But who represents them here ?—Well, they have no direct representative, but the Imperial Supplies Department acts as the intermediary between them and the freezing companies.

Can you tell me the name of the gentleman who acts for them here ?—The Controller of the Imperial Supplies Department is Mr. Triggs, and the Assistant Controller is Mr. Lees.

Would it be to the interests of Armour and Co., or any of the "Big Five," to crush the producer and raise the price to the consumer under the present conditions in the world ?—Naturally it would not be to the interests of Armour and Co. to completely crush the producer, but it would be to their interests to get a controlling-power in the buying-markets of this country.

Did not that policy which they pursued in America cause the setting-up of the Commission to which you have referred, which has put them out of court so that they dare not continue that policy now ?—Yes, as regards groceries and that sort of thing. There is one aspect of that matter which I think should not be lost sight of: they had been extending their operations over such a wide field that it might be said to cover all classes of foodstuffs. Well, that constituted them such a very serious menace to the American people that that action was taken, as a result of which they have abandoned their extraneous businesses, but that leaves them with all their enormous monetary power to be concentrated on the meat business, and it makes them more dangerous than ever.

You made the suggestion that if the consumers—the people of New Zealand—had a trust here which was squeezing the people in connection with their butter, cheese, or meat, some steps should be taken by way of legislation to stop that ?—Any trust that squeezes the people at all is bad for the country.

Are you aware that at the present time there is a Bill before the Canadian Parliament not to license the export of any produce or any goods until the people of Canada are first supplied ?—No, I did not know that.

Mr. Powdrell: Do you see any danger in dealing c.i.f. with these companies—the farmers of New Zealand selling to Armour and Co., for instance, for delivery in New York ?—I do not see that there could be any objection to that.

But you think there would be danger in their being allowed to buy in New Zealand, in the paddocks ?—Yes.

And you contend there is greater danger if they bought works in New Zealand ?—Yes, undoubtedly.

You have heard the arguments of some of the examiners on this Committee—that it is to the best interests of the farmer to deal with the men who give him a higher price than his own works give him. Do you think, under those circumstances, that the freezing companies in New Zealand would be justified in adopting the same attitude and selling their works at a 100-per-cent. profit ? If the farmer is justified in selling his sheep at ¼d. per pound extra profit, would not the freezing company be warranted in accepting £500,000 for works which cost them £200,000, and letting the farmer "stew in his own juice" ?—It depends upon the point of view from which you look at the matter, but it would be a bad thing for the country.

I suppose you know that a great many of the farmers' co-operative works are guaranteed by too little capital ?—Yes, some of them.

Do you think it would be legitimate for the farmer to grasp the additional ¼d. per pound from Armour while he is strangling the works ?—I think it would be a bad thing for the farmer in the end if he did so.

Is it not a fact that the American firms are getting a good hold in the Smithfield Market ?—Yes, they have been strong there for years past.

Do you see any danger in these big companies purchasing a big proportion of the stuff in New Zealand, and the farmers not dealing direct here but selling c.i.f. to London, and not knowing to whom they were selling ? The agent at the other end might be Armour and Co. They would then have only one-third of the free meat on the market. Do you not think there is danger in that they could do what they like with the other meat ? Do you not think there is danger of their getting control of our meat in that way ?—Yes, if they got sufficient control of the British end.

It depends upon the amount of control they get there ?—Yes.

It has been contended that Armour and Co. treat the offal better and make more out of it, but since they have no works here it would be entirely lost to them. Do you think it would be possible for Armour and Co. to give as much for stock as the co-operative works here can give ?—No, it ought not to be, unless through their being able to influence the world's markets at the other end to the disadvantage of their competitors.

Mr. Jones: I understand that your opinion is that it would not be in the best interests of this country that Armour and Co. should be permitted to come here ?—That is so.

Have you carefully followed the live-stock figures in America to see whether they are actually operating in that direction ?—You mean—followed the trend of the number of live-stock ?

The price and general effect of the operations of the "Big Five" upon the farmers there ?—Well, I cannot say that I have followed it very closely. I have gone through the information obtained by these inquiries that were set up by the United States Government.

I suppose it is fair to assume that the meat business has been in operation in America sufficiently long for us to conclude that it has become a settled policy, and that the present effect is likely to continue to be the effect in the future ?—Well, the history of the five large meat companies in America has been rather a chequered one ever since before 1900. They have been the subject of a series of attempts on the part of the Government to keep them in order.

Quoting from the statistics handled by Mr. Lysnar—which are reliable—I find that in 1903 the average price for steers per 100 lb. was 19s. 6d., and the price gradually increased over a period of fifteen years until to-day it is £3: does not that seem to indicate that they have been working in the interests of the producer ?—No; that has been brought about by the operation of the law of supply and demand throughout the world.

Then it is not a trust if the law of supply and demand is operating ?—But this is the world's supply and demand.

You were accusing the "Big Five" of being a trust ?—No, I used the words "so-called trust."

But if you have continuous increases in price, does not that prove that they are not a trust ?—No; because if you have got a continually increasing population, and a consequently greater demand for meat, and if the supply of meat is not keeping pace with the increase in the demand you must get higher prices.