

suggest half a dozen ways by which Messrs. Armour and Co. could escape the penalty clauses of the Act without in any sense breaking the law of the land. But that is just what Messrs. Armour and Co. refuse to do, because the moment they did that they would place a strong weapon in the hands of their critics, and they would say, "Here they are defying the law and snapping their fingers at our refusal to give them a license." The result would be that our critics would be furnished with a strong weapon against us by our own conduct. Armour and Co. will not place themselves in the position to allow their critics to throw stones at them. At the present time no one could throw stones at us, and we have no intention of playing into the hands of our critics by anything of that kind. If the Government continues to refuse us a license we will discontinue trading.

*The Chairman :* The Act could be altered.

*Mr. Alpers :* Precisely, sir, that is the very point I am coming to. The House is sitting now. The moment Armour and Co. exported meat without a license because of some defect in the law Parliament would promptly amend the Act, and we would be in a weakened position, because our critics would have some justice in their criticisms. We have no intention of evading the law, and we consider we have a right to a license, and if by any chance we misconduct ourselves the law is strong enough to turn us out of the country. If I may suggest, sir, there is another aspect of the matter. The question hitherto has turned upon trust competition, and so on, and the benefit to the farming community. Surely there is another aspect of the matter. The company law of New Zealand constitutes a standing invitation to Armour and Co. or any other company to come here and establish themselves. Armour and Co. came four years ago and was duly incorporated, and is trading with foreign capital, as it has a right to do. It paid registration fees, and has paid its annual fee of £50 ever since for a license to carry on the business for which it is incorporated by the terms of its memorandum—namely, the business of meat-exporters. And what happens? While it is on the one hand paying its licensing fee under the Act and has embarked capital into the business, it has on the other hand been refused under the Slaughtering and Inspection Act a license to carry on that very trade, and that without any suggestion that it should be entitled to compensation for being refused under one law what was granted under another. There is another business which one has to have a license to trade in—I refer to alcohol. If a "publican and sinner" wants to sell beer in the backblocks or anywhere else he has to have a license, and before the Magistrate can refuse him a license he has a right to be heard in open Court. If any charges of unfitness are made against him he has the right to call evidence to refute them; in other words, he is given an opportunity of self-defence. We ask to be put in no worse position than the publican is in, or that the license should not be refused until we have had a chance of meeting any charges that have been made against us. It is not apparently even suggested that there is anything to charge us with. No one suggests that we have done anything wrong, therefore I say we are entitled to our license. Apart from the meat profits or anything else, is it in the interests of the public good as a whole in this way to discriminate between citizens and to act contrary to the principles of justice? If I may suggest, sir, there is another aspect of the matter that should be looked at. Something has been said by various witnesses on the farmers' side that there are combinations amongst buyers now. That is news to me. If that sort of thing exists it occurs to one as a matter of common-sense that it is easy for three rogues to conspire; it is not so easy for six rogues to conspire; and it is even more difficult for twelve to conspire. Surely the safest check on such conduct is free competition. It has also been suggested that the more competitors you have the better it is for competition. Under the Slaughtering and Inspection Act the Government has most complete powers of control and the fullest powers of investigation of all companies operating in the meat trade. Messrs. Armour and Co. are quite willing to submit to the utmost control provided it is equally exercised over all the meat-buyers; and, as I say, the law now on our statute-book gives the Government of the country most complete powers of controlling organizations, whereas if the license were refused they might carry on the business to some extent. Armour and Co. have no intention of dodging the law, but they do say that with a license, in such a contingency, they could be much more easily caught if they engaged in unfair dealing.

*Mr. Lysnar :* You are a shareholder in Armour and Co.?—Yes; but my main interests are in the direction of acting as solicitor and adviser to the company.

That is why you are a shareholder?—I am a shareholder in Armour and Co. of Australasia in order that I may exercise a supervision over the conduct of the business as solicitor to the company, and on behalf of Mr. J. Ogden Armour. There are only two directors in the company, and if there are any matters in dispute they have to be referred to me as sole arbitrator.

You have to decide?—Yes, on behalf of Mr. Armour.

That is, Mr. Armour of Chicago?—Yes.

Is he not in the parent company in Chicago?—Yes. He is the head of the whole of the Armour family interests.

And of the American Meat Trust?—He denies that there is an American Meat Trust.

Has he not given a large guarantee towards the bank fund—a guarantee of £250,000?—We have a credit of £250,000.

Although the nominal capital of the company is £100,000, he really has £350,000 in this company?—There is an overdraft.

But his guarantee is £250,000?—I do not know. I do not know the amount of the guarantee.

Armour and Co. purchased Joseph and Co.'s business in New Zealand?—Yes, sir.

Armour and Co. have a very large number of retail shops in England?—I do not know.

The parent company has a very large number of retail shops in England?—I do not know. I would just like to say a few words with respect to the purchase of Mr. A. L. Joseph's business to which Mr. Lysnar has just referred. The circumstances are these: When Armour and Co. of Australasia were about to commence business in New Zealand one of the first matters which had to be taken into consideration was the engagement of buyers. We had to get buyers somewhere. Mr. Joseph had just died. His business was being carried on by his executors, and they had some very excellent men. Well, Mr. Carney and I fully discussed the matter. Mr. Carney said, "I can get all those men quite easily if I offer, say, £50 or £100 increase of salary." "Yes," I said, "and then what will Joseph's people say? They will say, 'The Americans have collared all our buyers