

that is the part I am to confine my remarks to. I think we must admit that there is general unrest. It is a universal and not a local question. The same law that applies to New Zealand applies to every other country. The aspect of the question I would like to deal with is the question of land.

3. You can hardly speak as an expert on land. Can you give us anything in your knowledge as to land having increased in value?—I can only give the facts as stated to me by the Government.

4. We can get that information ourselves. Can you give us any facts to support it?—I have been a resident of Dunedin for thirty-seven years, and have witnessed a considerable increase in the value of land brought about by the expenditure of public money and the increase of population. That increase in the value of land is a tax on all who live on it, and adds to the increased cost of living. It must be apparent to all that the land question underlies all other questions, and I am not prepared to deal with the cost of living unless I deal with the primary cause of it all.

5. Keep to the facts within your own knowledge?—Personally I can only witness certain things that have happened. I must go to authorities for further information as to what has happened generally.

6. No, we have the means at our command to see what the Government Statistician says regarding those. Tell us what the price of land was twenty years ago and what it is now for the same section?—I do not know that I could deal with that question. I bought my land thirty-seven years ago.

7. What was the value twenty years ago?—The same as thirty-seven years ago.

8. What is the unimproved value of your land?—I gave £90 for the section. For many years it kept at that value until we were involved in a depression, when it came down considerably lower. That would be in the "eighties." There has been a gradual rise since, and a greater rise since the construction of the municipal electric trams. I live on the Anderson's Bay Road. There were sections sold there, to my knowledge, six or seven years ago for £40 or £50, and sections of the same size sold lately for £150.

9. *Mr. Macdonald.*] You attribute that to the construction of the trams?—Yes. The increase of utilities and population.

10. Did they not improve the general appearance of Anderson's Bay Road?—Yes, but money that was spent in that direction did not touch the part of the district where the rise has taken place.

11. Is that advance which you refer to been pretty general, in your estimation, all over Dunedin?—Yes. To a greater extent in some particular districts than in others.

12. The argument you are trying to adduce is that the extension of public utilities has caused a rise in the price of land?—Yes. There was a question asked a previous witness as to the price of groceries. Although the manufacturer may not have raised his prices, we know that the rents have increased in the places where these goods are sold, and therefore the grocer has to increase the price of his commodities. The landlord makes the tenant pay, and the tenant makes the general public pay. That has operated throughout Dunedin for many years.

13. Many of those business people own their own premises?—Some of them—a minority. I know of one man who has been driven out of two shops in a central position in Dunedin because of the rents.

THOMAS SMITH, Master Butcher, examined on oath. (No. 28.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—Master butcher.

2. How long have you been in business?—Twenty-five years in Dunedin.

3. Have you any knowledge of any combination of men banded together to regulate the price of meat?—None whatever.

4. You think such a body does not exist?—I am positive it does not.

5. You buy direct from the auction-yards?—I buy from anywhere—farmers, graziers, agents, or any one else.

6. Have you any knowledge, or is there anything within your knowledge, which would make you think that any manipulation of the butchery trade has caused a rise in the cost of living?—There never has been any manipulation of the trade in my residence in the city. The nearest approach to it has probably been in the spring of the year, when stock is very high and competition is exceedingly keen, and butchers have gathered together at Burnside and decided on a half-penny or a penny per pound, not in order to make a profit, but simply to prevent the ruinous loss they were experiencing.

7. How did that loss arise?—On account of the dearth of stock.

8. By reason of the drought?—It is almost invariably the same that in the spring of the year fat cattle and sheep go up in price, due, no doubt, to the scarcity of feed to fatten.

9. *Mr. Robertson.*] It is customary to increase the price about those times?—It has been done. There is nothing binding, however, in it on the butchers.

10. You have no association?—No.

11. Do you meet again and agree to take that price off when stock comes back to normal?—No. Competition is so keen that whenever a butcher can afford to sell at a lower price, down the price goes.

12. And the others follow?—Rather. If all trades were run the same as the butchery trade in Dunedin there would be no need for the Commission.

13. Have you any statement you can make which would benefit the Commission and which you have not been asked about?—If the evidence has been correctly published bearing on our trade the witnesses have not been stating the truth. One man went so far as to say there was a ring in connection with the butchery business. That is false, and I class it as an unmitigated lie. No ring nor trust has been in existence during the twenty-five years I have been connected with the trade in Dunedin, and there has been no movement connected with the trade that I have not been associated with. The retail price of meat quoted in the published evidence is not correct. One witness said that rump steak was retailed at 8d. to 10d. per pound. You can buy good ox rump steak anywhere for 8d.