

161. I will just put this to you by way of speculation : You feel at the present time the position of Gibbs's dentifrice as against Kolynos—supposing the representatives of Gibbs's dentifrice were selling their article at 1s. and you were obliged to sell Kolynos at 1s. 6d., would you endeavour to use your influence on the P.A.T.A. to bring the two prices more into line ?—We have no influence at all in the P.A.T.A. executive.

162. You are a member of the committee ?—Yes.

163. That has something to do with that body ?—It would have to be done on proper lines. Moreover, we would never think of using any influence on the executive of the P.A.T.A. in that direction.

164. You would not think of doing it ?—It did not occur to us that such a thing would be possible—that is, to use influence to have the price brought up to the same level as another line. It may differ in size, and also as to the quality, altogether from the particular line you have mentioned.

165. Are you aware that such has been the practice ?—I have no knowledge of anything of the kind.

166. *Mr. Collins.* How long have you been agent for Kolynos ?—Since 1908.

167. In regard to this number of 100, for what year is that ?—1922-23, the first month of 1923 ending our financial year. We have not the records before that.

168. Could you supply to the Committee the actual numbers that the percentage represents ?—I think there would be no objection to that, Mr. Chairman, but it would take a little time to prepare it.

169. Your evidence has been mainly in connection with Kolynos, has it not ?—Yes ; it is one of our big agency lines.

170. That, I take it, is your most serious complaint ?—That is so. With the general business we have the same thing, but I do not make a point of surveying the whole of our drug-prices.

171. How many lines from overseas have been cut in your trade during the last three years ?—What loss ?

172. Proportionately ?—It is very difficult to say, sir. I cannot give you any idea, even on percentages.

173. I would like some indication, even if it was 10 per cent. or more ?—One could not give an answer of that description definitely, but I should say 20 per cent. It is only a guess.

174. That would be of no use to us. Does your firm experience much cutting in New Zealand greatly in proprietary lines ?—More or less, yes.

175. Could you not adjust the position on the spot ?—You cannot do that.

176. Do you think that price-fixing is general in New Zealand ?—No, not general. Many firms issue a list. The general run of proprietary articles are cut right throughout the Dominion.

177. You are manufacturers of certain articles, are you not ?—That is so. There is a special price on a line costing up to 13s. 6d. to 14s. per dozen, but it gradually gets cut down to below that.

178. You have to put up with that ?—That is so. Sooner or later it comes down, through competition, to a lower level.

179. To some extent your prices have to be moveable because of competition ?—That is so. We endeavour to establish a line at the policy price.

180. Do you know of the existence of a trade competitor in New Zealand deliberately slaughtering Kolynos, and encouraging the slaughtering of Kolynos, with a view to putting on a competitive line ?—No, not in relation to Kolynos.

181. I was taking Kolynos merely as an example. In your wide experience you do not know of a wholesale competitor deliberately purchasing your line in large quantities and slaughtering it so as to pave the way for his line ?—No, I do not think he could afford to do it.

182. Has your business generally been fairly prosperous ? Can you state generally in regard to your firm ?—My attention is more particularly confined to our warehouse trade.

183. Has that been fairly prosperous during the last five years ?—Yes.

184. What I meant was generally on your sales of proprietary articles. Speaking generally, do many of your customers go off one line and go on to something else—you say that you have done fairly well ?—Yes, there seems to be an idea in the trade that if you lose one trader you get another.

185. Have you any knowledge as to the cost of running a retail chemist-shop ?—Not a retail chemist business.

186. Of a grocery business ?—No.

187. Of a cut-rate-store business ?—No.

188. Or of a drapery-store business ?—No.

189. In fixing the retail price for, say, Kolynos, the manufacturers can have no regard to the changing overhead cost with respect to those different distributors ?—They have to take it in a general way. They know that a chemist must get a fair margin of profit because his turnover is limited. He is not like a grocer turning over his stock, say, ten times in the year.

190. To be fair, the P.A.T.A. fixed a price of 1s. 6d. at the behest of the chemist ?—Yes.

191. Whereas the cut-rate shop might be quite satisfied with 1s. 4d. ?—That is an element of competition that we consider very unfair from the wholesale point of view.

192. Your sympathies are with the chemists ?—Yes.

193. To help him to maintain his business ?—It is absolutely necessary. I do not know of many chemists who have retired as a consequence of what they make out of their chemistry business, other than outside speculations, &c.