

90. I suppose, among the people dealing in meat in New Zealand, every one is of the same opinion that they are operating here?—I think so. There is no doubt about it in my own mind, and to an increasing extent.

91. Would there not be a distinct danger, if we succeeded in shutting out American companies, of their dealing through English capital, or ostensibly English capital?—No doubt they would try to do so.

92. Do you not think they could do so without being discovered?—Yes, I think they might.

93. Then do you not think we should, if possible, attempt to shut out all monopolies, whether American or English?—Yes, I should say a monopoly of any kind, whether British, American, or New Zealand, should not be allowed.

94. We had it in evidence the other day from the managing director of the Meat Export Company that we could not deal with this matter satisfactorily unless we not only got assistance from our Government here and the British Government, but also from the Governments of other parts of the British Empire. Are you of the same opinion?—Yes; I should say that Australia should be asked to join with us, and also Argentine should be asked to join in. You may say that, roughly, the meat-supply is divided into three parts—Argentine, Australian, and New Zealand—so that if we could control the supply from New Zealand and Australia we would then control two-thirds of it.

95. In your business you have two branches—an agency branch and a purchasing branch?—Yes.

96. You offer to purchase stock?—If the farmers want us to buy outright we do so, and sell through our agents in London.

97. *The Chairman.*] You are a New Zealand firm?—Yes.

98. With headquarters in Palmerston North?—Yes.

99. *Mr. Witty.*] It is reported that Armour and Co. and Swift and Co. are taking a lot of the best buyers from other companies: is that so?—Yes, I have heard that, but we have not lost any of ours. I think Mr. Kingdon himself was the manager of the Gladstone Freezing-works in Australia. Mr. Carney has the power of attorney, and he was a wool-buyer.

100. I suppose you are aware that Armour and Co. bought out Joseph and Co., and have also taken some of the best men from some other works?—I do not know much of what is going on in the South Island. I have one or two papers here, which I will leave with the Committee. [Returns and statements handed in.] I would also like to place before the Committee a printed circular sent out by Messrs. Sims, Cooper, and Co. It reads as follows:—

*“Meat Trust Menace.*—In view of the many rumours and false statements which have been circulated connecting us with the above, we desire to publicly place on record the following facts: (1) That we are a purely New Zealand firm; (2) that neither directly nor indirectly have we any American capital in our business; (3) that neither directly nor indirectly do we receive any American financial support; (4) that no American company or interest has, directly or indirectly, the slightest control over our business. Should the false statements previously mentioned be repeated subsequent to the publication of these facts, we can only regard them as being made with the deliberate intention of injuring our business, and action will be taken by us accordingly.—Yours faithfully, SIMS, COOPER, AND CO. (N.Z.) LIMITED.”

I desire now to read extracts from letters from Gilbert Anderson and Co., of London, written to my own firm. The first is dated 5th October, 1916, as follows:—

“We have had information that Armour’s purpose establishing buyers in New Zealand. We believe, however, that this will be resented not only by the Imperial Government, but by the New Zealand Government, as it is felt from the experience of the past that foreigners should not be allowed to handle British commandeered meat, as they only use this for the purpose of enhancing the prices of their own market, and, being foreigners, are outside the control of the Imperial Government.”

Further, “The position when we advised you on the 24th August was that New Zealand lambs were sold on Smithfield at 9½d. Owing to the American firms being able to obtain supplies of New Zealand meat they were able to raise the price of their own uncontrolled South American meat, so that the price of Argentine lambs was 11½d. and 10¼d. The position now is that, owing to larger supplies of New Zealand lambs, the Imperial Government are able to maintain their price on the basis of 9¾d. Smithfield, while Argentine lambs have fallen to 9¼d. and 8½d.

“It cannot be too strongly impressed on the New Zealand sheepgrower that the operations of the American firms are detrimental to the interests of the grower. Their desire to handle New Zealand meat is only that they may obtain enhanced prices, which they could not obtain otherwise for their South American mutton, beef, and lamb, and, as they are foreign firms, their action and prices cannot be controlled by the Imperial Government. The only way to prevent this unfair competition is for the New Zealand grower to insist that his meat shall be only handled by British firms and sold direct to the British public without the intervention of the foreigner.

“We would earnestly recommend to the attention of the New Zealand freezing companies, and also to the sheep-farmer, the position of the meat trade in the United States. In spite of what the Americans say, the facts and statistics of America prove conclusively that the American farmer does not flourish under the present system of meat trusts and controls, as is shown clearly from the fact that such large tracts of country are continually going out of cultivation, and solely attributed to the low initial price which the Americans pay for their stock and the heavy and extravagant manner in which their business is run.”

Then, in a letter dated 20th April, 1917, there is the following:—

“There have been large quantities of U.S. River Plate meat which have been selling at lower prices than indicated previously. There is every appearance that these sales are being forced, as it is understood that the Government will bring in pressure on the Americans to be