

pound; rump steak was 6d. per pound, and now was 8d. Fifteen or twenty years ago butter was 10d. per pound for all the year round, and now it was 1s. 3d. for many months of the year, and it certainly was not so good in quality as it used to be in the winter months; it was salted and frozen, and not fresh. The butter had not merely increased in value, but had deteriorated in quality. 1s. 5d. was the highest price she had paid for factory butter; last winter it was not quite so dear. Milk was now 4d. per quart, and used to be 3d. in past years. The quality was as good, she thought. Potatoes had increased enormously; they used to be 3s. 6d. per sack, sometimes 4s. 6d. and 5s.; now they were 12s. and 14s. per sack. Bread used to be 2d. for the small loaf and 4d. for large loaf; it was now 6d. for large loaf. Fruit was now an exorbitant price; a member of her household had paid 6d. for five apples the other day. Of course, apples could be bought more cheaply wholesale, but not for 1s. per sack, as in former years. People had less room for gardens than they had before the rating on unimproved value came into force. Vegetables were also much dearer; cauliflowers used to be 2d. or 3d., and now cost 6d. and 8d. each. Bananas were very dear in Christchurch, and of poor quality. Housewives suspected there were fruit rings, but, of course, this could not be proved. Fish had risen very greatly in price; at one time flounders could be got for twelve a shilling, now they were 1s. each. Fish was practically a luxury nowadays. It was also of poor quality, was stored for months in cool-chambers, and then sold when it had no flavour. This was done, of course, with the view of limiting the supply; if it all came on the market at once it would get too cheap. Boots and shoes had greatly increased in price; children's shoes could be bought in former years for 4s. 6d. and 5s., now they cost 10s. In past years more lignite coal was burnt, but now the hot-water services, &c., required the burning of better-quality coal, such as Westport and State coal. She, like Mrs. Page, could not understand why New Zealand produce could be bought cheaper by English housewives than by New Zealand housewives. It seemed very wrong that with the freight all saved, New Zealand women still had to pay more. Certainly the increased cost of living was due to some extent to the higher standard of living; people were no longer satisfied with a smock and a hut and beans and bacon. It was natural and desirable that they should demand more comforts. The modern houses practically all had bathrooms; a house without a bath was rightly considered a place of horror, but baths meant extra money. To be clean needed money, as Mrs. Black (her fellow-member on the Charitable Aid Board some years ago) was wont to say. It had been charged against the New Zealand girls that they spent more money on clothes. The idea of beauty was deeply rooted, and should be turned to good account by education in what beauty really meant. The technical classes now enabled practically every girl to learn to make her own clothes and trim her own hats, and that meant so much less cost. With regard to rent, she would like to see further extensions of the advances-to-workers scheme. She knew one widow who had been buying her house for thirty years, and in the end had paid twice the cost of the house—a £300 house cost her £600. Nursing was also an item calling for more money than formerly. In former years a woman could be got for nursing and general household work and attendance on children for 25s. per week; now a skilled woman cost two and three guineas per week, and did not do the washing, cooking, &c. She was not saying a word against skilled nurses, but the fact remained that nursing involved more expenditure for the housewives. Another factor in the increased cost of living was this: children did not go to work at as early an age as formerly; they used to go at eleven years of age, and even ten years; she had herself started as a pupil-teacher at eleven years of age. Education of young people was on different lines now. Education certainly cost more now than it used to—how much more she could not say, as her children were all grown up now. Many mothers had spoken to her of the additional cost of school-books. So far as the tariff was concerned, this had led to the decrease of prices on some lines, but the quality was often inferior. Probably one had to pay just as much as formerly for really good tea. Wages had gone up, and, of course, the commodities of life went up with them; that was a matter for the serious consideration of the New Zealand politicians. Another question was the larger number of women who were never prepared for housewifery, and had no knowledge of the proper way to expend the household money. In this respect the domestic schools were doing a great and good work. She thought it should be made compulsory for every girl in the land to go through a domestic-science course in conjunction with the public schools; every school should have a kitchen and dining-room attached to it where the girls could do the cooking, and learn general household management. The Technical College in Christchurch had such a kitchen, and supplied meals at a low rate to the students. She strongly advocated the establishment of municipal or State markets for fish, and meat, and fruit, and so forth. This would help to eliminate the middlemen altogether. Municipal kitchens would also be a great help, and municipal laundries. She thought the time ripe for the establishment of these even in New Zealand, with its comparatively sparse population. So far as amusements were concerned, there was a growing need for and appreciation of recreation, and, personally, she was very glad to see it, although she thought the time had come for the municipal censorship of what was one of the greatest educational factors of the people—the picture-shows.

ELIZABETH BEST TAYLOR, Widow, examined on oath. (No. 45.)

*Witness* stated she was president of the Creche and Kindergarten Association of Christchurch, and that she had lived in Christchurch for the last twenty-two years, and regretted that she had had so little notice before coming to the Commission. She had, however, gone over a few accounts of about ten years ago, and could confirm the evidence already given as to the increase in the prices of some of the necessities of life. There had been a gradual increase during the past ten, fifteen, or twenty years, and there was also the higher standard of living to be counted