

established with the very object of preventing such combines from obtaining any further stranglehold on the meat trade of this Dominion; and in justification of this I extract the following from the local company's letter to your Board, dated 3rd October, 1923, viz. :—

“ On the 26th ultimo the chairman of this company wrote to you asking you to notify us when it would be convenient for your Board to hear evidence we are prepared to give upon the question of the suggested forced sale of this company's works to Vestey Bros., and at the same time he delivered our letter to you of the 14th ultimo, bearing on the same question.

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“ I have again on behalf of the company to ask your Board's immediate attention to this most important question, and to fix the earliest possible date when our evidence may be taken. Shareholders as well as directors recognize that it would be very detrimental should such a huge combine as Vestey Bros. or any of their subsidiary companies be allowed to acquire these works.”

In paragraph two of page three you repeat that I told you in September, 1923, that the vessel was to be sold, and that the proof that you are right is to be found in the fact that I had been then advised that the Bank of Scotland had intimated that unless arrangements were made to their satisfaction before the 30th September they would foreclose their mortgage on the vessel. I would ask what on earth has anything that took place between the Bank of Scotland and the local company to do with what you say I told you in September, and which I absolutely deny, and my denial is borne out by two of my co-directors who were present with me during the greater portion of the interview referred to, which was to make an appointment for your Board to hear the company's objection to the works being sold to Vestey Bros. Your dragging up irrelevant matters in connection with the company and the Bank of Scotland shows both bad taste and an utter disregard of commercial morality. The simple fact remains that the Bank of Scotland did not realize their security in September, 1923, and because they did make a very proper request that some arrangements be made to their satisfaction that in no way justifies you in putting the distorted construction on the position that you have attempted to do.

In your next paragraph you state, “ The Board knew from yourself the financial position of the company.” This is an utterly incorrect statement for you to make, and I ask, “ When did I communicate to your Board anything about the financial position of our company ? ” I have certainly never met your Board in the matter, and neither myself nor the company have ever written your Board about its financial position, and again I challenge you to prove this statement.

Then you go on to refer in the same paragraph to a cable from our agents in Britain asking for £5,000 before the boat was berthed. If our agents did ask for £5,000, what has this to do with you ? And I again ask, “ Who disclosed to you a confidential communication between our company and its agents in Britain in this connection ? ”

You then give an extract from some shorthand notes that you say were taken at an interview at which I and two other directors were present with you and Mr. Hunt on the 17th March, 1924. Here again, without showing the whole of the discussion, you have picked out a few words to try and justify your unreasonable attitude. This quotation is incorrect without the whole context of the interview; and here I would point out to you that these are the shorthand notes that you had taken during our interview with you, unknown to us and with your shorthand-writer in a concealed position. This we discovered at the close of the interview, and we wrote pointing this out and asking you for a copy of these notes, which you refused to supply. Again I say that if you refuse to supply the company with a copy of these notes you have no right to use them, and I again ask, seeing you have quoted part of them, that your Board should at once supply the company with a complete copy of the whole. If you still refuse to do this you have no moral right to quote from them or use them.

Then you make the following astounding statement: “ This claim for money because receipts were not sufficient to meet expenditure of the voyage effectually disposes of your statement that the vessel is a profitable venture.” This is a malicious and unfair comment for you to make, and I ask, “ What has the question of whether the boat is profitable or otherwise to do with the question of your removal from the Board ? ” And in my opinion the fact of your dragging this up clearly establishes your biased attitude, which is the basis of the complaint against you, and why you should try to slander the capabilities of the company's vessel in this manner is beyond my comprehension. Since you have raised the question, however, I can state that the company's books will show that she is a profitable venture so far as her running-earnings are concerned, even without any outward cargo from England. Also that, providing, of course, she is allowed to come into the New Zealand trade and get a full cargo at current rates, her earnings will still show a profit. Unfortunately, your Board has prevented this being done in the meantime, and by so doing has placed the owners in a very awkward and dangerous position, which will make it very difficult for them to retain control of the vessel.

In the third paragraph on page four you state that on the 15th January, 1924, the general manager of the bank asked what was the latest information I had regarding the “ Admiral Codrington,” to which you say I replied, “ We have nothing later than the telegram sent you on the 10th, and I expect she has gone (meaning, of course, that you expected the vessel had been sold).” Here again you are wrong when you state I said, “ I expect she has gone.” I have never written or spoken those words in connection with the matter, and I again challenge you to prove your statement.

Regarding the letter dated 24th October, 1923, asking for some arrangements to be made for a reduction of the mortgage on the steamer, which you have set out, I have again to ask, “ Who supplied your Board with a copy of this letter ? ” I need only add that it has no bearing on the question, and the fact remains that the mortgagees took no steps in the matter.

On page three you state that if the bank had not found the money to berth the ship the captain of the ship would have been forced to mortgage the cargo, and the shippers would have had to pay the