

87. *Mr. Robertson.*] How long would it be before there was deterioration in butter when stored ?—It all depends on the quality of the butter when stored originally.

88. Do you mean that it is inferior butter that you store ?—No, but you have to take the chance of any breakage in your machinery, &c.

89. Why is it it fetches such a low price—is there deterioration in quality ?—Of course.

90. If good when it is put in it will eventually become poor ?—Yes.

91. How long will it take to deteriorate ?—I could not tell you. It might go bad in a week, or it might go bad in a month.

92. *Mr. Hall.*] What is the general difference in price between farmers' butter and factory butter ?—I could not say. We do not deal in farmers' butter.

93. *The Chairman.*] Is it not a fact that certain persons take farmers' butter and work it up and sell it under all kinds of fancy brands ?—I could not say.

94. Is it not within your knowledge that such butter is on the market ?—I could not say. I do not know.

95. *Mr. Robertson.*] You mentioned "Maple Leaf." Who makes it ?—I do not know. J. B. MacEwan are the agents.

96. It is possible that might come from various factories ?—I do not know.

97. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Are you a registered company ?—Yes.

ALFRED WASHER, House and Land Agent, examined on oath. (No. 13.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation ?—A land and estate agent, doing business in Roslyn.

2. Have you been in that occupation long here ?—For twenty years.

3. You have a pretty wide general acquaintance with the district ?—Yes, during the whole of that time.

4. Has there been within your knowledge a considerable rise in land-values in the last twenty years ?—In some cases 200 per cent.

5. Can you give us an idea of what in your mind constitutes the source of that : is it entirely the increase in the growth of the town ?—I should attribute it to the growth of population. The rents during ten or fifteen years have increased about 30 per cent. There used to be a sort of unwritten law that a man should give a day's pay for a week's rent, but that cannot be done now. Of course, they get far more conveniences at the present time, and that might cause an increase.

6. Do you think there has also been an increase because of the increase in the cost of material ?—Yes, I think the cost of building has increased about 25 per cent. When I said that there had been an increase of 30 per cent. in rent I was referring to the smaller cottages. It has not increased to that extent with the larger houses.

7. To what do you attribute that : to the difficulty in getting tenants for the larger houses ?—That is so. There is a far better demand for smaller cottages. I also find that there is not the same percentage of rented houses to-day that there was ten years ago.

8. Does that apply to all the districts about here equally ?—I think it covers the whole of the place—the hill and other boroughs. Far more workers own their houses than was the case ten or fifteen years ago. Take the case of a man with three or four daughters. Previously most of those girls would be at home, but now they are found out working. A case came under my own knowledge where such a family was bringing in £6 or £7 a week.

9. *Mr. Macdonald.*] People are able to pay an increased rent ?—That is so.

10. *The Chairman.*] Is that because of the economic pressure being greater and driving the girls out, or because of the greater independence of women ?—The greater independence of women, I think. There are far more facilities of employment for girls than formerly. There is one point that occurred to me. Take a man earning 10s. a day : fifteen years ago such a man was satisfied with a house at 10s. or 12s. a week, but now you find him paying 17s.

11. That is because of the increase in the standard of living ?—That is so. They will not go into the old houses now.

12. You are not saying that as if it was a blameable thing ?—Not at all. The position has improved very much. My experience is that you have great difficulty with the tenants in those old small houses.

13. *Mr. Hall.*] Do you take it that the scarcity of smaller houses is due to the owners thinking there is a risk in erecting houses of that kind ?—That is so. I would not invest in small houses myself. Ten or fifteen years ago a man took an interest in his garden, and no man would take a house unless it had a good section—say a quarter of an acre. They prefer a house now that has a small amount of ground as possible. Any man with £10 can own his own house under the Advances to Workers Act.

14. *Mr. Veitch.*] It is only those who are not frugal in their habits who live in rented houses at all ?—That is so, as a general rule. There are exceptions, of course. A man whose tenure in a place is uncertain would not be justified in buying or erecting a house of his own.

15. You say that the capital cost of building has increased by about 25 per cent. Do you mean that the 25 per cent. is due to a better class of building or to an increase in the cost of materials in building similar buildings ?—I think it is owing to the better comforts provided. Hot and cold water is now installed, and even in a four- or five-roomed house electric light and gas is put in ; and there is also sewage, which is an expensive item in all the suburbs.

16. Take the case of a four-roomed cottage built twenty years ago. We will assume that to-day you want to build a house exactly the same, with no more conveniences, but everything the same as it was then : do you think it would cost more to build that house to-day ?—Yes, a four-roomed cottage with washhouse attached could be built for about £250 about fifteen years ago ; at the present time the cost would be over £300.

17. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Approximately there has been a 25-per-cent. advance ?—Yes.

18. Is it chiefly owing to the increased cost of timber ?—Practically everything, including painting. At one time you could get a small cottage painted for about £7 ; now it costs about £13.

19. *Mr. Hall.*] That is a question of wages ?—Wages and material.