

You think that they really have not had a trial yet?—We know they have been operating, but I have always worked with the one company—Belfast—and have not come directly into contact with the others.

Do you not think that your suggestion for more competition from outside buyers, and not only the Armour Company, is due to a lack of system amongst the farmers in the matter of co-operation as to working their own stock?—No doubt there is room for great improvement in that respect, but, still, I am a great believer in competition.

You are speaking only of competition in the paddock?—Yes, mainly. The question of the outside markets is rather beyond my ken.

You said that you thought the objection was coming more from the freezing-works than the farmers, did you not?—I have got that idea.

Are you aware that most of the co-operative works in the North Island do not deal with Armour and Co., or with meat speculators at all; therefore, you can quite understand that that company's competition does not enter into the question at all here?—I am only speaking from my own point of view, and as I see the question in my own district, and as we are working in Canterbury. I am not able to give evidence as to the position in the North Island.

Is it not the fact that the great profits made by the freezing-works during the Imperial meat contract were made by storing that meat—profits which Armour and Co. in any case would not participate in?—Great profits, I suppose, have been made largely from the storing.

Are you aware that the profit has amounted to 5s. per sheep on a 64 lb. sheep?—Yes.

Do you think there is any chance of Armour and Co. competing with works that are solely co-operative, buying the farmers' own stock?—I would not like to express an opinion on that point.

Mr. Lysnar: You have stated you have fifty preference shares in certain freezing-works. Are you not aware that preference shares give no right to a sheepowner to put stock into the works?—I am not a lawyer, and therefore cannot give an opinion on that point.

But do you not know that that is a fact?—The point of law in question has never come up as far as I am concerned, and I do not know if I have any such right or not. I cannot say.

But you say you are representing the farmers or some farmers' association: is that not so?—No, I represent nothing. I just came here as a private individual to express my own single opinion.

You have not come as representing any particular group of farmers?—I am representing nobody excepting myself.

You say you think that Armours should have a free hand to buy?—I do.

In order that all the farmers can get better prices through the competition?—That is the idea.

Are you not aware that the prices to be paid by the buyers out in New Zealand for stock are fixed in London every week?—I do not think that that applies in our district.

Do you say it does not?—I can only quote my own experience. Of course, if I get the price that suits me I sell my meat to the works. If I do not get a suitable price I ship it.

Have you noticed when you get quotations throughout Canterbury from different meat firms or from buyers that they are always the same?—No, I have seen big differences.

Have you sold to the different firms about the same time in a year?—Yes; when one is selling it is a usual thing to get quotations from different firms, and I have found a variation— $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in one case and $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the other.

Is that in connection only with "extra prime"?—No; in connection with the meat you are selling—usually meat of the best quality.

Supposing you had sheep of better quality than your neighbour, probably you would get from $\frac{1}{4}$ d. to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. more than he would: is that so?—The meat is all graded in the works, and you sell it on the grade.

And the buyer takes the wool?—It depends on how you sell. You can sell the meat only, and keep the skins.

Practically, they sell the whole thing in Canterbury?—No; I often sell the bare meat, and work my skins.

That system existed during the commandeering, when there was not so much profit to handle?—No, prior to the commandeering and during it.

Do you know anything about the workings of Armour and Co. in other countries—whether they have been detrimental or otherwise to the producer?—I do not see how they can be very detrimental in the United States, judging by the present price of meat there.

You say "judging by the present price of meat": are you not aware there has been a Commission held in the United States in connection with their operations?—Yes; I saw a pamphlet in respect to it.

And in their findings did not the Commission say that Armour and Co. are acting detrimentally to the sheep-farmer?—I know nothing about it beyond generally knowing what the Commission did. I understand the President turned the report down, did he not?

No; the President has not turned it down, but has been going on very much with it. Have you followed the decisions of that Commission very closely?—No, sir, I cannot say I have.

And, personally, you do not know the real effect of their operations in other countries?—No; it would be rather presumptuous on my part to express an opinion on that point.

But you are quite willing to take the risk of their doing good or bad here?—Yes.

Mr. Hawken: If Armours were to give more per sheep than anybody else in Canterbury would they not get all the sheep?—I would not like to say that, as there is a proportion of people in Canterbury who would back their opinions if they did not believe in Armours. I would, for one. I would not sell to them, even if they gave more money, if I objected to their dealings. Still, under ordinary circumstances they would perhaps get the bulk of the sheep if they offered more than other buyers.

If they gave more per sheep would they not be able to control the works?—No.

But what would be the use of the works if they had no sheep?—We have the farmers' works, and if there were any doubt about the actions of Armour and Co. there is no doubt that the farmers interested in those works would be patriotic enough to stand up for them. Am I not right, however, in suggesting that we have our Government officers, and that if there were any suspicion as to Armour and Co. acting detrimentally to this country their license would be withdrawn?