

8. In taking that into consideration have you considered the various classes of "cash and carry" businesses that there are—there are at least three?—I do not worry if there are three.

9. We have what is known as the grocerteria?—Is it in existence in New Zealand?

10. In Dunedin. The second class is the class in Wellington known as the "cash and carry," with no wrap-up of parcels, and no string, even, in the shop, and where the person comes in and brings a basket and takes away butter, &c.?—What about rice and sugar?

11. Bags would have to be provided in that case. The third is "cash and wrap up," and then there is a fourth, known as "cash, wrap up, and deliver": the fifth, known as "cash, wrap up, deliver, and credit." We will take the first three: you say you will have to fix three different prices for those three different classes of business?—I suggest that the difference in the service they render is so minute that it is useless to attempt to discriminate.

12. It means the service of one assistant. Take the case of butter and string; it means the services of one assistant to wrap up butter and tie it with string?—No.

13. Surely it appeals to one's common-sense that if you do not wrap up a parcel and tie it up you can do away with an assistant?—No.

14. I am told that you can do away with the services of more than one assistant?—You are going into the vexed question as to the relative size of the business. You get many business concerns where it is only a one-man concern, and it is not going to take him more time, because he otherwise might be idle.

15. You yourself have had no experience in a "cash and carry" business, and do not know what it is?—I do.

16. Have you had experience of it, and where?—In Auckland.

17. What business?—Wheeler Bros.

18. You were not in the business?—No, but I had an experience of it.

*Mr. Collins.*] I take it that the reply of Mr. Barker is that there is very little difference in cost.

19. *Mr. Gresson* (to witness).] As regards Wheeler's, you suggest that the reason why Wheelers met with disaster was because they carried on this "cash and carry" business?—No, I do not suggest that.

20. You are aware that there were other reasons why Wheelers collapsed?—Yes. May I say this in regard to differentiation—I want the Committee to understand the position: that there is no more difficult problem facing the grocer to-day than this differentiation in price. Personally, I have always pointed out, notwithstanding the fact that some individual wrote to the paper here and did not have the courage to sign his name, that the man who paid cash was always entitled to consideration. I want to say that there is no more equitable method than that of giving cash-register receipts; but you cannot compel every one to use them. Another method that has been considered—it has much to commend it—is of charging a booking fee of 5 per cent. The Farmers' Union Trading Company adopted that; but they charged their method and allowed a discount subsequently, conditional that the amount was paid on a fixed date, of 1 per cent. on the 1st of the month. Now, the difficulty in regard to that is to get a uniform system. At the Grocers' Federation conference which was held in Dunedin a resolution was passed along those lines, but that has not been given effect to. Here is the difficulty between the respective classes of trading: Those who sell for "cash and carry" immediately say that if a price is fixed by the P.A.T.A. as the minimum price, that the grocer is going to charge and book at the same price. The reply to that on the part of the "cash and credit" grocer is this: if he complies with the credit account no one who knows the respective classes of trade can continue what I believe to be, especially affecting that "cash and carry" business, a more or less unprofitable business. I want to say that one of the great troubles this season in regard to the "cash and carry" was caused by their attempt to differentiate. They have not been fair in the prices they have been charging for the "cash and carry" as compared with the prices charged where goods are sold on credit. The prices have been placed right down on cost. I can speak of five years' experience in the early days. We had actually three prices sometimes; and there is no more difficult business than to attempt two prices—namely, one cash and one credit—because the position becomes exceedingly difficult when you get down to articles sold ordinarily at 1s. 6d. or below. To have two prices, in my opinion, is wrong, and the only way to overcome the difficulty is to add 5 per cent. in order to adequately meet the position.

21. *Mr. Kennedy.*] Do I understand you to admit that there is a difference in the case of a credit business and that of the "cash and carry" business, and that there should be some reduction to the "cash and carry" customer?—Yes, certainly.

22. You do not see anything unfair in giving the exact amount of that benefit to the consumer?—I might ask you for an interpretation as to what is meant by that.

23. I cannot answer you any more than that. I am asking you the exact amount of benefit?—There has got to be some fixed amount, for the simple reason that what you term the exact amount of the benefit might vary considerably. Take, for instance, a man who is running his business on an exceedingly low rental, and therefore if you are going to take that fact into consideration he cannot go and cut his price considerably below the other trader who is doing the same business and who is paying an equitable rental.

24. You want to preserve in business not only the inefficient and efficient, but the man who cannot carry on?—You are putting words into my mouth to which I did not give utterance. We only want the efficient man in the grocery trade, the same as in the legal profession. If he is more proficient he should be allowed to retain those advantages for himself and his family.

25. And to have a compulsory organization to enable him to live as against the competition of the more efficient man?—I do not know that any such organization is suggested at the present time.