

EFFIE JULIA MARY CARDALE examined on oath. (No. 40.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are secretary of the Coal and Blanket Fund, Christchurch?—Yes.
2. Can you make any statement to the Commission bearing upon the question of the rise in the cost of living?—Yes. I not only work for the Coal and Blanket Fund, but I am a worker as well. I have had some eleven or twelve years' experience here, and I think I can give the Commission some information upon some aspects of the question they are inquiring into. I find that blankets have varied very little in price—at least, so far as concerns the Coal and Blanket Fund.
3. Say from ten years ago until now?—Yes, they have varied very little in price during the past ten years.
4. *Dr. Hight.*] Retail prices?—Yes, net prices.
5. *The Chairman.*] Do you buy your goods wholesale for distribution?—No, we call for tenders.
6. Do shops or wholesale houses send in tenders?—Shops.
7. Do you buy more blankets now than you did ten years ago?—Yes, we buy considerably more now. I do not know that the Coal and Blanket Fund was in existence ten years ago. I have been secretary for four years, but I was on the committee for several years before that.
8. Do you think that the number of blankets you buy has increased by 50 or 100 per cent. during that time?—I really would not like to say, but I know that the number of blankets we issue has increased. The number of applicants was about 200 when I first started, and the number has increased every year. Last year we had about 530 or 540 people applying.
9. Were you able to give blankets to them all?—No, I think there were about fifty that we did not help at all. Some asked for coal. The greater number received blankets.
10. The cost of living has not increased in the matter of blankets?—No.
11. Could you tell us about coal?—Coal is going up steadily every year in price.
12. Do you know what price it was ten years ago?—No.
13. How far back does your experience relate to?—Five years.
14. What coal do you use?—We use Greta and Pelawmain—Newcastle coal.
15. Is the quantity you distribute now greater than it was five years ago?—Yes, we give more than we did at first to each person.
16. So that there has been a considerable increase in the amount of coal distributed. The price has risen as well as the quantity?—Yes.
17. Could you tell us for the last five years what the rise has been?—One year, I think, we only paid 28s. a ton. I think that five years ago the coal was more expensive, and the next year it was cheaper. This year we are paying 34s. 4d.
18. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] What is the price of Westport coal here?—I do not know. We only call for tenders for Greta and Pelawmain coal.
19. Can you give us any further information?—When we come across these distressing cases we never leave it at giving coal and blankets. I know that in the case of bread, where the families fetch it, 4 lb. loaves were only 4d. at one time; now the price has gone up to 6d. or 6½d. In the case of rather large families that makes a very great difference.
20. Butter?—I could not say about butter. But as to potatoes, they are such a standby for big families. They used to be 5s. 6d. a sack, and even cheaper. During the last few years they have gone up to 12s., 15s., and £1 a sack. Look at what a big difference that makes in the case of a big family. The year before last potatoes were £1 a sack.
21. Meat?—Meat is dearer than it used to be. Years ago you could get a neck and breast of mutton: from that the meat could be given to the husband, and broth could also be made for the children. Now you have to pay 6d. for half the quantity you used to get for 6d. That was five or six years ago.
22. Could you tell us the difference in the price of mutton five years ago and what it is to-day?—No.
23. But, generally speaking, there has been an advance?—Yes.
24. To what extent on mutton—1d. a pound?—I should think it might be.
25. *The Chairman.*] In regard to other household necessities?—At one time milk was 3d. a quart; now it goes up to 4d. in the winter; and in the case of children that increase makes a great difference.
26. Do you think that five years ago it was 3d.?—Five or six years ago certainly it was 3d.
27. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Of course, milk would vary in price with the season of the year? They never used to put milk up in the winter as they do now. Last year it went up to 5d. a quart. In regard to boots and shoes, I think the prices of those have gone up tremendously—strong boots for children, for instance. Formerly you could get for 7s. 6d. a good strong pair of boots for a child of ten or eleven years of age. Now they are 10s. and 11s. per pair.
28. Are those locally made boots?—I could not say.
29. *The Chairman.*] As to clothing, could you tell us whether there is any difference in cotton goods during the last two or three years? Are they any cheaper now than two years ago?—I do not think they are any cheaper. I think they are much about the same price.
30. Although the tariff has been altered and the duty taken off?—I should not think that cotton and calico are much cheaper.
31. Woollen goods?—I could not say about those.
32. Do you think that drapers' goods generally are dearer?—I am sure they are. I know that where we used to be able to get a coat and skirt ready-made for a certain price, you cannot get one for that price now.