

Are you aware of the tactics adopted by Messrs Armour and Co. there?—Yes.

Do you approve of those tactics?—No.

I suppose you have received no intimation from Messrs. Armour and Co. as to the way they will act?—I have received no intimation from Messrs. Armour and Co. as to what their proposed operations in New Zealand will be.

You only know of their policy in the United States?—Yes; I know what they have been charged with.

You do not approve of the procedure?—No.

*Mr. Hawken*: You have in Canterbury a firm or company which is overshadowing the other companies and preventing competition?—I do not think so for one moment. I do not know of any company that overshadows the market, nor do I know of any company that has wiped out any competitor. There are men who are not doing as big a business as they did in former years, but they still have their buying representatives.

You want more competition?—Yes; we want all the competition we can get.

If the law as it stands to-day is not good enough to prevent the practices which you have described, do you suppose we could get Armour and Co. out if we wanted to?—Yes, if it was proved that they were guilty of any malpractice.

You say that the farmers object to meat trusts?—We have nothing we know of to charge against them.

Do you suggest that they are acting in collusion with one another?—No, I do not think so.

You think that by Messrs. Armour and Co. operating in New Zealand they would give you the competition you need?—I think we should get more consistent competition than we would otherwise. The reason I think that is because other trading firms are not hand-in-glove with Messrs. Armour and Co., and probably they would act as a stimulus to the market.

*Mr. Burnett*: In the event of a license being granted to Messrs. Armour and Co., what would you consider sufficient grounds for cancelling that license?—I am not in a position to say what would be sufficient grounds.

As a practical sheep-farmer?—I do not know to what point we would allow them to go before we said to them, "That is unfair trade practice and we must stop you." I would not like to be placed in the position of having to say, "You cannot go across that point."

Supposing you occupied the position of Minister of Agriculture, how would you put your foot down on their malpractice?—I would have to be guided by the evidence produced.

*Mr. Lysnar*: If they were all like you no evidence would be obtained?—If I thought they were bringing undue pressure to bear to strangle competition or to gain an undue advantage I would be one of the first to stop them.

*Hon. Mr. Nosworthy*: You said just now, in describing your experience of selling and that of your neighbour's, how the stock was divided up by buyers: how do you consider by the advent of Messrs. Armour and Co. into the market they would make it any better?—They might not make it any better.

You are liable to increase that difficulty instead of preventing it. You are opening the door to another company to come in and work on the same lines. The idea at the present time is that all the meat trusts carry out the practice suggested by you?—Not all of them. I do not suggest that all the buyers are working under that kind of practice. When we were suffering from the effects of the drought the season before last we were told that the freezing-works were full and that no more carcasses could be got into them. The result was I instructed an agent to find me a buyer for my fat lambs, but he could not do so. I saw Messrs. Armour and Co.'s representative—who has since died—and he bought the lambs on my property. As I have already said, at that time I was told that I could not get my stock into the refrigerating-works or into any of the local works, but I know they were buying sheep all over the place.

*Mr. Burnett*: They controlled the space?—They controlled the space and controlled the market, and used it for their own purposes.

*Hon. Mr. Nosworthy*: Would you be in favour of the Minister of Agriculture or the Government having control of the whole of the space in this Dominion?—That is a matter I have not thought of.

I understood you to say that you know what would happen if you got up against these people—that is, you would not be able to sell anything to them if you got up against them?—Yes.

If you do not knuckle down to the combinations here now they are in a position to squeeze men out?—Yes; as they are now, they could combine and refuse to buy your produce. If outside competition—that is, independent competition—were brought in I think this difficulty would be obviated.

The inference from what you say is that the whole of the operations are controlled by a trust to-day, and you would not care to fight that trust as it exists at the present time?—No, I would not.

They have got the people down who decline to knuckle under?—I do not want to suggest that that is a common practice, but it does happen. It happens in this way: if there is a large breeder of fat stock, the men know where the stock comes from. If a man brings his stock from a long distance he does not care about taking them home again, and the result is he sells them at the best price offering instead of having to drive them a long way home without having effected a sale.

In other words, if they have not got the space available to put them in they have to sell their stock on the open market?—Yes, it is in their hands.

It looks as if the Government wants more power instead of less power.

#### WILLIAM VAN ASCH examined. (No. 4.)

*Mr. Van Asch*: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, in my opening I should like to say that I have not been instructed by the Hawke's Bay Farmers' Union to appear before this Committee, and I may say that I have put in an appearance on my own accord. Prior to the Dominion Farmers' Conference taking place in July last we held an executive meeting of the Hawke's Bay Farmers' Union, and the following resolution was carried: "That our delegates be instructed to move at the