

22. There is a difference of 2d. per bushel in the price here and that of Australia?—About 2d.

23. Can you tell us what the difference in price is in flour in Australia?—It is quoted there at about £7 10s., while the price of bread is 6½d. per 4-lb. loaf. Here flour is quoted at £8 10s., and the bakers are selling bread at 6d. the 4 lb. loaf, so that the consumer does not suffer.

24. Where is flour being sold at £8 10s.?—That is the f.o.b. price in Canterbury.

25. There is a difference of £1 between Australia and New Zealand?—Yes. I received a telegram here to-day to say that the price of flour over there is £7 10s. a ton.

26. If I produce a letter from a baker in business here—a Mr. Taylor—stating that he has to pay £9 10s. for his flour, what would you say?—I do not know what the price is in Wellington—I am speaking of the f.o.b. price in Timaru.

27. I am speaking of what he has to pay for it?—I cannot tell you about that. I am only giving you the f.o.b. price in Canterbury. There it is £8 10s. less 2½ per cent., and freight here is 7s. 6d.

28. Are you aware that an average of a million bushels has been sent to England for years past?—That is very likely.

29. Do you think the farmer would ship to England if he could get a fair price here?—I ship it myself.

30. Are you not aware that the price of wheat here is regulated by the London market?—Most decidedly it is.

31. Do you say that the flour-millers here give more for wheat than the exporter?—There is no wheat being exported now.

32. There was about a million bushels exported?—Not this year.

33. That is for the year 1904?—It varies every year. I think there was about a million bushels more grown that year than this year.

34. In 1904 the figures were 813,535 bushels?—If our farmers have a good crop they must get rid of the wheat somewhere, and they have to ship Home and take their chance of making a loss or a profit; but farmers will tell you that some years they make heavy losses.

35. You say there are about seventy-five flour-mills in the colony?—Yes, roughly speaking.

36. Do you know, roughly, what the amount of wages paid is?—I pay about £60 or £70 a week, according to my wages-sheet.

37. Do you know what other people pay?—No. Their output is restricted, because it was ruination before, when we were losing money by every shipment. They cannot now run their mills more than eight hours a day, in place of the twenty-four they were able to run before.

38. According to the statistics we have, the amount paid in wages has not reached £50,000 a year?—So far as I am concerned I can send my statement of wages paid, and you will find it is over £70 a week.

39. Can you tell me approximately the quantity of flour produced by the millers and sold in New Zealand?—You will find all those details in evidence in what was called the Taylor inquiry.

40. About 800,000 tons was the evidence given at the inquiry?—I did not say that.

41. I presume you will admit, considering the increased population, that the quantity has not been diminishing in any way?—I should not think so—it would be the other way about. But the number of mills has decreased.

42. I presume, under any circumstances, even when the duty is abolished, that the millers will still have the advantage of the freight and charges incurred in bringing flour from Australia?—I believe the Union Company will carry at a lower freight from Australian ports than from Timaru to Auckland. We have to pay about the same rate of freight in sending flour from one New Zealand port to the other as from Australia to New Zealand.

43. I presume you could have flour-mills established near the centres of consumption?—There is very little wheat grown in this North Island. I think the Auckland mills have to get nearly all their wheat from Canterbury.

44. Assuming that the difference is £1 a ton between the price of flour in New Zealand and Australia, that means that the consumers in this colony have to pay at the very least £80,000 more than the consumers in Australia?—I am informing you now that the price of bread to-day is cheaper here than in Australia.

45. Where did you get the information—from that telegram?—It was just put into my hands when I came along here.

46. Will you lay it on the table?—Yes. I also saw Mr. Gow, and he informed me that they were sending flour from America to Hong Kong at £7 10s. a ton; and we cannot compete against that.

47. If the bakers here are able to pay £1 more per ton for their flour than they do in Sydney and only charge 6d. for the 4 lb. loaf, whereas in Sydney it is 6½d., do you not think there is an extraordinary difference in the profits?—Perhaps there is more competition here.

48. *The Chairman.*] The total amount of wheat exported to Great Britain was only 200,000 bushels. The question has been raised by Mr. Hogg as to the difference of £1 between the Australian price of flour and the price here: what is the difference in the production of loaves of bread per ton of Australian flour and per ton of New Zealand flour?—I should say three or four loaves per sack of 200 lb.

49. *Mr. Bolland.*] Do you know anything about Indian wheat and what the price is, put on board?—No, it is rather a dirty wheat, and has to go through a washing-machine. They mix the Indian wheat in Great Britain.

50. Are you aware that the Native labour can put it on board at 9d. a bushel?—That might be. The question of labour is a very important one. In Australia you can get a good farm hand at 15s. a week, while here he will cost you £1 5s. a week. They are getting Manitoban wheat in Sydney and mixing it with Australian wheat. The Manitoban wheat is very much stronger than the wheat here. Our wheat is large in the grain, but weak.