

That, sir, and gentlemen of the Committee, is a letter from Mr. W. Nelson, of Tomoana, who has, as I have already intimated, had business relations with Messrs. Armour and Co. Well, sir, what I want to say is this: there may have been other delegates directed to support the application of Messrs. Armour and Co. for a license when the matter came up at the conference and were influenced by Mr. Lysnar's eloquence.

*The Chairman:* I do not think you want to throw discredit on Mr. Lysnar.

*Mr. Van Asch:* Well, all I can say is that we ought to have all the competition we can get for our produce.

*Hon. Mr. MacDonald:* Mr. Chairman, I should like to know whether we are dealing solely with Messrs. Armour and Co.'s petition, because I desire to ask Mr. Van Asch one question with reference to Messrs. Vestey Bros.

*The Chairman:* Yes, in a general way. Mr. Van Asch referred to the resolution that includes Messrs. Armour and Co.

*Hon. Mr. MacDonald (to Mr. Van Asch):* You are aware, are you not, that the Farmers' Conference passed a resolution asking the Government to prevent Vestey Bros.' operations in New Zealand? I understand that they have purchased freezing-works at Tomoana. Would it be detrimental to the farmers if no license was granted to Vestey Bros. for the purpose of carrying on their operations at Tomoana?—It would be an absolute calamity if the Tomoana works were to shut down. We would have to rail the stock away, because the Hawke's Bay Freezing-works would not be able to kill all the stock for us. If they were to shut down I do not know what we would do.

*Mr. Lysnar:* You are of course aware that Nelson Bros. have applied for a transfer to Vestey Bros. ?—No, I was not aware of that.

You have no reason to suppose that if the Minister refuses to consent to a transfer Nelson Bros. will close their works up?—I know nothing about Nelson Bros.' operations.

But you said something about shutting down the Tomoana works?—I do not know anything at all about Nelson Bros.' operations.

If the Minister refuses to consent to a transfer from Nelson Bros. to Vestey Bros., what do you think that Nelson Bros. are likely to do, speaking from your own knowledge?—I do not know anything about Nelson Bros.

But cannot you express an opinion?—Possibly the prices of our fat lambs might become less.

If the Minister refuses the transfer?—That might possibly take place.

If they do not get the Minister's consent?—I should think they would take it for granted that they would get his consent. I cannot imagine why they should not get his consent.

Are you not aware that it has been stated that Nelson Bros.' object in selling to Vestey Bros. is in order to fight the trust?—No.

You are not?—No. Mr. Nelson stated to me that he had a very favourable opinion of Armour and Co. He stated to me that he had done business for twenty years with Armour and Co., and that he had found them splendid men.

*The Chairman:* Have you found any lack of competition in the Hawke's Bay District?—Yes, there is a great lack of competition. There is one man who purchases practically three-quarters of the fat stock in the district where I live.

You have not sufficient competition?—So far as I am aware no one has ever complained of the prices in any shape or form, but there is practically only one man to deal with.

*Mr. Lysnar:* You think that by admitting Armour and Co. you would have more competition?—Of course we would. Certainly we would.

*Hon. Mr. Nosworthy:* Do you consider that the advent of Armour and Co. would make any difference in the Hawke's Bay market for fat stock, seeing that Mr. Nelson has stated that for twenty years they have dealt with Armour and Co.? Would not the same thing still continue?—No. I understand they have dealt with Armour and Co. in London as middlemen. It would be different if Armour and Co. were here. I understand that we would gain because of the fact that Armour and Co. would purchase our mutton and lamb and ship it to America, where the best market is.

You read Mr. Nelson's letter to the Committee just now. Among other things a reference was made to the Department of Agriculture, and it also reflected on the capacity of the people generally in opposition to the Meat Trust. But are not those reflections also on the ability and brains of the whole of the Government of the United States, who had to fight this trust, and bring to light so much evidence against it?—Well, sir, it seems to me that the "Summary" to which I believe you refer has not injured the meat people very much. It seems to me that in regard to the meat business, as in regard to many other businesses, it is a case of the survival of the fittest.

You know that Armour and Co. is one of the "Big Five," and that the United States Government has passed legislation putting them out of business in the United States. Do you now advocate that they should be allowed to enter into business here?—So far as I know, the United States Government have not sheeted home their charges. I do not know of anything that has been brought against Armour and Co. outside of what I have read in the "Summary."

Mr. O. T. J. ALPERS examined. (No. 5.)

*The Chairman:* Your full name, Mr. Alpers?—Oscar Thorwald Johan Alpers.

Your address?—Christchurch.

And your occupation?—Barrister.

Will you make a statement?—Yes, sir. I am not a farmer, sir, and I am not interested in meat. I have one share in Armour and Co. of Australasia. My share is one £5 share, which I hold merely in order to be able to exercise certain powers in connection with my duties as solicitor to the company, and I have attended all the meetings of the directors of the company in that capacity. I have no other financial interest in the company beyond the £5 share which I have mentioned. I have been asked to explain what I know of the position of Armour and Co. of Australasia in New Zealand. I was the solicitor who incorporated the company here, and I know its history from first to last, because the instructions for the formation of the company came to me direct at the outset. I may say that