

100. At what price were you in the habit of selling it?—I keep it under the counter; we never sell it.

101. What do you mean by that?—We do not boast about the price we are selling it at—in fact, we are what may be termed ashamed of the price. Many people are selling it at 1s.

102. Mr. Hook, could you tell the Committee, in a grocery business like yours, about what is the percentage of overhead expenses?—From 10 to 12½ per cent.

103. Does that include your own wage or salary? Not including your own wage or salary----

104. *Mr. Gresson.*] In reference to the last question asked by my learned friend, in the present business where you are manager you include your own salary in that estimate?—That is the general estimate of all business.

105. You said that you sell Amber Tips tea at 2s. 11d.—Yes.

106. What is your own tea like?—It is good tea.

107. Do you put it up in packets?—Yes.

108. Is it sealed up?—Yes.

109. Do you consider that tea is as good as [*Brand deleted*]?—It is better than [*Brand deleted*.]

110. According to what you told my learned friend, you always sold granose biscuits at cost?—No.

111. I think you told him so?—How far back do you refer?

112. When did you sell granose biscuits at 1s. 2d.?—Three years ago.

113. Since then you have been selling them at 11½d.?—Yes.

114. You are one of the cutters, then, are you not?—We like to appear so. We have to meet the competition of the other fellow.

115. There is nothing to compel you?—The public wants it.

116. Your point is that, if the public wants a thing, you have to cut?—We have to cut the same as the other fellow.

117. In this particular case, since you have been where you are, you have always been selling at cut prices?—As I say, we have to meet the competition of the other fellow.

118. In regard to your Coronation soap and Velvet soap, which you have referred to, is there very much difference between them so far as quality, &c., go?—In the quality I should say, no.

119. It does not matter, then, so far as the public is concerned, whether they buy your soap or Velvet soap?—They are entitled to have what they ask for.

120. You supply them with as good an article as they ask for?—Yes.

121. You told us that when you had to sell your shop out you could make a living there; but owing to the amount of cash you had involved you considered you could do as well outside, and that it was not worth your while carrying on there. In other words, would you mind writing down on this piece of paper what profit you made at the time you felt it was wiser to go out of business than to keep on the way you were doing. [*Mr. Hook wrote down particulars on a piece of paper, and, after perusal by Mr. Myers, Mr. Gresson handed same to Mr. Collins, Chairman.*]

122. You have told us that you were carrying on business in Courtenay Place as a cash grocer—that is, on your own behalf?—Yes.

123. Did you wrap up the goods?—Yes.

124. Did you deliver them to your customers?—No.

125. It was simply a “cash and wrap-up” business?—That is so.

126. You were not “cash and carry,” but in your business you did tie and wrap up parcels?—Yes, like respectable tradesmen.

127. And delivered it over the counter?—Yes.

128. *Mr. Kennedy.*] I suppose the returns in your present business are satisfactory—that is, the business you are at present managing?—Yes.

129. Very satisfactory?—I would not say that. As I am speaking about another man’s business, I do not want to say much.

130. I suppose you will concede that these competition prices are lower to the public than if there had not been competition?—The prices are lower, yes, some of them.

131. Do you mean by a cutter a man who sells lower than you?—No: a cutter is a man in a lot of cases who appears to be cheap, but does his best to undercut the other man if he can—that is to say, puts his prices down to-day and puts them up to-morrow.

132. Some men can buy better than other men because they are keener buyers; is that not so?—Yes, I will concede that.

133. Will you also concede that some men can run their business concerns better than others?—Yes, I will.

134. And some men have the benefit of large turnovers?—Yes, some of them have.

135. So you will concede it follows that some can sell at a lower price than others and still make an adequate profit?—Some can. I am not admitting that a man with a larger business can sell cheaper than a man with a small business. Some men are competent, whilst others are incompetent.

136. What you desire is that every man, irrespective of his capacity, shall sell at the same price?—I am not suggesting that at all.

137. Do you not suggest that every man shall sell one article at the same price?—I am not suggesting; I am here to answer questions.

138. Do you approve of every man selling at the same price?—I approve of getting a reasonable profit on every article you handle.

139. Supposing a man can carry on his business efficiently and sells his goods at a less price than his neighbour and still gets a less profit, do you think that that man should be prevented from doing it and be compelled to sell at the same price as his neighbour?—No man can handle a thing for 2½ per cent. when his overhead is 10 or 12½ per cent.