

50. When meat is nominated by Armour and Co. to themselves at Home, have they any retail shops in which they can sell their meat?—I do not know. The wholesalers are getting the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound.

51. You do not think they go right into the retail business?—Not from the evidence I have been able to get.

52. *Mr. Anstey.*] You made the suggestion that the railway tariff should be graduated to prevent meat being carried past certain freezing-works: I presume the only way to get that done would be to appeal to the Railway Department?—Yes.

53. Is it not rather a hopeless thing to ask the Government to charge lower freights for shorter distances?—No; get them to charge higher freights for longer distances.

54. Would not that penalize the grower?—No; you have to protect the grower against himself. He will accept 50s. for beef now, when he may have to accept 30s. in a few years' time.

55. It would penalize the grower now?—Yes.

56. You admit there must be some rebates?—We always get a rebate from the Auckland Freezing Company.

57. But is that rebate given to the buyer himself?—Yes.

58. Is it only that class of rebate you want to prohibit?—No, that is legitimate which is given to all, but it is the secret rebate I want to prevent.

59. You want the Government to pay the interest on the meat in store instead of paying it indirectly in the way of increased storage to freezing companies?—Yes.

60. Are you quite sure that these large wholesale buyers are not connected with the retailing of our meat in London—I am speaking of the released meat which has to be sold to the wholesalers at a limited profit?—I received a letter only yesterday, which shows they are not connected, but do control the wholesaler.

61. The evidence is that the retailer gets that enormous profit: do you not think the wholesaler here gets portion of that profit?—No.

62. *Mr. T. A. H. Field.*] The point is that the meat is sold to the wholesaler in London at $10\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound?—Yes.

63. And it was stated that Vestey and Co. owned four hundred retail shops?—Yes, through Fletcher's.

64. You are satisfied that Sims, Cooper, and Co. have dealt with more than half a million of money in New Zealand in connection with the Government?—Yes.

FRIDAY, 31ST AUGUST, 1917.

STEPHEN JAMES AMBURY examined. (No. 18.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What position do you hold?—I am chairman of directors of the Auckland Farmers' Freezing Company.

2. You are aware of the object of the setting-up of this Committee?—Yes. Would you allow me to say that we are not volunteers, but we are indebted to the action of some officious gentleman in Wellington, I believe, for our presence here to-day; but we are quite prepared to honestly answer any questions you may put to us as far as we are able, but we really have no statement to make. We have no data from our books, but we are here prepared to give you an honest answer to any questions you may ask.

3. You are here, gentlemen, to-day because the Committee are of opinion that you may be able to help them in the present inquiry, and we feel quite satisfied that you will help us to the best of your ability in an important inquiry of this kind?—Quite so.

4. Would you care to make any general statement in the first instance about the position?—No, sir. It would be better for us to answer any questions you may ask us.

5. *Dr. Neuman.*] What can you tell the Committee about the operations of the American meat companies in the Auckland meat market? What American companies are trading in the Auckland Province?—Armour and Co., but no other American companies.

6. Are they buying largely?—They came into the market this last season, and they bought a considerable amount of stock.

7. Do they freeze in your works?—Yes.

8. Do you keep an open door for farmers to freeze on their own account?—Yes, we are a farmers' company, and we freeze for our shareholder farmers first—that is the first consideration.

9. Is your capital all New Zealand capital?—Yes. We have 2,400 shareholders in our company, so you may know they are small.

10. Supposing a small farmer with a thousand sheep and a big farmer with ten thousand sheep come to your works for freezing facilities, do they each get the freezing done at the same rate?—Yes, there is no consideration given to the larger buyer.

11. Supposing a company froze two hundred thousand carcasses with your company in a year, would they not get a rebate over the man who froze five hundred?—No, not any consideration whatever. We have never done that during the existence of the company.

12. Do Sims, Cooper, and Co. operate in your district?—Yes, but to a very limited extent this last year.

13. They started this last year?—No; they had been operating in the district for quite a while, but last year they did very little freezing.

14. But they are trading in the district?—Yes, especially in the Waikato.