

37. Does not the advances-to-workers scheme give assistance for the building of homes in rural districts?—That may be so, but I refer particularly to the workers' homes which have been built in the cities.

38. *The Chairman.*] Would it be possible for any of the large farmers to have workers' homes built in the country for farm labourers—assisting the Government in the way of providing the land for the purpose?—I think that such a scheme could be carried out very successfully. I do not think that a row of houses for workers should be built, as I have seen done in the cities. Each man should have 4 or 5 acres of land around his house, in order that he may grow vegetables, keep poultry, and perhaps supply himself with milk.

39. You would have settlements of labourers who could be called upon by the farmers when they wanted them?—Yes; if the farm labourers are not there the farmers cannot get them. If a labouring-man lives in the town, and he has to go out into the country to work, it practically means the keeping-up of two homes, and in the town he has not sufficient land to grow his own vegetables.

40. *Mr. Veitch.*] Do you not think that the high price of land in the country would prevent the carrying-out of such a scheme?—There are many farmers who, I think, would be only too willing to give the land for nothing for homes for workers.

41. I do not know of any?—Here is one. I may state that I have built homes for workers. Of course, it is my property; but I am sure that if such a scheme were carried out farmers would do a great deal to assist it.

42. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Can you give us an instance within your own knowledge where land has gone out of cultivation because of the shortage of labour?—I am of opinion that if there was sufficient labour available farmers would cultivate twice as much land as they are doing now.

43. Would you put down more crops if there was a greater supply of labour available?—Most certainly.

44. *The Chairman.*] It is not that the wages paid by the farmers are so low that they do not induce labour to go into the country?—My idea is that you cannot expect a man with a family to go from his home and work in the country and keep up two homes, and the farmers cannot afford to build houses for such men.

45. *Mr. Veitch.*] Do you not think the supply of labour in country districts is simply regulated by the law of supply and demand?—I think the shortage of farm labour arises from the fact that men cannot go into the country and live there with their wives and families.

SARAH SAUNDERS PAGE, Married Woman, examined on oath. (No. 43.)

*Witness* said that she had kept house for some years with a growing family, and believed that the cost of living had increased considerably during the last sixteen years. In her experience, the price of necessities had increased, and the price of luxuries had decreased. Necessities, with the exception of bread, had all increased. It was in the very poorest houses that bread was a large item in the week's expenditure; in better houses its place was taken by other things. Milk and butter had increased. Sixteen years ago when she married she had a contract with a butter-supplier for 10d. per pound for butter all the year round; now butter was 1s. 3d. per pound. She had kept a cow herself at one time, and got 10d. per pound for the butter sold. Sometimes butter would go down to 7d. in the summer, and up to 1s. in the winter, years ago. Sixteen years ago she thought milk was 3d. per quart; now it was 4d. Sixteen years ago she used to buy half a sheep for 3s. 6d. (say, in 1896-7); this half-sheep was bought from a farmer. Woollen clothing was much dearer now than formerly. When she married they paid £30 per year for a house, and the same house, without improvements, was now let for £40 per year. It was not a new house sixteen years ago; it was a five-roomed house without hot-water service, but with a bathroom. Boots were much more expensive than they used to be; boots for herself for which she formerly paid 15s. now cost 21s.; as a fact, she paid 30s. per pair for her boots now, but they were better. The cost of education had increased; children now used paper and lead-pencils instead of slates, and a great many additional reading-books. These were good things, of course, but added to the cost of living. She thought the effect of the tariff was to decrease the prices of luxuries more than the price of necessities. Tea, for example, might be reckoned a luxury for children as compared with butter and milk and oatmeal, all of which had risen. Currants, raisins, and prunes had gone down. Housekeepers never could understand why it was that butter, meat, and other products could be sold more cheaply in England than in New Zealand, the place of their production. The lack of cheap household assistance added to the cost of living in various ways—more money had to be spent on labour-saving devices and conveniences, and more money on ready-made clothing. Hot-water services were good to have, but added to the cost of living. She heartily agreed with Mr. Ensor's evidence as to the desirability of co-operation, but the land should be held and worked on the co-operative system, too. If this were done, and free and easy access were given to the land, many of the necessaries of life would go down in price.

ADA WELLS, Married Woman, examined on oath. (No. 44.)

*Witness* said that she could bear evidence to the increased cost of living during the last twenty years. Mutton used to be 2d. and 2½d. per pound, or a side of mutton could be bought for 4d. 6d. She understood that the men at the abattoirs at present could purchase a side of mutton or lamb which was a little underweight for 4s. 6d. Beef used to be 3d. and 4d., and now was 6d. per