

had come here to do business, and were going to have it no matter what it cost. Those threats have, I think, been held out to numerous other companies in the same way. We do not freeze for Armour and Co., and we have as far as possible refused to do any business for American companies or business people who are assumed to be representing American companies. The result of that naturally is that they have made it as warm as they possibly can for us. As to the steps which should be taken to counteract these methods, I confess that I am quite unable to make any recommendation. It is such a huge question. It is surrounded with difficulties which can only be got over by co-operation with other Dominions. I fail to see what can be done unless, first of all, the inclination of these outside places is ascertained by the Government here. Without co-operation and combination by the different Dominions or nations my opinion is that we shall fail. As to the question of the Government purchasing stock I do not know what to think. I have a perfectly open mind on the subject, and am anxious to be convinced, but as far as I have seen State institutions have not been as successful as most of those who promoted them expected. I have seen something of State handling in the last few years since the war commenced, and the small respect I had for Government handling has not improved very much. At any rate, there is this to be said, that whatever may be done by the Government, they have still to do what all companies have had to do—namely, buy our experience. There is no question about that. No Government can take it up and at once become practised and skilled in an industry which it knows nothing about. Therefore the question of Governments controlling works, to my mind—whilst it is quite open to argument, and I am prepared to find I am wrong—at first blush it seems impracticable.

3. *Mr. Pearce.*] Do you mean taking over the works altogether?—No, controlling in any way. I am not speaking of controlling the prices, but of regulating them. I think one question was asked as to whether the Government should control the freezing-space. Well, I do not know; it might be practicable, but it seems to me that if that were to be brought into operation all kind of factors might arise which would affect the earning-power of those companies. Many things might occur. Under the conditions of competition some companies are able to pay the farmer a higher price than others, and they can bring the stock past other people's works and freeze them at their headquarters. If you eliminate that you will, of course, eliminate a very large amount of competition. There are many ramifications which I could not attempt to speak on without previous grave consideration.

4. Would not those difficulties be got over if they took the meat at a certain price per pound from your works?—It depends upon how much meat is put through their works. If the Government buys I do not exactly see where the object comes in, because if the Government buys at a price it would be, I take it, delivered at the works. If the farmer has got to fix the price for his animal, then the buyer does not exactly come in.

5. I mean, fix the price for the meat?—Well, really I would prefer not to try and advise on the matter, because the question is a very huge one. The whole question of commerce and the whole principles of commerce are involved, and unless we get the other Dominions and other nations to act together we can expect nothing but failure. Without the assistance of the Imperial Government, or without the co-operation of English firms on the Home markets, I do not think we shall get very much further. Even if the Government bought the meat the big combination in the Home markets, especially with the Meat Trust, might make it a very awkward job for the Government. Mr. Millward mentioned the possibilities of committees dealing with this. There are committees already set up, but they are committees to deal with imperishable commodities. If you attempt to hold the meat-market up it is going to cost you storage at so-much per pound all the time, so that the cost does not improve. At any rate, I have nothing to go upon which would warrant me in attempting to advise you gentlemen at this stage. Probably it would save your time a good deal if advice were not given, but when you have got what you want from the various people, then you might call together those whose evidence has seemed to you to be good enough and ask them to sift that evidence as far as they can, and tell you what inferences they draw and the conclusions they have arrived at. I think that would probably save time. I would not attempt to advise you. You, of course, are aware that Imperial inquiries have been made into this Meat Trust question, and pamphlets have been published. In Australia there was a judicial inquiry in regard to the existence of the Meat Trust, but the papers practically leave you as much in the dark as ever. Then, gentlemen, there is another aspect of this question which I would like to refer to. Supposing you succeed in putting the American Trust out of our market, are there not any other trusts that might be equally dangerous to us if you get rid of the American Meat Trust? As probably some of you are aware, Mr. Vestey came to New Zealand not long ago after having spent a considerable time in Australia. While in Australia he purchased large tracts of country. He is a meat man on the London market and a great speculator, and with all due respect to him—and I think he will admit it himself—he is a speculator. I do not think he cares whether it is in British sovereigns or in American dollars that he gets his money, so long as the aggregate is all right. I think he would tell you that himself. He came out here, and an inquiry to purchase a freezing company immediately followed his arrival, I assume he was an intending buyer of freezing companies in New Zealand. At any rate, an offer was made to my company, and I know of offers being made to other companies to sell right out. Since then Mr. Vestey has built works in Auckland. Now we have in New Zealand other companies, such as Armour and Co., with British capital no doubt, they being duly registered here. I do not know whether they have followed on the same lines with regard to registering with a small nominal capital, but, with America out of the way, even an English company formed with capital to work on the same lines would be just as bad for us; so, as I said before, difficulties bristle. When these gentlemen have been in New Zealand I have had opportunities of discussing various matters with them from this point of view, and I have realized that whilst the American