

37. What is your idea of it? You are secretary of a union and know a good deal about these general labourers: how do they make both ends meet?—Neither I nor any one else can tell that. Only the man himself can do so.

38. An increase in the cost of butter to the extent of 1s. a pound is not going to help that man to make both ends meet?—No, he will go farther back and get more desperate.

39. What is the remedy?—The remedy is for the authorities to take the matter in hand. I would not suggest a remedy.

40. I suggest the remedy is for the employer to pay that man sufficient wages per week, including the time when off duty, to enable him to maintain that wife and family in reasonable comfort?—Yes; but how it is to be brought about is a matter for you gentlemen.

41. I would not believe that the average wage was only £3?—I would not be sure, but it is so near it that there would only be a trifling difference. I am referring to the Wellington builders' and general labourers.

42. *The Chairman.*] You are not referring to carpenters?—No. I said at the beginning that I was secretary to a union of unskilled workers. I referred to them, and I certainly would make no statement which my conscience did not approve of, and I find no fault with the farmer trying to get as much as he can—I would do the same thing myself; but I think it behoves the farmer to consider the consequence in time. When we were boys the agricultural labourer in England was a shade less intelligent than the Zulu in South Africa, but that is not the position now. The more you educate a man the more you have to take him into account, the more he thinks, and the more discontented he gets with his position. You would be surprised at the intelligence possessed by the members of the union of which I am the secretary. They may sometimes be a little hasty and say things which are not quite consistent with what should be, but I expect our legislators say that sometimes. The more intelligence the men possess the worse will be the upheaval, and come it will, because they are on the verge of upheaval now.

43. *Mr. Poland.*] You suggested an import tax; but does not an import tax increase the cost of living?—Yes, of course, it does. We are paying the other fellow for our boots and paying our own fellows for our butter.

44. You think the import tax should be taken off boots?—I would not go that far. I only took that as an illustration to show the increase it meant to us in boots.

45. In order to reduce the cost of living, do you not think the import tax should be taken off—that would reduce the price of boots?—I am not silly enough to suggest such a thing as that until some other mode of revenue is decided on.

46. What do you recommend?—I am not recommending anything, but simply stating facts.

47. You are recommending an export tax on butter?—No; it was suggested to me that I should mention that matter, and I said I did not know how it would act.

48. You do not recommend it yourself?—No, I am not speaking for or against it—I do not know.

49. *Mr. McCombs.*] It has been suggested to you this morning that a ration ticket might be issued to people with certain incomes and under to make a distinction between the consumers. You said it would be too much like charity?—Well, that is only my own opinion.

50. Yes, I agree with that?—I would not take a ration ticket myself; I would rather go without or on short rations.

51. *Mr. Atmore.*] When referring to the average wage being £3 a week, did you mean three pound notes, or were you measuring it by the 1914 standard?—I am glad you put the question. I should have said £1 10s. a week as compared with the 1914 standard.

52. And do you recognize that in the case of the farmer's butter, if he got 2s. or 3s. it is only half that value as compared with 1914? The actual money received by the farmer to-day has depreciated in purchasing-power exactly the same as the money in the hands of the labourer or the £3 per week man?—Yes, I assume that, because the relative difference is the same.

53. You know that there is a shortage of the goods manufactured in other countries for which we exchange our butter, and if there is a scarcity of those goods it will affect our purchasing-power or the exchange power?—Naturally.

54. Then if there is a shortage of goods in any of the countries from which we import, that would have some effect in the price of our butter?—It would have, but I do not admit that it should have in the country in which the butter is produced. For instance, I used to buy oranges at Oporto for a mere song, while in Edinburgh I would have to pay 1s. a dozen. I should say if you have to pay 2s. 10d. for butter in England you ought to be able to buy it here for 1s. 10d.

55. You would not say those two cases were analogous. For instance, there is a market for all the butter we could make throughout the whole world?—Yes.

56. You said that if you were a farmer you would expect the 1s. per pound more?—No—I merely said that if I were a farmer I assumed that I would try and get all I could, but that does not solve the problem.

57. The statement you made was that if you were a farmer you would consider yourself entitled to the increase of 1s. a pound?—Not entitled to it, but that I would try and get all I could. That is human nature. I mean to convey that if we admit the fact to ourselves, humanity is simply like a lot of vultures each fighting for a larger share of the carrion. The man who gets the smaller share is naturally in the big majority, and they whine at the men who get the biggest share. We want to get above that.

58. How would you deal with the farmer who in 1914 was producing sufficient butter each week in order to get a return of £5 profit? What would you say he was entitled to get now before he was on the same footing as then?—£10.

59. He would have to double the nominal price of his butter to get it?—Possibly; but when I admit that, then you must admit that the worker's wage ought to be doubled at the same time in order to meet the increased cost of the products.

60. There has been such a depreciation in the purchasing-power that it hits the man producing the butter?—Yes. Of course, we would need to ascertain the decrease before we admitted it.

61. *Mr. Kellett.*] You referred to an export tax. In which way would that benefit the consumer—how would you apply it?—I have already said that I only mentioned that in parrot-like fashion. I was told to mention it before the Committee.