

I have not put much honey on the market myself yet; I have only started two years, and have been increasing my stocks.

8. Are these prices the same as other honey-producers are getting?—Yes.

9. *The Chairman.*] How much local honey is brought into Christchurch during the year?—It is impossible for me to give you any idea.

10. *Mr. Hall.*] How many hives have you?—Two hundred. The honey is exported to the Old Country and sent to other parts of New Zealand. My idea of avoiding the unnecessary handling is to establish State stores, not co-operative but State concerns. I think if the State can run coal-mines and railways they can run stores.

11. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] You mean you would sell to the State and the State would sell to the people?—Yes; the State should run retail shops, and that would cheapen the cost of commodities by eliminating the middlemen and selling and distributing agents. Trading should be a State monopoly, I think.

12. But not production?—No, not production. By doing that the cost of advertisements, and distributing and selling, and general overlapping in commercial circles could be eliminated and the goods cheapened. I also strongly condemn the credit system, which makes for unthriftiness, and leads to the formation of bad debts by the baker, the butcher, and the grocer, and these have to be added to the price of commodities. State trading would abolish this evil.

13. *Mr. Hall.*] About what quantity of honey per hive could you get in a good season?—The average output, reckoning one season with another, would be between 60 lb. and 70 lb.—that is for all over New Zealand.

14. *The Chairman.*] Could you send us in an exact statement as to the output of honey and the values received?—Yes. I will do so. Statement *re* honey: The last census shows that the total output of honey for the 1910–11 season was slightly over 1,000,000 lb. Generally speaking, the crop was a poor one, and in a good season it might have been three times this amount. There are no means of arriving at the total annual crop, as the census figures are all that is available. In commercial apiaries the average yearly production is about 60 lb. per colony. The cost of production, leaving out labour, amounts to—rent, say £2 for site of apiary; freight; renewal and depreciation of plant; very small tins or other vessels, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound; commission, if any. Suitable labour is not available, and operations are limited to the capacity of the owner's labour. One man can attend to from two to four hundred colonies. The average price delivered in bulk is 4d. per lb. In Christchurch three seasons ago the crop was plentiful, and the price went down to 3d. per pound. Since then, notwithstanding two very poor seasons, $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. is the best price offering from the merchants. In other centres where honey is equally scarce, but where it is sold by the auctioneers, the price is $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. I have been selling mine in a retail package at 6d., less 5 per cent. commission and freight, the retail price being 8d. The limit of greatest production in New Zealand has not been reached yet by a long way. The eradication of disease and improved methods of management are cheapening the cost of production. The industry is practically independent of the rent question, and there is a likelihood in the near future of prices reaching a lower level.

TUESDAY, 11TH JUNE, 1912.

WHOLESALE MERCHANTS.

Mr. G. Harper, Solicitor: May I be permitted to make a short statement on behalf of some clients of mine? I represent T. H. Green and Co., and Benjamin Limited, both of whom have been subpoenaed to attend and give evidence. Without taking any technical objections at the present moment to the subpoena, I wish to state on their behalf, and also on behalf of other gentlemen if they are going to be subpoenaed, that they very respectfully decline to give evidence in the same way as was done by certain merchants in Dunedin. I mean no disrespect to the Commission at all; but they are following the advice which has been tendered to them in Dunedin, here, and, I believe, elsewhere, and they are simply acting as a matter of principle on that advice.

The Chairman: The Commission regrets that that course has been followed, but has no option except for the present to receive your statement.

GILBERT DIXON, Butcher, examined on oath. (No. 47.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a butcher carrying on business in Christchurch, Mr. Dixon?—Yes.

2. How long have you been in business here?—I have been in the butchering business all my life in Christchurch and suburbs.

3. Has there been any marked increase in the retail price of meat during the last ten years?—Yes.

4. Could you give us any idea of the percentage of increase during the ten years—that is, in the retail prices?—The wholesale buying price has increased on beef by about 10s. a hundred.

5. In what period?—In the last ten years. I suppose that would pan out at just over 1d. a pound.

6. Mutton?—In mutton there has been about the same increase—about 4s. or 5s. a head dearer than ten or fifteen years ago.

7. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] That is, on an average of 60 lb.?—Yes, 55 lb. or 60 lb. sheep.

8. *The Chairman.*] Is there much difference between the retail sellers as regards the price of meat?—Yes, there is a great deal.

9. In what way does it vary—is it owing to the situation of the shop in the suburb or in the main street, or in what way?—It applies more to delivery and booking.