

160. *Mr. Montgomery.*] When you see the Self-help prices on their window, how does that affect you?—I have to follow. If I happen to be $\frac{1}{2}$ d. more than they are I have either to come down to their level or do no business.

161. *Mr. Reardon.*] Do you allow your wife a wage for running the shop?—No; I allow her nothing. I cannot see my way to allow her anything. We work together, and if we are successful we share it; if not, we will have to go out.

162. *The Chairman.*] Have you arrived at the difference in cost of running your Aro Street shop as compared with the Willis Street shop?—I have arrived at the difference in expenses, yes.

163. Which is the cheaper shop to run?—Aro Street. I got it at an exceptionally cheap rent.

164. But one is a cash business, and the other cash and credit?—Yes. My Aro Street shop is strictly cash.

165. Are you satisfied, in view of the competition which you have to face, with the return you are getting?—No, I am not satisfied.

166. Are you satisfied with your present position compared with your position in England?—No.

167. You were better off as an employee in England than you are in New Zealand to-day?—Yes. The only thing is that I am freer here. I am my own master, and I should never have become my own master there.

168. In view of the existing competition, did you expect to do a great deal better than you are doing to-day?—Yes, I did.

169. Even having regard to the methods and cut prices?—I thought I could hold my own.

170. What is your overhead in Aro Street?—I reckon it works out at 10 per cent. in Aro and Willis Streets. We have to pay more rent in Willis Street, and I have to pull it down.

171. How do you pull it down?—I do not pay my wife wages.

ARTHUR WILLIAM PRESS sworn and examined. (No. 16.)

1. *Mr. Myers.*] What is your occupation?—I am managing director of Thompson Bros., Ltd., of Wellington, wholesale grocery merchants.

2. Your company is the agent for the proprietors of Amber Tips tea?—Yes.

3. Are the proprietors of that tea a New Zealand company?—Yes; they are Messrs. Fletcher, Humphreys, and Co.

4. Do you remember when that tea was first placed on the market?—Somewhere about 1908.

5. Is it a tea which is blended in New Zealand by Fletcher, Humphreys, and Co.?—Yes.

6. Are they experts, or have they an expert whom they employ for the purpose of blending teas?—They have experts.

7. And is that their principal proprietary line of tea?—Yes.

8. Perhaps their only line?—Up to a year before last it was their only line, but they now have a line called Empress; but Amber Tips is their main line.

9. Is it a line which they advertise?—Yes, very extensively.

10. Is it a line the sale of which started in a small way?—Yes, very small. When we first took over the agency our first order to them, which I gave, was for five cases. I fancy that was in 1908.

11. By dint of advertising and quality, I suppose, did this tea become established on the market?—Yes.

12. It became a popular tea?—I believe it was looked upon, and still is looked upon, as a leading packet tea.

13. Can you say when the sales of that tea reached their peak?—As far as Wellington is concerned, about three years ago.

14. When you say "Wellington," you mean?—The Wellington Province. Why I speak only of that is because we are only concerned with the Wellington Provincial District. Our agency only takes in Wellington this side of Palmerston North and Woodville.

15. Wellington District up to Palmerston North and Woodville?—Yes.

16. Have the sales suffered since then?—They have in the Wellington District.

17. Can you attribute any particular cause to that?—We attribute that to cutting, as up to that time sales showed a steady progress.

18. And up to that time had there been much cutting?—Only in isolated cases; but it became intensive from three years ago onwards.

19. When you say it has become intensive during the last three years, has it increased?—Yes, it has increased, because there has been a "follow on."

20. Have you during the last three years maintained the advertising, and have you maintained the efficiency of your salesmanship?—Yes; in fact my principals inform me that they have spent more money on advertising during the last three years.

21. What price do you pay for that tea?—As wholesalers we pay 2s. 10d., less $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. trade discount, plus 7d. per case landing charges, less $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. monthly settlement.

22. Can you tell us what that means net?—No, I have not worked it out.

23. How many pounds in a case?—60 lb.

24. My friend Mr. Young makes it 2s. 10d., less $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.?—Very likely that would be right. The 7d. represents $\frac{1}{3}$ per cent.

25. Can you tell us the price the wholesaler charges to the retailer?—2s. 10d. for up to five cases; 2s. 10d., less 5 per cent. for five cases and over, with the usual $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for monthly settlement.

26. I think the proprietors of the tea mark the price on the package?—Yes, 3s. 4d. per pound. It is marked on both ends of the packet.