

On resuming at 2.30 p.m.

HAROLD HOOK sworn and examined. (No. 12.)

1. *Mr. Myers.*] What are you ?—A grocer.
2. A retail grocer ?—Yes, a retail cash grocer.
3. Are you in business on your own behalf ?—I am managing for Mr. Owen Hurney.
4. Now, I think you have been engaged in the grocery business for a good many years ?—Yes, for about thirty years, I should say, roughly speaking.
5. During what portion of that period have you been in business on your own account ?—About fifteen years.
6. Do you remember Wheeler, of Auckland, starting in business in Wellington in 1922 ?—I would not be sure of the date.
7. Were you in business at the time ?—Yes, in Courtenay Place.
8. Had you been in business for some time ?—About twelve months.
9. Doing a cash business or a credit business ?—All cash.
10. Were you making a living out of it ?—Yes, I was doing very well.
11. Wheeler started business near you, did he not ?—Yes, about 50 yards away, or perhaps 100 yards away ; I could not be quite sure.
12. And was he doing a cash business ?—Yes, I think so—that is, as far as I know.
13. Did he adopt any special tactics in his business ?—Yes ; he was always notorious as a cutter, and did cut very strongly in every line.
14. Can you say in a general way what class or classes of goods he cut mainly ?—On some proprietary and other lines.
15. Can you remember any particular proprietary line where he indulged in cutting ?—He used to cut Kolynos.
16. Down to what ?—Down to a shade over cost, and lower.
17. Of course, you are speaking of a few years ago. Can you remember other items on which he cut ?—Yes ; he used to cut on tobacco and cigarettes, Edmonds' baking-powder, &c.
18. Can you remember in a general way whether he was cutting in more lines than those you have described ?—Sunlight Soap.
19. What was the consequence so far as you were concerned : what did you have to do ?—I had to meet the competition.
20. Can you remember whether Baxter's lung-preserver was cut by him ?—I cannot say as to that.
21. When you say that you had to meet the competition, what do you mean ?—By cutting down to his price ; I could not do anything else.
22. What was the result so far as you were concerned ?—I think my profits were much lower and the expenses were just the same ; and I considered the matter, and I did not think it was worth while to carry on, and therefore I sold my lease and got out.
23. You came to the conclusion that you could not make a living ?—I could make just as good a living elsewhere without having capital in the business.
24. You sold out on the assumption that he would remain in business ?—Yes.
25. What happened ?—He closed his business a few hours before I did.
26. Where is Hurney's shop situated ?—At the corner of Abel Smith Street and Cuba Street.
27. How do you find the position now in regard to cutting ?—It is a shade worse ; in fact, it is every bit as bad.
28. Than at the time when you had to meet Wheeler's competition ?—Yes.
29. Have you any cutting shops near you now ?—Yes, fairly near. There is Hill Bros. down the road ; the Self-help ; and there is another one in Cuba Street. It is not very close, but it is near enough to affect us.
30. Do you know a certain line of goods called the Pacific goods ?—Yes.
31. What class of goods do they comprise ?—General goods, such as vinegar, methylated spirits, &c.
32. By whom are those articles put up ?—They trade as the Pacific Manufacturing Company, in Newtown.
33. It is a local manufacturing company ?—Yes.
34. Have you handled any of those goods ?—Not to a great extent ; that is to say, not to buy from them generally. I have only a few of their lines.
35. Is there any particular reason why you do not or could not ?—We always like to stock a line that is not being cut.
36. Is that line being cut ?—Yes.
37. What lines of a similar character do you stock ?—Anybody-else's lines that have not been cut, if we can get them.
38. As a matter of fact, is there any particular line to which you are giving preference for that reason ?—Yes, Murdoch's.
39. What is the name of their brand of goods ?—I think it is the Red Funnel brand.
40. At what price do you sell Edmonds' baking powder ?—1s. 2d.
41. What does it cost you ?—14s. per dozen.
42. You are selling at cost : why do you do that ?—It is worse if you try to charge more than the other man.
43. Why do you sell that particular line at 1s. 2d. ?—Because the other fellow is doing it.
44. I suppose there are some cut lines which you have to stock ?—Yes.
45. When a person goes into your shop and asks for a line upon which you are cutting under a profit, or a profit that does not pay you, what do you do ?—We substitute it if we can : that is to say, in a lot of cases you can introduce something else, or some other maker, I should say.