

posed, because we are in rather a peculiar position. We are a wholesale company, and at the same time we are a co-operative company—that is to say, any butcher can buy shares in our company, and at the present time we have fifteen retail butchers as shareholders and some forty-five farmers. It is open to retail butchers and farmers to take shares in our company, but no one else.

114. Where are your works?—At the present time we are slaughtering in a slaughterhouse between Kaiwarra and Ngahauranga, but we have in course of erection an abattoir at Ngahauranga. Now, if these public abattoirs are erected in Wellington, it will fall very heavily upon the retail butchers. In Wellington we have a number of butchers whose business does not extend over three bodies a week, and it would be a great hardship to them if abattoirs were established, because they would have to go out into the open market and buy the stock. In the first place, Wellington is excluded from the farming community. The retail butchers in Wellington at present do not kill for themselves, except in very few instances. The killing is done by small wholesale butchers and by the companies. If they did kill for themselves they would have to practically depend upon the Johnsonville saleyards, and a shortage there at any time would necessitate these small butchers—and some of them only kill a body and a half, some of them two bodies, and some three bodies a week—going a distance up to the Wairarapa, or to Palmerston, to buy stock; and then to get it railed at the cheapest rate they would have to take from two or three, and with some of them four weeks' supply. A truck of cattle carries eight. They would, therefore, have to take eight head of cattle in order to get them railed down here at the cheapest rate. They would similarly also have to buy sixty sheep to get them down here at the cheapest rate, and therefore it would be a hardship upon them. Our shareholders therefore strongly object to the erection of these public abattoirs. I think, sir, you have a letter from a Mr. A. Duncan, stating that it was impossible for him to represent the butchers this morning on account of the short notice given him. He represents some thirty-four butchers, who signed a petition to the City Council asking them, before this Bill was brought down, to get a clause inserted in it similar to clause 7, which would allow of the delegation of their powers to any company which has its meat killed under inspection. I may state that we want public inspection for our killing. We have asked for it, but our present premises are not suitable, and therefore we are going into better premises, so that we shall be able to have proper inspection. I think the Committee will see how it would affect the small retail butchers if these public abattoirs were erected. For instance, say, on a Tuesday, the small retail butcher may go to the sale, and he may find the price so excessive, in consequence of a shortage of stock at the Johnsonville yards, that he has to go up the country. I would also point out that a large number of these retail butchers in Wellington are not capable of buying stock on the hoof. They have not had the practical experience necessary. They have been used to the shops, to getting their meat already killed, and they have never been used to buying the meat on the hoof. They would, therefore, have to depend upon other people to do the buying for them, and this would necessitate more labour and expense in carrying on their business. It would mean that some of the small butchers would not be able to compete with other members of the trade, who are doing six or seven bodies a week, and who are pretty well up to the purchase of stock on the hoof. We also object to clause 7 as it stands at present. Suppose a delegation of power was made by the Wellington City Council to the Wellington Meat-export Company. We contend that under such circumstances neither the Gear Company nor the Banks Co-operative Meat Company, nor any other company killing meat under Government inspection should be forced to pay the fees to that company, as would have to be the case if these powers were delegated to them. As far as the company I represent are concerned, we have no objection to either the Wellington Meat-export Company or the Gear Company being appointed abattoirs. We do not wish for it ourselves; but we do think it would be unfair for us to have to pay fees to any other company. I think you will find that there are only a small number of the butchers in Wellington favourable to the establishment of public abattoirs. I should not say there would be more than eleven or twelve of them. I do not include the suburbs in this calculation—that is, the Taita, Lower Hutt, Pororua, &c.—because I think they are out of the radius. There are only about eleven, or, at the outside, twelve butchers in Wellington who really wish for public abattoirs, and they are the larger butchers who are doing a larger trade, and who have been used to buying cattle on the hoof all their lives. To show that the company I represent is composed of a great extent of small butchers, I should like to hand to the Committee our articles of association, by which you will see that four of the directors are retail butchers in Wellington. We are not a capitalist company. We are a co-operative company of small butchers and farmers. [Document handed in.]

115. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You say your company is completing a new abattoir?—Yes, sir.

116. What style of a place is it? Is it up to date?—Yes, it is up to date. The plans were passed by Mr. Reakes.

117. What are the capabilities of the place?—We can kill thirty head of cattle and two hundred sheep daily, and it is built with a view to extension.

118. How far is it on now?—Well, it is over a third done.

119. Where is it?—It is on a section just at the back of the Wellington Meat-export Company's works. I may as well state the position we were in, and the reasons we had to make a start to build this abattoir. We bought out Mr. G. W. Banks, and we were killing in the old slaughterhouse, when we received notice from the Department that if we did not take steps to have another building erected our license would be cancelled. We then approached the City Council, through Mr. Gilruth, asking them if they were taking any steps with regard to public abattoirs. This was in March last. And they said at that time that they were leaving it to the new Council to decide. Well, under the circumstances we had either to erect a new building or close up altogether. So we bought a property at the back of the Meat-export Company and started