

with, particularly during the last ten years. The commodities she had specially noted were bread, butter, meat, potatoes, milk, bacon, and cheese. She could not be certain of the actual increase in bacon, but believed it was from 8d. to 10d. and 11d. per pound in fifteen years. Home-grown fruit had also increased, such as gooseberries, currants, and raspberries. Owing to increase of population these fruits came from longer distances in many cases, and there were therefore increased transport charges; there did not seem to be enough of this kind of fruit grown to meet the local demand. Raspberries used to be 4d. per pound by the dozen pounds, and now were 7d. per pound. The reason given for the increase was that the Frimley and other factories took so much of the fruit nowadays. Increased land-values no doubt was another factor; the people could not afford to buy land on which to grow these small fruits. Whether or not a fish ring existed she could not say of her own knowledge; there was a strong feeling among housewives that such was the case. Her experience confirmed that already quoted by Mrs. Page and Mrs. Wells in regard to milk. People sometimes paid as much as 5d. per quart in winter, and a few years ago it was the same price all the year round—did not rise in the winter. Butter used to go down to 6d. per pound in summer, and eggs also declined. Ten years ago they got eggs for 6d. and 8d. per dozen, and now they were never less than 10d. or 11d. For poultry they paid 8s. 6d. per pair, instead of 4s. 6d. as formerly. During the last ten years meat had risen 1d. and 1½d. per pound, she thought; the increase was greater on mutton than on beef. The increase was not so great in the last ten years as compared with the increase from twenty-five years ago. The price of boots had certainly increased, and she confirmed Mrs. Page's evidence in this respect. The increase in children's shoes was proportionately greater, in her opinion. In regard to drapery, woollen clothing had gone up greatly; stockings were dearer, and so was woven underwear. Cotton goods did not show much increase. The increased standard of living, the higher standard, had made a good deal of difference; and the purchasing of ready-made clothing, as referred to by previous witnesses, was a great factor. Probably this made clothing cost about one-third more. Certainly she would be in favour of compulsory domestic training for the girls of the nation. There were not enough girls to go into the homes to do the necessary work there—there were so many other avenues of employment open. The whole question of home life required the greatest attention, and it would certainly be very good for the nation if the girls were compelled to learn domestic science. The girls would then make better wives and mothers, and would avoid the waste and mismanagement that one saw all around nowadays in so many homes. The girls of the upper standards would be much better occupied in learning domestic science, she thought, than in doing so much arithmetic and little specks of Latin and other subjects; that is to say, she would substitute the technical domestic school for the higher standards of the primary schools. The higher standard of living imposed on parents new duties and responsibilities in all sorts of ways—*e.g.*, the care of their children's teeth was given much greater thought now, and was a matter of quite considerable expense. The greater desire for recreation had also to be reckoned with, as well as the increased price of commodities.

WILLIAM BAILEY BRAY, Apiarist, examined on oath. (No. 46.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Do you supply honey to Christchurch?—Yes.
2. Can you give us any information as to the amount of honey that came into Christchurch, say, ten years ago, and the price?—Generally speaking, the price of honey has not risen.
3. What information have you to put before the Commission that will help it?—I wished to deal with the price of rural land, as being the source of production of food and clothing. The general opinion is that prices have risen during the last decade, and whether that is the result of the higher price of land, or whether the higher price of land follows the increased prices of the produce, I would not state dogmatically, but I am inclined to think that the land has risen with the food. A previous witness stated that the increased price of land was the result of cheaper money. I think that has some connection with the increased output of gold—the production of gold all over the world.
4. Are you speaking as an expert?—Oh, no.
5. We are going to get expert evidence on that directly, and, honestly, we do not want any theories. Just give us facts?—The increased price of land is the result of cheap money. If we leave that aside, I would say that the cost of living has risen with the increase in the cost of land: the farmer can afford to pay more for his land because he can receive more for his goods. All the primary produce has risen in price, especially meat and dairy-produce. Produce such as fruit, bacon, poultry have risen, and these come from sub-rural land, and that has all risen in price. So I would say that the price of land has affected the price of food, and then the price of land in the city has also affected the price of land in the country and added to the cost of distribution. In my own experience in regard to selling honey I have seen something of wholesale methods of trading, and the present methods by which all our business is done are, to my mind, very clumsy and expensive through unnecessary overlapping.
6. Can you give us an instance in your own business?—I was standing outside a small second-rate suburban store recently and saw no less than three travellers go in to solicit orders, all dealing with the same lines. In regard to honey, there was overlapping through one store taking the honey, but declining to deal with different firms; then the honey had to be sent to another store which did deal with these firms.
7. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Can you tell us anything about the price of honey?—It is sold at 3½d. to 4d. per pound in bulk. That is generally delivered in town. The retail price is 7d. to 8d. per pound in shops. There is the expense of bottling and providing the bottle; but they get extra for the bottle. There is a clear margin of 100 per cent. That is a grievance I have as a beekeeper. The wholesale firms make on this line to compensate for the narrow margin of profit on other lines.