of opposition over freezing-rates, both would have lost on the freezing, and for that reason they charged the same rates and gave the same rebate, which was and is open to everybody. The freezing-rates are reasonable. There is no monopoly of any kind about either company.

14. The fact that there were two shipping companies doing business in Southland would in itself be a benefit to the farmers?—Yes, it was, in my opinion, a great benefit.

15. I understand from Mr. Anderson's reply to your telegram that your business this season has been considerably reduced below normal?—He gives the actual figures—49,594 sheep and 52,984 lambs—and he gives the reason for the small quantity put through. It is because higher prices were being given by an American meat-buyer.

16. What would be your normal business?—Under ordinary circumstances over 200,000 carcasses. I cannot from memory state the exact quantity.

17. Owing to the operation of those outside buyers your business was reduced by one-half?—There can be no doubt that the total number of sheep and lambs put through the Ocean Beach works this year is very much smaller than it ought to be, and it is partly due to the reason Mr. Anderson states in his wire.

18. *Mr. Anderson.*] There have been buyers from Christchurch too, have there not?—I cannot say positively, but I think that is very likely; they frequently buy in Southland. The whole of the details are within the knowledge of Mr. Anderson, the managing director of my company. It is recognized that the works have been well managed, and Mr. Anderson is responsible for the working. He does not even under active competition want to run them at a loss with his eyes open.

19. *Mr. W. H. Field.*] Our main difficulty was that Birt and Co. said they were the agents for Armour and Co. for Australasia, and Australasia includes New Zealand?—Personally I know nothing about Birt and Co.'s Australian business. We have no interest of any kind in their business there. They are attorneys for a powerful shipping company, and would be unbusinesslike if they did not secure all the shipping freightage they could either from Armour's or any other company. Any shipping company would, I have no doubt, do the same if they could get the business.

20. They might have used the term possibly with the intention of doing business some time in New Zealand?—I have never heard of and know nothing whatever as to Birt and Co. buying largely in New Zealand for Armour and Co. or any other American company.

21. They have no meat business here?—I do not know. I have never heard of their buying here for American meat companies. They could, of course, do so entirely without my either hearing or knowing about it. I do know that neither Birt and Co., nor the Federal Steamship Company, nor the Ocean Beach Freezing Company, nor J. G. Ward and Co. have purchased for or sold meat to any American buyers or through American buyers in the Ocean Beach Freezing-works. There is no reason why they should not do so if they wished; the fact is that they have not up to now done so.

22. You have given the meat question a good deal of thought: can you tell us anything as a remedy for the menace we have against us?—My own belief is that the principal way in which an effort can be made is to prevent trusts and combines of any kind from operating in this country. If the Government owned all the freezing-works—to put it briefly—and owned all the refrigerating-steamers trading from this country, that, in my opinion, would be no solution; and if they were to say that no American companies were to ship or buy here that would be no solution, first, because you cannot stop Americans from trading in or with New Zealand, and, second, supposing you could stop them, so long as an American company wants to have New Zealand sheep or mutton for sale in Great Britain it has only to give a higher price there on its own account through its own company or through a British firm. You cannot stop them from operating in England, neither can you, in my judgment, stop them from operating here. If you attempted to do so it would raise an international question straight away, and if any movement of the kind assumed definite action it would have to come before the Governments of the countries concerned for settlement. There is no doubt the respective Governments would have to settle the matter, and clearly, if we stopped the people of a friendly Power from trading here, they could with equal justification stop British people from trading in the United States of America. We undoubtedly have the right to control and prevent monopolies and combines here. I believe the principal and most effective thing to do is to prevent monopolies and combines. The theory put forth that if we had our own meat-shops in Great Britain, in addition to owning the steamers and also all the refrigerating-works in this country, is not going to overcome the difficulty. I am positive it would not. It would, if you could control a large proportion of the beef that the American meat companies, under their organization in America and the Argentine, have the command and, indeed, the control of at the present time. On going into the matter in England at the Conference with the British Government representatives I got all the information I could. The fact was stated there that last year four American meat companies used 250 millions sterling in their business for one year's operations. That was the turnover. The figures are stupendous. Four American meat-buying firms handled 250 millions sterling worth of meat. It is truly a prodigious sum. It is quite clear they are not buying the meat here to sell in New Zealand or Australia, but to operate in the British Isles, and possibly partly for the Continent. Clearly, if they are handling 250 million pounds' worth of meat and shipping enormous quantities of it to England—they, of course, sell largely in their own country, too—if we had our own meat-shops all over England, if we could not provide a much larger propor-