

*Hon. Mr. MacDonald* : In connection with the resolution passed by the New Zealand Farmers' Union Conference, are you of opinion that that resolution did not voice the general opinion of the farmers?—I am of opinion that it did not voice the opinion of the farmers in the South Island. The general opinion in the South Island is strongly in favour of the issue of this license to Armour and Co.

*The Chairman* : In reference to the resolution passed at the Farmers' Union, you say it is not the feeling of the farmers generally?—In that sense I do not think it is. I may say that the union is not so strong in the South as in the North, and consequently the representation is not so great at any Dominion conference. The men in the South who trade in the fattening of sheep or lambs—and I am satisfied I am speaking for 75 per cent. of them—would be in favour of this license being granted.

Then the resolution did not apply to Armour and Co., evidently?—No, sir; not so far as the South is concerned.

It included another firm?—Yes.

I suppose that it was proved that the other firm was a trust, that it was a British firm, and that it was acting against the interests of the farmers of New Zealand?—Yes, sir, that was the general opinion. That firm is working on trust lines from what I heard the representative from Gisborne say. I also feel that the Conference was influenced by the eloquence of Mr. Lysnar, and by the force with which he put his case at that time against Vestey Bros., and in consequence they brought in Armour and Co. The feeling in the Conference was that they would blot the whole thing out of existence.

Notwithstanding the fact that last session an export license was refused Messrs. Armour and Co. you are of opinion that under changed conditions it would not be detrimental to the farming industry if a license were granted to them commencing from this year: you are of opinion, if the Slaughtering and Inspection Amendment Act of 1918 is carried out strictly in accordance with the provisions of that Act, that neither Armour and Co. nor any other proprietary freezing company would risk doing anything illegal?—I would think not—that is, if they have ordinary wisdom. As a matter of fact the interests of the producers are protected by that Act. It would be to the advantage of the sheep-farming industry if these licenses were issued for a year.

*Mr. Lysnar* : At that Conference there were representatives attending from all parts of the Dominion, were there not?—Yes.

The following is the resolution that was passed at that Conference: "That the Government be urged to take steps to prevent meat trusts monopolizing the export trade of the Dominion. That this Conference views with alarm the efforts now being made to urge the Government to grant a meat-export license to Armour and Co., and would strongly urge the Government, in the best interests of this Dominion, to absolutely refuse to grant the same; and, further, that the Government be requested to see that steps are being taken to stop Vestey Bros. (trading under the various *nom-de-plumes*) from operating as freezing-works owners and meat-exporters in the Auckland and Poverty Bay districts, as they are a too powerful combine to be allowed to operate in this Dominion; and, further, that the Government take steps to enact the necessary legislation, as suggested by the parliamentary Committee, in order to keep the trusts and combines from operating in this Dominion." That was the resolution passed at the Conference, was it not?—Yes, I believe it was, although I am not quite sure with respect to the last sentence you read out.

Do you mean that portion which reads, "as suggested by the parliamentary Committee, in order to keep the trusts and combines from operating in this Dominion"?—Yes. As a matter of fact I believe the resolution was formulated after your suggestion was adopted by the Conference: that is to say, you placed the matter before the Conference and it was agreed that a resolution on the lines suggested by you should be adopted.

That resolution was formulated and voted on separately, was it not?—Not to my recollection. Various amendments were suggested. The report read out by you would be a correct report.

Was not Armour and Co.'s case voted on separately and Vestey Bros. case voted on separately?—Not to my recollection. If Armour and Co.'s case had been voted on separately I have no doubt that they would have been granted a license.

Are you aware that the farmers' unions for many years past have been agitating for protection by law against the trusts?—Yes.

And carried resolutions at each conference in that direction?—Yes.

They were largely responsible for getting that law passed?—Yes.

You said you were satisfied that combines are working to the detriment of the sheepowners: do you not think it would be better to stop them and ask the Minister to exercise his powers in that direction and stop those people buying stock in Canterbury in the way suggested by you?—If you do that you would have to make out a case against them and submit particulars to the Minister.

Exactly. A man who buys sheep in that way is not entitled to a license?—This occurred some time ago and before this law was in existence.

Do you not think as a farmer that this is the proper course to take, instead of putting Armour and Co. into the trade in New Zealand, and to stop this sort of business, having to go to the Minister and say these men are acting unfairly?—Personally, I would not like to do that.

You would still allow Messrs. Armour and Co. to come in?—Yes, under the existing law. I would not like to be placed in the position of having to fight a strong combination of meat-buyers by reporting their practices to any Minister. I know what would happen to me—there would not be many of my sheep sold.

The Minister does not make his information public in that way. You say that the position is sufficiently protected by the present law?—Yes.

Are you not asking that the present law should exclude Americans?—Not by any means.

You are aware, are you not, that the Government declined to grant a license to Messrs. Armour and Co.?—Yes.

You say you want some special competition this year?—No, I did not say we want some special competition. We want all the competition we can obtain so long as it is on fair and legitimate lines, and we want it not only for this year but for every year.

Have you read the United States Commission's report?—I have read a summary of it.