

106. Under those circumstances, do you think it right to keep wheat up to fictitious rates?—As far as the miller is concerned the price of wheat is not a matter of so much importance to him as a fair profit for his work. If wheat is dear flour must be dear, and if wheat is cheap flour must be proportionately cheap. So that the miller is not very much interested in the duty being taken off or kept on. The farmer is most interested.

107. *The Chairman.*] Did Mr. Evans add good machinery to the Crown Mills?—He added machinery, and it is a very perfect mill just now. He spent a considerable sum of money upon it.

108. Would you propose that the Government should fix the price of flour and bread?—Certainly. I think every miller would be pleased if a Board were appointed to fix the price of flour and wheat.

109. Assuming that the Government fixed the price according to a scale—wheat at so much, and flour and bread in proportion—do you think the millers would be willing to support that?—I think they would all be delighted.

110. That has been a suggestion which has been made very frequently in this colony?—I know that the bakers in Dunedin had an interview with Mr. Seddon, and that that was one of the things they urged, that the Government or Parliament should fix the price of bread according to the price of flour.

111. Do you think such a thing possible?—I think it is.

112. There are only about two by-products out of wheat—bran and pollard?—Yes.

113. So that the whole of it could be fixed by an adjustable scale?—I do not see why it should not. As far as I know the mind of the millers, all they want is a fair profit for their labour. I have never met a miller, except one, I can honestly say, who wished to monopolize the trade or to get an undue advantage at the expense of the community.

114. Can you say what ratio the shortness of hours and the increased wages of the workmen bear to the price of flour?—I scarcely follow you.

115. I am anxious to find out if the flour is charged and the bread is charged at a fair value to the public: can you tell us how much per cent. the increased cost has been through the shortened hours and increased wages?—It simply means eight hours out of the twenty-four, and in addition to that there has been an increase in the wages—about 15 per cent.

116. Can you work that out for the Committee?—Yes, I will work it out and let you have it (as stated above, 15 per cent.)

117. You referred to cutting bakers: have you noticed what the bakers in Auckland have been fixing as the price for bread?—I noticed that when flour was at £7 the 4 lb. loaf was to be 5d.

118. The ratio fixed was: Dunedin—flour, £9 15s.; bread, 6½d.; Wellington—flour, £10 2s. 6d.; bread, 7d.; Auckland—flour, £10 7s. 6d.; bread, 7d.; Christchurch—flour, £9 10s.; bread, 6½d. We have it in evidence from a baker in Wellington that if flour was £10 it would pay him to sell bread for cash at 5½d.?—There may be special circumstances in connection with that gentleman's business that I do not know about. In Dunedin it takes 1d. per loaf to cover delivery alone.

119. Do you think it is an unwise thing to have a cash price and a delivery price?—I do not think you can help that very well, because there are some people who will not go to the shop or send for it. If it has to be delivered at their homes it is only right that they should pay for the cost of delivery.

120. You do not think it is fair that the person who goes or sends a child to a shop and pays cash should bear the cost of the delivery of the bread?—Certainly not.

121. Do you not think 1½d. in the loaf is a big increase in the price for delivery, and that a man might well afford to sell cheaper for cash?—He may have a different way of doing business. I am not a baker. I am merely giving the opinions I have heard expressed on the subject. The cash baker has no books to keep and has no bad debts.

122. *Mr. Taylor.*] You said a good deal about rational hours for mills?—Yes.

123. What is the custom with the flour-millers in America and Great Britain as far as the number of hours per day is concerned?—I do not know. I know that the Americans work in a big way, but I do not think it would be desirable to introduce the American system into New Zealand. I do not suppose the bakers would be prepared to do it.

124. Do you know whether in Great Britain and America it is customary for mills to work twenty-four hours a day?—Yes, I know that is so; but in those countries they have big populations to supply, and are not hampered by much labour legislation.

125. Was that the custom in the large mills in New Zealand until the formation of the millers' trust?—Yes; they worked twenty-four hours as long as they could, and then shut down and paid off their men.

126. Do you work your mill six or seven days a week?—I do not work on Sunday.

127. On moral grounds you do not work on Sunday?—Yes, as well as physical.

128. How many hours do you work a week—sixty-six hours?—Yes.

129. You produce about 33 tons a week?—Yes; we could produce 66.

130. What millers besides Harroway spoke to you about joining the trust?—Steven and Co. frequently asked me to join.

131. Who else?—There was Mr. Harroway and Mr. Lough. The association never attempted to interfere with my business.

132. Yours is a very small business compared with other mills in the colony?—Yes; but there are others as small and smaller.

133. Do you charge association prices?—As a rule I do.

134. Do you always charge association rates for your flour?—Not always.

135. Do you cut under them?—I give concessions for cash.

136. You cut on a discount?—It is recognised that 3¼ per cent. is the discount for cash, and that is what I have been giving.