

19. Have you in the case of certain articles been compelled by P.A.T.A. boycott to come into line with P.A.T.A. prices?—We are in this position: that unless co-operative societies sign an agreement that they will not only maintain the price fixed by the P.A.T.A., but will also add to that price any dividend they may pay, they will not be supplied. That means we are not allowed to pass on to our customers any rebate they would get on account of much handling, and the customer is not allowed, on his part, any benefit of his mutual trading.

20. It is powerful enough to dictate to your powerful association?—Yes, to that extent. And it means this: “Unless you accept our terms of sale you cannot have our goods.” That is their dictum, and that is where they stand.

21. You had no option but to submit and buy to their dictation?—Yes, if we want to sell the goods. Their goods are very largely advertised, and in consequence of advertising their goods are in great demand. Our great objection to the whole thing is, first, we object to the fixation of prices, which is against the interest of the consumer in particular; and, second, that they should have the audacity to dictate to us as to whether we shall hand on any benefit of efficient distribution to our customers.

22. You think that a retailer should be free to hand on to his customer, if he so desires, some of the benefits of efficient management and efficient service?—Yes, I think so.

23. Is it a fact that the P.A.T.A. in England has one price or more than one price?—I should say that they have one price so far as I know. Of course, their prices do vary to this extent, as you can readily understand—namely, where a man is in a big way there is a certain amount of allowance for quantities; but the basic price is the same.

24. Is there anything else which you would like to let this Committee know about?—I only want to say that I believe every public inquiry that has been held has expressed the view that price-fixation with a minimum-price fixation to the consumer by any manufacturer of any article is harmful to the consumer. I believe that has been the finding everywhere; and the only reason why we have been unable to get satisfaction is because the Government cannot move without introducing new legislation, and I think every one knows the trouble there is to move a Government without legislation. The objection to the P.A.T.A. is very, very real, and when I tell you that our customers represent three million heads of families, which is, roughly, a quarter of the population of Britain, you may know that their voice would not be expressed unless they felt they had some grievance.

25. *Mr. Walker.*] Has the P.A.T.A. organization at any time approached you and asked you to give them your figures of costs of doing your business, either as between your company and the retailer, and the retailer and the consumer?—No.

26. In other words, whatever method of price-fixing adopted by them, they have not asked you what it costs you to handle your business?—The only time they approached us was when they found the retail societies were not adding on a certain percentage.

27. *Mr. Myers.*] In connection with interdepartmental inquiries, I understand they do not examine witnesses on oath?—No.

28. They simply do not examine witnesses?—I would not like to say that. Of course, they would report the result of their investigations.

29. And probably would not take evidence from witnesses?—I should say they would.

30. Do you know?—Yes, they do.

31. Do you know of your own knowledge as to whether they do or not?—I should not like to say, but I would be surprised if they do not.

32. I have here a list showing six names of members of a certain tribunal which has already been referred to: do you know those men?—Some of them.

33. They are not Government officials?—Some of them are, and some of them are not.

34. Can you tell me for certain?—It is not my business to answer that.

35. But you must?—I must object to that.

36. I am asking, of those men, how many of them are Government officers, and how many are not?—(No answer.)

37. *Mr. Collins.*] Are you sure of them?—No, I am not. You must remember that you might have two men with the same names.

38. *Mr. Myers.*] That is quite right. Which of those men are Government officers, and which of them are not?—I cannot tell you.

39. Your business is a wholesale business, is it not?—Yes.

40. You are not a retailer?—I have already explained that we are a wholesale medium for the society.

41. You are not in control of any retail businesses?—No; but the whole of our shareholders are in the retail business.

42. You said in the course of your examination by Mr. Kennedy that the P.A.T.A. come along to you and say that unless you accept their terms of sale they will not supply goods?—Yes.

43. Does the P.A.T.A. supply goods at all?—To whom?

44. I am asking you: do they?—The firms comprising the P.A.T.A. do.

45. That is quite a different thing?—You control the firms that are in your association.

46. One must assume from what you said that the P.A.T.A. keep stocks and sell them to the dealers?—Any one knows different to that. If I implied that, I must have made a fallacious implication.

47. What you mean is that goods are sold not by the P.A.T.A., but by manufacturers in the association?—And who have signed an agreement of the P.A.T.A.

48. I suppose you will admit that a manufacturer is entitled to fix the price at which his goods are sold, both wholesale and retail?—If he fixes a minimum sum, I say he is not entitled.