

26. *The Chairman.*] Do you attribute part of the cause of the increased cost of living to the working-classes the difficulty in getting houses, and the heavy ratio that the rent bears to a man's income?—Yes, there is a difficulty in getting houses.

27. Houses of four rooms or six rooms?—Yes, the smaller class of house. The large house you can get, and you can get it cheap in proportion.

28. Have you any further statement you would like to make?—I can only repeat some of the things said by the Hon. Mr. Paul this morning. I believe the remedy is in more State and municipal enterprises. As long as these things are controlled by private individuals the same influences will be at work. The main question is the land question. But if people were prevented cornering the land they would corner the product of the land. There is another important matter that I would like to point out. There is a Dairymen's Association which controls the supply of milk. They hold periodical meetings and fix the price of milk. The Taieri and Peninsula Company is a member of that association.

29. Has the price of milk risen in late years?—Yes.

30. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Is it a proper organization?—Yes, but I do not know whether it is registered. Statements are published in the papers that they have decided that from certain dates the price of milk will be so-much per gallon. It is quite apparent that the Taieri and Peninsula Company can distribute their milk much cheaper than any of the individual dairymen; yet they deliver the milk at the same price. They do not cut; they are loyal to the dairymen. The price is fixed so that the poorest dairyman can make a profit.

31. *The Chairman.*] The inference is that the larger suppliers must make larger profits?—Yes. There is also a Master Bakers' Association in Dunedin. They used to meet periodically. The price of flour fluctuated so much at one time that it necessitated the Bakers' Association holding frequent meetings, and reasons were always given for increasing the price of bread. Another firm stepped in, and since then there have not been so many meetings, and we now very rarely hear of any alteration in price. What effect the new firm had on the association I do not know. Perhaps the price of flour has remained stationary since then.

32. *Mr. Macdonald.*] You do not object on principle to an association of bakers arranging the price at which they sell bread?—No. What I objected to was the system they had in fixing the price. A union of workers when formed have to appeal before a certain tribunal, and have got to satisfy that tribunal that they are entitled to an increase in wages. The methods of the Dairymen's and Baker's Associations are entirely different.

33. Some unions of workers?—I am talking about those who are loyal to the arbitration system.

34. You think it is fair for these people before they put up the price of commodities to appear before some Court and give reason for raising the prices?—It is very difficult for a tribunal to fix a price. If they took into consideration every industry they would require to have different Boards.

35. *The Chairman.*] You do not surely regard that as a more serious thing than, say, tackling a tailoresses' log?—The bootmakers' log has gone, and the tailoresses' will have to go too.

36. They showed the ability of a Court to deal with fine matters?—That is so. In regard to the tramway business, I would just like to point out that in the *Otago Daily Times* of the 7th May the Town Clerk in his report, published in that paper, estimated the increased wages of the men to amount to about £3,200, but the charges to the public have not been reduced since then, although they had been just prior to it.

37. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Have you the record of the Corporation trams' revenue for twelve months?—It was £71,762 for last year.

JAMES WRIGHT MUNRO, Master Baker, examined on oath. (No. 26.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a master baker.

2. Are you a member of the Master Bakers' Association?—No.

3. Is it within your knowledge that there is such a body?—Yes.

4. Has that body agreed amongst themselves as far as they could to regulate the price of bread?—Yes.

5. Is the regulation intended to be in their interest or in the interest of the public?—In the interests of the master bakers, undoubtedly.

6. Has it the effect in any way of restraining free competition? What happens to any one who does not agree with what they arrange?—At the present juncture nothing can happen.

7. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Have they attempted to use the Millers' Association in any way to stop supplies?—They did at one time, but the Millers' Association is now in the same position as the Bakers' Association—that is, a good many in the trade are not in the association. About five years ago, when practically all the mills were in it, they did try to use the Millers' Association. Since then quite a number of the millers have withdrawn from the association, and others have started; likewise many bakers.

8. There is competition now amongst the millers that did not exist before?—That is so. The two existing bodies practically fix the general price of the product.

9. When the Millers' Association was a united body do you know of any specific instance where they boycotted a baker because he was cutting prices?—No, not boycotted. The only case I know was our own. When we started business we had to pay cash before we got flour.

10. Is that not the usual method?—No. The usual method in the milling trade is one month's credit.

11. *The Chairman.*] Has the price of bread risen during the last ten years?—That is a very difficult question to answer, because the price of bread is based on the cost of flour, and flour fluctuates according to the fluctuation of the wheat-market. I should say that at the present time in Dunedin bread, considering the price of flour, is about the same price as it was ten years ago.