

31. Is it your experience that this tagging of meat enables him to do that?—Unquestionably.

32. Is it prejudicial to local companies, such as your own?—Without doubt, and to the farmer, too. Armour and Co. are here, and have spent a considerable amount of money to purchase a goodwill.

33. Do you think if some amendment were made in the present system of tagging that would be an improvement?—I recommended to the Minister when the last increased price was given not to bother about the price. I said, "Get the surplus meat free on the market, because that will satisfy New Zealand."

34. *Mr. Reed.*] Is all the capital of the Wellington Meat Export Company New Zealand capital?—So far as I know, yes. I do not know that we have any foreign element. It is all subscribed in New Zealand.

35. What is your opinion regarding the effectiveness of compelling all freezing-works in New Zealand to be locally owned: do you think that would combat the operations of any trust?—I think it would be a very good thing if it were possible, but I do not know how you are going to provide such a thing as excluding all but New Zealand capital. Are you going to prohibit the transfer of shares?

36. It would amount to that?—I am afraid that you would not get a very big subscription towards the new company.

37. If you thought it were possible, you would think the scheme a good one?—I would rather look round for some other solution. It occurs to me that I would try a good many other things first; but probably there may be no necessity for that if you made it unprofitable for foreign capital to come in.

38. *Dr. Newman.*] If something is not done to check the advance of the Meat Trust in New Zealand, will it not shortly get complete control of the trade with the wealth of money they have?—The local companies will undoubtedly go under.

39. And if there is no combined action and the State does not intervene they will have complete control?—Unquestionably.

40. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] Would the freezing companies have any objection to giving this Committee or the Government information as to the ownership of stock in the various works: by "ownership" I mean the people who are freezing and have sold their stock to the Government—that is, taking in the farmer who freezes and the agents who have purchased?—Under the scheme of working consequent upon the commandeering of the meat the companies have undertaken to give to the Government all the information they require. If it were not so provided for we would give it cheerfully.

41. Then that information is readily available?—Quite.

42. There was one point in Mr. Millward's suggestions which you did not emphasize in expressing your views, and that is this: that this scheme of Government control, by fixing the prices through a representative committee, could only succeed if the Imperial Government at the other end controlled the distribution?—I do not think any possible good could eventuate from the New Zealand Government acting alone.

43. Do you think it would be practicable if the Imperial Government were so minded to control the distribution to the consumer?—It is practicable.

44. In what way—by merely fixing the price?—The fixing of prices when it goes to the consumer would mean that you would have to fix so-much as the price for a leg of mutton, so-much for a loin, so-much for the saddle, and so on. To my mind the only way in which you could come to something absolutely definite would be for the Imperial Government to own all the meat-shops.

45. And short of that?—I do not think there is anything short of that which would not be open to all kinds of abuses.

46. That is what I mean, practically—unless they enter into the business whole-heartedly?—It seems to me that is the only way. Of course, nations have gone ahead, and Great Britain has done very well in spite of obstacles, but I do not know what might be the effect if there is still too much State control.

47. But they might control sufficiently long to enable them to scotch the trusts?—Yes. I do not understand very much about trusts—it is an intangible sort of thing. They might be compelled, as the oil companies were, to distribute their resources. But what happens now? They are just the same under another name; and it may be so with the trusts.

48. *Mr. Pearce.*] In your works you freeze for various clients, do you not?—Yes.

49. Do you know of any case where meat after it has been frozen has been transferred to a fresh owner after it leaves your works?—No, we would not need to know that. If it is sold by the owner his transaction is with the other man, to whom he hands the bills of lading.

50. Any of your own clients could do it without your knowledge?—Yes. The bills of lading are handed to the owner, and if he sells his meat he passes on the bills of lading.

51. Do you not think it would be some check on the Meat Trusts if we passed legislation making it illegal to allow any rebates in regard to freezing and shipping for some of the big firms, who get rebates and are thereby enabled to compete on better lines?—Yes, that would be a good thing. I know there is in existence a practice to make substantial reductions in freezing-charges to certain people. I know on one occasion I was a sinner. I agreed to do what a competing company were doing, and at the end of the period I asked for the production of the agreement with that company before I paid out. They refused to produce it, and I said, "Very well, I do not pay until I get it"; and I have not paid to this day, and I am not doing any more business with that company.

52. You think it would be an advantage to take some action?—Yes, I do. It has worked well in other respects.