

interest in Armour and Co. There was no suggestion whatever as to my going in with Armour and Co. until I came back to New Zealand. I went to America and England entirely for private reasons. While in America I made extensive inquiries in regard to the statements made in that report of the United States Federal Trade Commission, and my impression was that we knew more about that report in New Zealand than they did in America. I spoke to scores of farmers, at the saleyards, on the trains, and in hotels, and never found any of them who were in any way dissatisfied with the prices which they were getting for their stock. After I left Chicago I went on to London. So far as Armour and Co. of Australasia is concerned, Mr. Carney and I are the two directors, and we have absolute authority. We have a perfectly free hand, and have to make no reference to anybody whatever as to the way in which we carry on the business. We have no knowledge whatever, and we certainly have no instructions, as to any of those restrictions of trade which it is supposed that Armour and Co. are going to inflict upon the farming community of New Zealand. I cannot imagine any more honest gentleman than my friend Mr. Carney, and, so far as I myself am concerned, I would not be a party to any methods or tactics which might be considered disreputable, and which would be contrary to the principles which I hold. I have as good a reputation as any man in this country, and my object is to keep that good reputation. Now, a great many statements, more or less wide, have been made with regard to Armour and Co. of Australasia, and these statements are going round New Zealand to-day. It has been stated on more than one occasion that Armour and Co. have made offers for works; that Armour and Co. are going to build works; and that Armour and Co. have shares in other concerns. Now, that matter can be disposed of very shortly by simply stating that we have no works in New Zealand; that we have not made offers for any works; and that we have not any shares or any interests whatever in any company or concern which owns any works. And I would add that neither do we intend to build works, make offers for any works, or take up shares in any company or concern owning works. There are quite sufficient works in New Zealand already without Armour and Co. or anybody else going in for works at the present time. The last statement I got with regard to Armour and Co.'s supposed intended operations in regard to works I received from Sir George Clifford. He stated to me that he had been informed on the very best authority that Armour and Co. was supplying £50,000 to one of those companies just starting in South Canterbury. I told Sir George Clifford that his authority was absolutely incorrect, and I told him, further than that, that Armour and Co. had not £50,000 or any other amount whatever in any company or concern in New Zealand; and I told him he could make what I had stated public in any way he liked. We have also been accused that we are going to buy ships. We are not going to buy ships, and we do not want any ships. As everybody knows, it is customary for the freezing companies in New Zealand to make their own contracts with the shipping companies in regard to all the produce that goes through the different works, and if Armour and Co. had ships, and brought their ships here, they could not load their meat into them. I do not know, of course, what is going to be the position in the future in regard to these contracts between the freezing companies and the shipping companies, but certainly that has been the position in the past under pre-war conditions. As a matter of fact, all that Armour and Co. are asking for is that they should be given a fair chance to trade in this country, on the same terms and with the same rights and privileges that their competitors have. Armour and Co. have come here to prevent combinations. They have come here to operate openly in their own name. I understand from Mr. Carney that it was one of the conditions made by Mr. J. Ogden Armour, when he consented to start a company here, that unless it was started in their own name it should not be started at all. We are here absolutely in the open, and, with regard to anything that is done by Armour and Co., a finger can be put on it at once. It is not a question of Armour and Co. being a party to no competition; it is a question of Armour and Co. not being a party to any price combinations. We have refused to be a party to any price combinations. We do not co-operate in prices with any other people, and we have often refused on any grounds whatever to cut up lots, or to do anything of that sort. I may say that I have myself been hauled over the coals by certain concerns because we have sometimes given more money probably than the current price. We have done so for the simple reason that it was the only way we could do business under the circumstances. My reply on those occasions has been that we are not compelled to give the same price as anybody else. We decline absolutely to tie ourselves up to the prices other people are giving. We are the arbiters of our own business, and we object to any interference by other people in any way in regard to prices. Now, I have always held that there are no outside trusts operating in New Zealand. In my opinion there is no such thing as a meat trust operating here. My reason for this opinion is that when I was working for the Canterbury Frozen Meat Company we never bought any stock at all. It was purely a farmers' company, and consequently we never came into competition with any of those exporters who dealt with us; and I had numerous confidences with those exporters, and from what I gathered on different occasions I came to the conclusion that there was absolutely no combination of outside interests operating in New Zealand. So far as the present arrangements are concerned in regard to the legal aspect of the matter I cannot see anything better than what we have at present, with a certain amendment. The Act which has been passed to grant an annual license is in fact the same as the American Act, with the exception that the American Act gives a right of appeal against a decision for the cancellation of the license. That is an amendment we want in our Act. Now, it seems to me, after the experience I have had in the frozen-meat business, that you could not have a better safeguard than you have at present in this Act. You have a license which is limited to one year. Would it be businesslike on the part of any concern for them to do anything within a period of twelve months which would be likely to jeopardize the renewal of their license at the end of the twelve months? Is it not nonsense to suppose so? I have been long enough in the business to know that a great deal more in the way of combinations has gone on internally within New Zealand than would be possible for external combinations. Probably some of you who were in the House a few years ago will remember the state of affairs which then existed in the Wellington District. The matter was discussed on the floor of the House. The whole of the Wellington District was practically cut up into different blocks, and prices were arranged accordingly between the companies operating. That was previous to the erection of the Wellington Farmers' Freezing Company's works at Masterton. I know these things have been done: there is no doubt about it. One of the greatest safeguards