

At that meeting there were no representatives from Auckland, Hawke's Bay, or Poverty Bay ?—Not at that meeting. I would like to answer your question with respect to Mr. McLeod. I asked him if he was in favour of this license or not. He said he was, and he intimated to us that he had his doubts about it going through Parliament.

FRIDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER, 1920.

EBENEZER HAY examined. (No. 12.)

*The Chairman :* What is your position ?—I am a sheep-farmer at Pigeon Bay, Canterbury.

Do you wish to make a statement before the Committee ?—Yes. I am in favour of a license to export being granted to Armour and Co., because it would mean another competitor in the open market for our stock, and in these days, when we have such heavy taxation to face, we need all the competition possible. There are 3,200 members of the Federation who are in favour of granting this petition. The Canterbury Sheepowners' Union numbers 1,500, and I think they are unanimous to a man in favour of granting the license. I am a sheep-farmer pure and simple, having no interest in any freezing-works, excepting eighty shares in the Canterbury Frozen Meat Company which I bought the other day. I am a producer and fatterer of sheep and cattle, and I look upon this license as a good thing for the producers, as Armour and Co. would be buying the stock in the open market, and if we cut them out we are cutting out competition, of which we want all we can get.

*Mr. Jones :* Have you found any objection in Canterbury, Mr. Hay ?—Yes, a certain amount from other sheepowners and fatteners of stock ; but most of the out-and-out sheep-farmers and fatteners of stock and sheep I have met are in favour of it.

*Mr. Field :* Of the license ?—Yes. The Canterbury Sheepowners' Union is the biggest one of the kind in the Dominion, numbering 1,500 financial members, and they are unanimous in agreeing to the license to export. The petition that went before the House on the subject was supported by them entirely—in fact, it was got up by them “ off their own bat.”

*The Chairman :* Whom do you represent ?—I am a member of the Canterbury Sheepowners' Union.

Have you been asked by them to attend ?—Yes.

*Mr. Lysnar :* By the association ?—Yes ; and I was also quite willing on my own part to come here.

Were you asked by resolution of the association to come here ?—No.

There was no formal request on behalf of the association—it passed no resolution that you should represent them here ?—No.

How, then, do you obtain your authority ? And what made you say just now that you came here on behalf of the association ?—I happened to come up last night with our president, and he asked me to come up here and say something, and I said I would be very pleased to because the matter was of interest.

Who is the president ?—Mr. Rutherford.

Then it was at Mr. Rutherford's request ?—I am on the committee of the Sheepowners' Union, and they considered it.

You say you have 3,200 members in the federation. Does that include all over New Zealand ?—It does not include Wellington.

It includes Gisborne ?—I think it does.

Are you aware that the federation there have gone against granting Armour a license ?—Yes.

Are you aware that a short time ago the federation called a meeting in Wellington ?—Yes.

And there was opposition to it from the North Island representatives who were there ?—Yes.

So that, if there were 3,200 members all over New Zealand, there would be a substantial portion against the license ?—Yes, there would be some against it.

You say you want all the competition you can get. Do you think that this competition has been found dangerous in other countries and that it may be dangerous to us if we grant this license to Armour and Co. ?—I do not think that we need trouble about other countries as long as we safeguard ourselves here.

Are you aware of the result of Armour and Co.'s operations in other countries ?—Yes ; I have heard of some of them.

Have you heard that it is detrimental to those countries ?—I have heard that, and I have heard the opposite.

Are you aware that the United States Government set up a Commission to investigate the question ?—Yes.

And are you not also aware that that Commission found that their operations were full of detriment both to the producers and the consumers ?—I do not know what it found.

Before you came before this Committee would it not have been wise to have made yourself acquainted with the different findings of that Commission ?—I do not think that that Commission at all concerns us in New Zealand, if we safeguard ourselves as we could clearly do and should do.

Are you aware that the farmers of New Zealand have asked for legislation to protect them against trusts and monopolies ?—Yes.

And that there was an Act in that direction passed in 1918 ?—Yes.

Do you think the Government are to be trusted to try and help the country ?—

*The Chairman :* I hardly think that question is relevant, as the witness is here to give his own views, and not to express an opinion as to what the Government may do.

*Mr. Lysnar :* Are you aware, Mr. Hay, that at present the prices charged for stock at the freezing-works are fixed on fat weight, and are practically all the same, the different works all quoting the same ?—I would not like to say that. I think they vary a little.

But you would not be sure ?—No.