

Dominion Conference that the Government take no steps from preventing any people from purchasing our products." Mr. Leadley, president of the New Zealand Farmers' Union, has stated that there was no opposition to the motion moved by Mr. Lysnar, and it seems to me that it should be shown that two votes should have been cast in opposition to that motion. I have come here, sir, to show that the Hawke's Bay farmers sent two delegates to that conference.

*The Chairman:* You have come here for the purpose of repudiating the action of the delegates to the Dominion Conference.

*Mr. Van Asch:* Yes. I claim, sir, to have the confidence of the Hawke's Bay farmers, because they appointed me as their representative on the Wool and Meat Conference five years ago, and, as I have already intimated, I am a member of the executive of the Hawke's Bay Farmers' Union. I may also say, sir, that I am one of the largest fatteners of lambs in Hawke's Bay, and I fatten between four thousand and five thousand every year. When it is stated that the northern farmers and the Hawke's Bay farmers were in favour of the motion moved by Mr. Lysnar I wish to say particularly that the Farmers' Union of Hawke's Bay are not in favour of it, and they proved that by their voting.

*The Chairman:* Not at the conference.

*Mr. Van Asch:* No; they voted in contravention of the vote taken at the meeting with respect to the resolution. They were against the resolution at the meeting, the two of them. It was carried against them, yet they persisted, apparently, in voting contrary to the resolution. That is what I wanted to say. I have here, sir, a letter from Mr. W. Nelson, of Tomoana, in reply to a question I asked him as to what he thought of the American Meat Trust, which I should like to read out to the Committee. Before doing so I would like to say that Mr. Nelson is about eighty years of age. I know that he would have liked to be here to give evidence in support of the petition of Messrs. Armour and Co. Mr. Nelson informed me that he had dealings with Messrs. Armour and Co. for about twenty years, and he thought it was only right that Messrs. Armour and Co. should be encouraged to come to New Zealand. Of course, he said it was against his own interests, but he thought in fairness to Messrs. Armour and Co. and in the interests of producers of this country they should be encouraged. Mr. Nelson's letter reads as follows:—

"DEAR VAN ASCH,—

"Tomoana, 25th August, 1920.

"Replying to your question, 'What do I think of the American Meat Trust?' I have to say I have before me a pamphlet entitled 'The Truth about the American Meat Trust.' I have read it carefully and endorse every word of it. I have not the pleasure of knowing the author (Mr. Carney), but his method of writing in the matter produced indicates to me that he is a man after my own heart—he says what he means and means what he says—and it is up to any one (however big or small) who discredits him to have it out with him face to face, and either prove his unfitness to trade in New Zealand or, failing this proof, to admit his right to trade. Having already said I endorse every word in Mr. Carney's pamphlet, there seems nothing more for me to say; but I expect you will want something original, so will inflict a few more words on you. About three years ago (before the excitement on 'A.M.T.' was as high as it is to-day) a document headed 'Report of Meat Export Trade Committee' was sent me by a high official in the Agricultural Department with a request that I would give my opinion of it. I commenced my reply as follows: 'I give it as my opinion that the American Meat Trust bogey is a product of a disordered brain.' Now, mind you, this was three years ago, and what I *thought* then I *know* now, the only change in the situation being the vastly increased numbers of 'defective brains.' During the past two years I have had dozens of people in this room asking what I had to say about the 'A.M.T.,' and in no single instance did I elicit any argument whatever to prove what they seemed to think was in what they called their mind. I will give a few answers to my numerous questions:—(1.) We are afraid they will get our freezing-works. (2.) It will end in their getting them all. (3.) They will get all the ships. (4.) They will eventually run the world's meat trade.' My answers:—(1.) I suppose they will not buy your works if you decline to sell them. (2.) Suppose they do get them all, if they do not behave themselves you can build more freezing-works. (3.) Then you can get more ships. I have done it once, so can you. (4.) Why on earth should they want to run the world's meat trade? This is putting the American down as a fool. Well, he is not a fool.' The last half-dozen words really cover the whole ground. When any visitor leaves my room I do not think I flatter myself unduly when I say they leave it 'wiser and sadder men.' I speak advisedly when I say 'sadder,' because they are sad at having to part with a grievance. The farmer loves a grievance dearly. Now to come to the point. I am perfectly certain that if any act of the Government should prevent freedom of action either to Americans or any other body so long as they behave themselves decently it will be the biggest blow to 'producers' that they have ever had dealt them. If they do not 'behave themselves' kick them out, but for Heaven's sake do not begin kicking till there is some ground for doing so. You will be asked, 'Who is this fellow Nelson who speaks so positively?' Well, he is the fellow who for thirty-seven years has devoted every day from daylight to dark in furthering the interest of the frozen-meat trade (and incidentally his own), and, given ordinary intelligence, such a lifelong apprenticeship should give him a right to attempt to educate a less-well-informed section of the country. Unfortunately no 'meat man' is supposed to be endowed with intelligence. In fact, I am sometimes forced to think that the Lord has been so lavish in his supply of 'intelligence' to the farmer that the supply ran out, leaving none for the ordinary man. One very curious situation comes to light as the result of the present hubbub *re* 'A.M.T.' For thirty years there has been a periodical outbreak of 'middleman' fever among the farming community. Now, one anti-A.M.T. said a few days back, 'What do Armours want to come here for—why cannot they get their meat as they always have done?' This means, through the middleman. Thus the farmer seeks to create what he has tried for thirty years to abolish. Do not forget, Mr. Sheep-farmer, it's the *sheep* that has to pay the middleman. Now, you will be asked, What does Nelson expect to make out of all this stuff he is writing? I will answer the question before it is asked. I have not a penny of interest in any meat concern of any kind in the world, and I have not a penny in any shipping company in the world, and all I hope to make out of my little effort is to prevent the rulers of this country committing a huge blunder which has been almost forced upon them by a large section of the community owing to their blind acceptance of the ravings of a few interested persons . . ."