

*Mr. Skerrett* : And I think that at the time they were opened the Government commandeer was in operation ?

*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Skerrett* : The commandeer of the Government involved the purchase of all meat slaughtered and frozen at your works and the payment of advances from time to time on that meat, including the storage charges, I think ?

*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Skerrett* : The period of the commandeer was a period of stability for freezing-works ?

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*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Skerrett* : They got timely advances on their output ?

*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Skerrett* : Do you know that during the period of the war and at the present day there are too many freezing-works in New Zealand ?

*Witness* : Due to the Government's urging the farmers to build those works.

*Mr. Skerrett* : I am not referring to that. Do you not admit that from 1916 down to the present time there were too many freezing-works in New Zealand ?

*Witness* : Yes. We also had enough works when Westfield was established.

*Mr. Skerrett* : The necessary effect of an overplus of freezing-works would be to produce keen competition in the operations of both purchasing and freezing companies.

*Witness* : During the war.

*Mr. Skerrett* : During the war and afterwards. Wherever you have in any country an overplus of freezing companies, that overplus is calculated to produce keen competition.

*Witness* : Very harmful to the farmers, and shut down the farmers' works.

*Mr. Skerrett* : I am coming to that in a moment. Your works proceeded upon the policy of freezing and selling on account of farmers ?

*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Skerrett* : And you were unable to make advances from time to time to farmers ?

*Witness* : We have never been in the position of being unable to make advances.

*Mr. Skerrett* : They have from time to time made advances to farmers upon the stock consigned to them ?

*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Skerrett* : Apparently these advances were insufficient to finance the farmers.

*Witness* : That is so.

*Mr. Skerrett* : Vestey's are buying stock in your district ?

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*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Skerrett* : In the usual way ?

*Witness* : The usual way they all operate.

*Mr. Skerrett* : Exactly in the usual way they all operate. Take the Wellington District, for example. Do you know that there are big companies operating in the Wellington District—the Gear Company as an instance ?

*Witness* : Yes. It is not a farmers' co-operative concern.

*Mr. Skerrett* : I know. But it purchases stock, and, I think, also freezes stock. It is, of course, in competition with co-operative companies, is it not ?

*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Skerrett* : And it is a company with a substantial capital ?

*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Skerrett* : It is not the only company of that kind in the Wellington District, is it ?

*Witness* : No.

*Mr. Skerrett* : You know the New Zealand Refrigerating Company operates in the north ?

*Witness* : Yes.

*Mr. Skerrett* : Do you suggest that in the interests of the farmers all these undertakings should be closed up ?

*Witness* : We go so far as to say that they should not traffic in meat.

*Mr. Skerrett* : Yes. So that what the farmers desire is that every freezing company should be closed which purchases meat on its own account ?

*Witness* : That is not the primary desire. The desire is that we shall protect the farmers.

*Mr. Skerrett* : I understand you to admit that what the farmers require is that all the existing freezing-works should be prevented from buying and exporting on their own account ?

*Witness* : We have not gone to that drastic length yet.

*Mr. Skerrett* : Is that what you require ?

*Witness* : What we require is to put our meat industry on a safe basis.

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*Mr. Skerrett* : That is not an answer to my question. The question is, Do not the farmers wish that all freezing-works should be required to desist from the purchase of stock on their own account ?

*Witness* : That is, in our opinion, the only way to safeguard our interests.

*Mr. Skerrett* : I understand you to say that your freezing-works are conducted as a branch of the Auckland Farmers' Freezing-works.