

73. Yes, if selling by the pound; but they do not always buy by the pound in Canterbury?—No, nor in the North Island. Besides, a lot of people prefer to sell by the head.

74. Do you not think it would be far better for the companies to sell and for the Government to buy from the companies, instead of the Government buying from the farms per head?—I do not think the Government could do the latter. It is a very costly matter. You have to keep such a large number of buyers going.

75. You say it is admitted that some companies are paying higher prices than others for lamb that has been shipped Home?—I would not say that. We have had to do in regard to lamb the same as others. If you have a business with a number of clients you must keep them together. If some one else comes along and offers a higher price than you are offering you are forced to give the same price or go under.

76. But is it not a fact that some of those who buy know, when it goes to the Old Country, that the lamb will be sold to their shops?—Well, we assume that: we have no knowledge that it is so.

77. Therefore they can afford to give higher prices for stuff at this end than those who have no shops?—But they have been giving equally high prices for beef and mutton.

78. But I am alluding to lamb and mutton?—Yes. They have been trying to build up a business.

79. *Mr. W. H. Field.*] Is there any evidence as to whether there is any existence of the operations of the Meat Trust in New Zealand?—Armour and Co. are established in New Zealand, and if you turn up the *Christchurch Sun* of the 30th September, 1916, you will see that Swift and Co. are stated to have been here for some years. I never saw any contradiction of the statement in the paper. Armour and Co. have their plate up.

80. You are satisfied as managing director of the Gear Company that the trusts are operating here?—Yes, I do not think there is any doubt about that.

81. Do you think their operations and influence are extending?—Owing to the conditions ruling at present there is not a great deal of room for them to extend, because every company knows now exactly what they can do. If the time comes when the companies will not know what to do, then it is possible that the operations of the Meat Trust will extend, because small companies will not be strong enough to speculate.

82. It is for the Committee to consider what evidence should be adduced in regard to the existence of the operations of these companies; but do you think we could get very much further evidence as to their operations in this country—I mean further witnesses?—Well, you can call Mr. W. N. Kingdon, of Christchurch, and Mr. W. I. Carney. Mr. Carney is the head man of Armour and Co. (N.Z.), and Mr. Kingdon is their meat expert. Mr. Carney will no doubt own up to representing Armour and Co., of Chicago.

83. Do you think the meat trusts can do us very much harm while the present system continues and while the war lasts?—I do not think the trusts can do us any harm under the scheme I propose.

84. But I am asking, while the war lasts?—Their efforts will be to build up a business after the war.

85. I want to know whether you think it is essential that Parliament and the Government should act this session if possible?—Assuming the war will be over this year—which I sincerely hope—the Government ought to be authorized to negotiate with the Imperial authorities.

86. You think it would be dangerous to wait?—I am afraid it would be dangerous to us and to the Imperial authorities. One of the modifications will have to be in regard to weight grades, which at present are very broad, up to 72 lb. for one grade of mutton; it will be necessary to subdivide that for the ordinary market.

87. It is quite certain that if we wait till after the war is over we will have more difficulty in dealing with the matter than we have now?—Yes.

88. We have had it from Dr. Reakes that we could not go further than the wholesale dealer in the matter of control: you are still strongly of the opinion that we should control the business right up to the retailer?—Yes, I am, because a lot of those shops in England are controlled by the Meat Trust companies, and it seems to me that if you control the wholesaler it is a very simple matter to put on a certain amount of profit and allow the retailers to come up to that.

89. You are of the opinion that the Government should buy from the farmer, with perhaps the assistance of the freezing-company buyers, and that the Government should be the purchaser?—I do not say that the Government should purchase the stock, but they should be the buyer of the meat from the companies.

90. Either buying from the companies or the companies having bought from the farmers?—Yes, it would be a simple matter. If the Government want to deal with every farmer it would mean considerable trouble. We have to go round these small settlements once a month taking small quantities with different brands. This involves a large amount of clerical work, and it would mean an enormous scheme for the Government to attempt to do the business the companies are doing.

91. Would it not be possible for the Government to buy direct from the farmers through the instrumentality of the companies and their buyers?—It would make it more complex.

92. [In reply to a question regarding consignments to Home markets the witness said]: The system does not make for sound finance. No small man will be safe in consigning on that plan. When I was at Home there was a small parcel of meat frozen by the company put on the market by a weak holder at a low price, and that pulled our price down for the time being. We lost through this in one day more than all the profits we could have made out of that particular parcel.

93. You spoke of the representative committee: what would you suggest should be the constitution—should it be a Board of Trade?—They should be practical men. I mentioned in my