

12. You are not objecting to the bakers forming a union?—No, it shows what a great thing forming a union is.

13. *Mr. Hall.*] Does the farmer deliver the milk to the union in bulk?—No, he delivers it to each house at the rate of 1s. a gallon.

14. *The Chairman.*] I understand you have some statement to make in regard to local purchases of things required by the Government?—Yes, in regard to co-operative labour. I suppose it all works in in connection with the cost of living—that is, in the case of the co-operative workers. That system is often decried as an expensive and costly one. The Government have never worked the system properly. They purchase the tools, materials, &c., and the system they adopt is a bad one. The Government calls for tenders from the different merchants for shovels, explosives, &c.—things that are necessary in connection with railway-construction. These articles are supplied by the merchants. The merchants have an agreement. There is just one tender sent in. In such cases the workers have ascertained in some cases that they could come to Dunedin and purchase explosives, shovels, &c., much cheaper than the Government can supply them even at cost price to the worker. The Government are all right in this respect, that they will supply goods to the worker at cost price; but if the Government imported the articles themselves they would be able to sell to the worker at one-half less.

15. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Can you give us a specific instance?—Yes, take Ames's shovels, No. 3.

16. Ames's shovels cannot be landed in New Zealand at less than from 44s. to 45s. a dozen?—That is 3s. 9d. Ames's shovels, No. 3, are advertised in Dunedin at 3s. 6d.—at least, they were four years ago—and the Government were selling them to the workers at 5s. for some classes and 5s. 6d. for others, and you could buy them in Dunedin at 3s. 6d. at that time.

17. Are you quite sure of that?—Yes, I saw it advertised.

18. *The Chairman.*] Would you send us a statement in regard to that after refreshing your memory in Invercargill?—Yes.

19. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] There are other makers of shovels besides Ames, and some of their shovels can be obtained for 2s. 2d. and 2s. 6d.—long-handled shovels—but you cannot obtain Ames's shovels at that price?—I saw Ames's shovels advertised in Dunedin at the price I have stated.

20. *Mr. Hall.*] Does the Housewives' Union propose to deal with other things besides milk?—Yes, all matters pertaining to the cost of living.

21. Is it a strong union?—Yes, it is strong, and it is becoming increasingly strong.

22. About how many members are there?—About eighty active members, and they are increasing.

23. *Mr. Veitch.*] How long has the union been in operation?—Since the last visit of Professor Mills to Invercargill: I think that was a little before Easter.

24. *Mr. Hall.*] Are you publishing any literature setting forth the objects of the union?—Yes.

25. Will you oblige us with some copies of the constitution of the union, and with other documents?—Yes.

26. *The Chairman.*] You mentioned something about dairy butter. Is it your opinion that the dairy butter which is now made is superior to that which was made for a long time because the farmers have got separators of their own?—Yes, but it will not keep so long; but I am satisfied that the butter in flavour is better.

27. *Mr. Hall.*] Is there much difference in the price between farmers' dairy butter and factory butter?—Yes, I know instances where men in Invercargill are dealing with producers all the year round, and they get their butter at 1s. a pound right through. The Housewives' Union are working in that direction, and I think they will be successful.

28. Is there not even a greater difference in the prices quoted in the papers between the farmers' butter and the dairy butter?—I could not say.

29. Who supplies the newspapers with the information for publication?—The retailers who supply the butter; they supply the quotations once a week.

30. The people who buy the butter fix the price?—The merchants, I think, fix the price.

31. *The Chairman.*] Have you any other statement to make in regard to any subject that you have not been questioned upon?—The land is becoming of increasing value, and the tendency is for rents to increase.

32. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Between what limits—20, 30, or what per cent. increase?—Yes, I can give you specific instances of increase within the last six years. The increase has been about 30 per cent.—that is, for houses which have been in use during all that time.

33. *Mr. Veitch.*] To what do you attribute that increase?—Mostly to land-jobbing. The curse of the country at the present time are these speculators. There is no *bona fide* settlement even in the country. It is purely speculating; even so-called farmers are speculating with their properties. A syndicate at Invercargill recently acquired the Chatsworth Estate, 240 acres. If the Government had acquired that land even at as much as £95 an acre they could have cut it up and disposed of it for residential sites, and it would have enabled people to have secured houses at a rental of about 12s. a week. And 50 acres of that land could have been set apart for roads and recreation reserves. That shows that if the land question had been tackled properly the cost of living would have been reduced very much to the workers at the present time. It has, however, been impossible to get the authorities to move in this matter.

34. *Mr. Veitch.*] Do you mean, if the Government had bought before the land-speculator came in?—That would be one way of doing it.

35. *Mr. Macdonald.*] There must have been a fair amount of settlement if you take into consideration the marvellous increase in farming and dairy-produce during the last ten years?—Yes.

36. *The Chairman.*] But you think that might have been greatly improved on if another method had been adopted?—Yes, the amount of settlement could have been greatly increased. The method of settlement, especially in regard to bush sections, is defective. There are large areas