

5. They do not pay them for the full week when it is wet weather?—They nominally pay them if they stand by, but they cannot stand by in the weather we have had here lately. The position with the general labourer is this: that I have had to remit six months' contributions to the men who could not meet the demands of the families. The contribution to the union is only 6d. per week. Now, think of how it is possible to live on £4 a week and pay one's way. I am sure you will all admit that the average labourer has nothing to spare now, and the average consumption of butter for the average family would be modestly put at 5 lb. a week. My family consists of my wife, myself, and three boys, and our minimum consumption is 5 lb. a week. If I have to do my utmost at present to meet my engagements on what I am receiving or what the labourer is receiving, I shall be 5s. a week short if butter advances 1s. per pound. Now, what would happen if the labourer is 5s. a week short in meeting his engagements?

6. *Mr. Powdrell.*] The annual consumption is estimated at $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. per week per head?—You must take into consideration the meat. My family only touches meat once a day, and my boys do not eat jam. I am fully satisfied I could not live and pay my way decently or fairly on the average wages received by the unskilled worker. Now, this is the position: while admitting that the farmer is only just like ourselves—and there is no use decrying the other fellow—the position becomes very grave when members of the community find it impossible to supply their wives and families with adequate nourishment. I am sure that not even one member of this Committee would hesitate under those circumstances to commit a crime rather than see his wife and family go short of food. Now, if they are on the verge of starvation at the present time, what will happen if they have to meet engagements which will entail an extra expenditure of 5s. a week? This question is one of the gravest that can be thought of. If there is a rise in the price of butter, which I repeat is the very thing I would ask for if I were a farmer—I would suggest that even from the purely selfish viewpoint—it would behove the farmer, the merchant, and every one else in the community to consider the grave consequences which must inevitably result if you goad the population in such a way that they cannot find adequate nourishment for their wives and families. If this increase in butter does eventuate, as it appears to be likely, I would suggest that some provision should be made by which the community should be given an advance in their wages. That advance in the wages of the workers should synchronize with and be commensurate with the rise in the price of butter. If they have too much to do to-day to meet their liabilities, how much more would they have to do to meet the extra liability of 5s. That is the most important matter I can put before you, and I do not think the gravity of the situation can be overestimated. Further than that, in making these statements, a few of the members of the Council point out to me that it would possibly not be a bad course to follow to impose an export tax on butter. At the present time we have to pay for our boots more than we care about simply because boots are protected. Well, surely the consumer has as much right to expect to be reasonably treated by the authorities as the importer or exporter. A substantial export duty might perhaps to an extent, although I do not know how far, alleviate the difficulty.

7. An export tax on butter?—Yes, on butter. I have not thought the matter out very clearly. However, what I did consider most seriously was the question of the men being goaded up as a result of being unable to provide sufficient for their wives and families. I am not speaking for myself individually. I am situated in such a way that I can manage to keep going, but we ought to think of the gravity of the situation before we act in the matter and make adequate provision for the man who has to buy butter after the price has been raised 1s. per pound. Another point I was asked to mention was that this Butter Committee should recommend that provision be made for an adequate amount of butter to be kept in this country to meet the needs of the population. Whether the price is raised or not, it is contended, and I think rightly so, that an amount sufficient to meet the needs of the population should be retained in the country. Of course, that is a purely local matter, and what happens in other countries we are not concerned with. We are immediately concerned with our own affairs; but whether there is a famine price ruling in England, it is contended that where there is such a plentiful supply of foodstuffs as in this country there should be no famine prices prevailing here.

8. *The Chairman.*] You made the statement that it did not matter about famine prices in the Old Country, and that that was really no concern of ours. On the other hand, you say the farmer is entitled to everything he can get. You suggest that we here should keep the price of butter down in New Zealand—that it does not matter whatever the surplus is it should be exported at that price, and that the people in the Old Country must pay the increased rate or solve the difficulty themselves. Is that the suggestion, that we are not concerned with what happens in the Old Country at all?—No, that is not the suggestion; but, to use an old adage, charity begins at home. We are concerned with ourselves before we are concerned with others. If a famine occurs, even in India, it is a man's duty to endeavour to relieve that famine, but not at the expense of his wife and family.

9. Another witness said that it was not our concern?—I would not hold with that. I think it is a concern of ours. The whole community is a concern of ours, but our primary concern is with our own people.

10. You suggested there should be an export tax on butter: do you not realize that if an export tax is put on butter the farmer would go out of the business at once and go in for the manufacture of cheese?—Put a relative tax on cheese.

11. How would you deal with wool: supposing the farmer went out of butter and cheese and went in for sheep?—He is making too much to go out of any of them. The statement of the farmer that he is making a loss has to be taken not only with a grain of salt but with a bushel of salt. The singular thing is that the farmer who tells us he is making a loss every year on his farm has a nice balance at his bank and buys his motor-car. I find that the larger the debit balance the more prosperous the farmer. I have a knowledge of mathematics, but that knowledge does not agree with the statements of the farmer.

12. You say that the wages of the workers should be raised commensurate with the increase in the price of butter?—Yes.

13. Do you know that butter is a fluctuating commodity?—Yes, and wages fluctuate.

14. No; wages do not, as a rule, go back?—Yes, they do; they fluctuate more than butter.