

16. And you pay no wages?—No, no wages at all on the farm.

17. *Mr. Powdrell.*] You have allowed for no wages in your return of expenses?—No.

18. *Mr. Kellett.*] You refer to your boys struggling on and yet you go in for pedigree stock?—Yes, that is what I rely on. The milk goes to the calves and pigs rather than to the dairy factory, the main return being from that portion.

19. *The Chairman.*] Are you in a large way with pedigree stock?—I started in 1908 and now have a herd of eighty Friesians. I have been trying all my life to get away from the milking and butter and go in for stock. Years ago we were getting 1s. 2d. per pound for butterfat, and we were doing better then than we are doing now with 1s. 7d. per pound. I have worked hard to get the factory established, but I know it would pay better for me to make the butter instead of sending the milk to the factory, provided I have the same market as the factory has. The factory has an advantage in that they make a superfine article. With the kind assistance of a good Government we have been able to make a good superfine article which is now in world favour, while we have now got into the position that we get a decent price for our butter in the world's markets.

20. In view of your return I take it you are working on scientific lines?—Yes, I stress that particularly, because we put in some hours of the day at the books.

21. *Mr. Powdrell.*] Do you milk by hand or by machine?—By hand. I started with the machine when I had eighty cows, but I would never go back to the machine again. My cows are milked three times a day, and three of us are milkers. We milk at 5 o'clock in the morning, then in the afternoon, and again at 9 o'clock at night, going to bed at about half past 11 or 12 o'clock.

22. Do you go to church on Sundays?—Yes. It is only one hour of recreation, and I let the cows and turnips go for that period.

23. Do you and your family go to the pictures?—Never. I have not been five times in my life.

24. Every penny you get is a prisoner, only you do not get enough of them?—Yes, and I do not drink or smoke.

25. *Mr. J. R. Hamilton.*] I suppose most of the money the farmer has he has saved up?—Yes.

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A. W. PAGE examined. (No. 15.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Your full name, Mr. Page?—Arthur William Page.

2. Your occupation?—Master grocer.

3. And your address?—Auckland.

4. I understand you wish to make an additional statement, on behalf of the Retailers' Association, bearing upon Mr. Bennett's evidence this morning?—Yes, sir. I wish to apologise for Mr. Bennett's absence this afternoon, but, unfortunately, he had another engagement which has prevented him coming. But we have gone carefully into the matter, and we think that possibly he may have left some misconception in the minds of some of the gentlemen of this Committee in regard to the question of retailing butter. On thinking over Mr. Bennett's evidence we came to the conclusion that possibly some of the gentlemen of this Committee may have thought that we were anxious to discontinue the sale of butter unless we get a certain margin of profit out of it. That is hardly the case. In Auckland every small shop—and there is a large number of them, provision shops and others—make a feature of retailing butter, and they very often cut butter below the grocers' prices. We would like to state that, although we are quite in accordance with Mr. Bennett's statement with regard to conditions generally, we would like to make it quite clear that in no case would we be satisfied to allow the retailing of butter to go out of the hands of the retail grocers.

5. Mr. Bennett's statement would not be in accordance with your wishes in that respect?—No, not on that point. On that point he did not speak for the majority of the traders in the Dominion; on that point he was only speaking for his own firm. We think it will be very detrimental to the trade if the retail sale of butter is taken away from the retail grocers. As Mr. Bennett has stated, it is one-seventh of our trade, and it is a proportion which has to be carefully safeguarded. We do not for a moment think that it will be possible to get working-expenses out of it, but if we can get a proportion of the working-expenses we will be satisfied. I will not go further into details, because Mr. Bennett has already given you the details this morning. My associate here, Mr. Petrie, can give you further information. He is the manager of Messrs. Smecton's Limited, of Auckland. They do a very large business, and have separate departments for their different classes of trade, and they keep records and figures which allow definite analysis to be made. Mr. Petrie can give you definite information, because in one of their departments they practically only deal with bacon, cheese, butter, and eggs. We hope that the information we are able to give will be useful to you in coming to some solution of this matter. We know it is a very large problem, and we trust that our evidence will be of value.

6. I suppose you have no suggestion to make to the Committee as to how the difference in the price can be made up?—No, sir. That is a very large question. We are retailers, and we leave that question to wiser heads than ours.

7. *Mr. Hockly.*] Do the retail grocers get their butter from the factories in pats or in bulk?—The majority buy from the factories in pound pats. A few of the larger grocers have butter-pat-making machinery of their own, but there are not more than two or three of such firms in Auckland. The majority of the shops get their butter in pats.

8. Does Mr. Bennett's statement with respect to the 12½ per cent. margin of profit for spot cash and 15 per cent. for booking cover the whole lot?—Yes, it covers the whole market for butter.

9. *Mr. J. R. Hamilton.*] As a grocer, what do you think of the suggestion that tickets should be given to poor people who are not able to pay the current rate: how do you think that would work?—Do you mean in the shape of ration tickets?

10. You can call them ration tickets, or any other kind of tickets you like?—Would not that lead to confusion? Everybody would want to get the tickets. If Mrs. Jones found out that Mrs. Brown was able to get butter cheaper with tickets she would want to get tickets also.