

Do you know anything of the associations of Armour and Co. with Birt and Co. ?—Nothing at all.

I suppose you know that they are associated?—I do not know that they are associated.

Do you know what interests Armour and Co. may have in ships ?—No ; they have none to my knowledge.

You say you can buy meat anywhere here if you do not get a license. Are you not aware that you cannot buy meat from other buyers and ship it ?—It is very easy to buy it. They would ship it.

You could not buy it and then ship it ?—We cannot export meat.

You are debarred by law, are you not, from buying here other than on your own account from a buyer ?—The position is this : so long as we do not export we can buy.

If you bought meat here from a buyer you would have to export it, would you not ?—Yes.

Do you not realize that if you did that you would be breaking the law ?—I have not considered breaking the law at all.

Well, Mr. Macbeth, I will put it to you this way : If you bought meat for export and exported it without a license you would be breaking the law ?—Quite so.

You would be absolutely breaking the law whether you bought the meat from meat-buyers or not ?—That is so.

You say you are not parties to price combinations in New Zealand. Are you not aware that price combinations are the tactics of Armour and Co. ?—Armour and Co. of Chicago ?

Yes ?—I do not know anything about that company.

You are unable to express a definite opinion ?—I should say that there has been a great deal of exaggeration.

Would you contradict Mr. J. Ogden Armour's evidence ?—I have never seen Mr. J. Ogden Armour's evidence.

Are you not aware that your buyers, when issuing prices, fix the same price to the farmers ?—I think they try to.

They actually do it ?—They try to.

When they issue prices to farmers for their stock are they not always on the same basis ?—Pretty nearly.

Does not that indicate that there is a combination ?—This country has more to fear from inside combinations than from outside competition.

These prices are issued simultaneously all over New Zealand ?—All over New Zealand ?

Well, say, all over Canterbury ?—There might be a limit fixed, say, of 9½d. per pound for lambs.

They would all issue the same price ?—Yes.

Would it not be the same price in Otago ?—Practically.

Canterbury and Otago go together ?—Yes. We have not done much business in the North ; most of our business is in the South.

Have you been paying the same prices as other people ?—My tactics have always been not to give more than I could help when I wanted meat.

But you have varied your prices—you have given higher prices than other people ?—We have given higher prices than other people : that is one of the troubles we have got into.

When have you been paying higher prices than anybody else ?—Towards the end of the season.

Did you pay the same in every case ?—Not in every case.

You differentiated in regard to wool ?—We differentiated in regard to quality and wool.

Can you give the Committee the date ?—I cannot give the exact date. It was towards the end of the season.

How much more did you give than anybody else ?—I think it was ¼d. That was to farmers who had their own space. We were getting very little space. That was the only way we could get the meat away.

Consequent upon them having the space you gave the higher price ?—That is so. Immediately the prices were raised the freezing companies objected, and we got no space. The shortage of space caused lower prices to the farmers. Take, for instance, the agitation in South Canterbury. At the present time they are establishing two new freezing-works there because apparently the farmers did not realize that the trouble was caused by a shortage of space. The trouble arose from the fact that when there was no space sometimes for farmers certain companies were able to buy stock at prices less than the market value. There was no space for outsiders.

You gave the extra price because the farmer had this space, otherwise you would have paid the same as the others ?—No, not necessarily so.

Well, I am just trying to find out what the position really is ?—I think I have explained that we have absolutely declined any arrangement of prices between ourselves and any other company.

Are you not aware, as a practical frozen-meat man, that weekly cables come out giving the prices London is paying ?—During the last few years ?

Under normal conditions ?—I presume every buyer will get his price from week to week.

From London ?—Yes.

Are you not aware that on every Tuesday the Smithfield Market buyers meet and fix prices ?—No, I am not aware of that.

But you are aware that cables come out every week ?—Do you mean Government cables ?

You are aware that cables are sent to the different buyers ?—I could not say.

Do not Armour and Co. get their weekly advices ?—I do not know how they come out at all.

But they get their weekly advices ?—Yes. Of course, if you operate at this end you must know what is going on at the other end.

*Mr. Field:* You have, of course, your business agents in London ?—We have no business agents in London. We prefer to deal direct with our London company.

You receive cables from the agents there as to the price ruling in each week ?—No.

I suppose the weekly reports that come out are the basis on which you buy—that is to say, they give you some idea as to what price to pay here ?—I would not say that even.

Do you know who suggested the formation of this company ?—I understand from Mr. Carney that it was his suggestion.