

61. On two and a half million tins: You have told us that when this intensive cutting started you knew that some of the grocers were not only putting your article under the counter but were pushing other lines?—Yes.

62. Can you tell us when, or about what time, the price in some districts went down to about 1s. 2d.?—It is rather a difficult matter, because the price has varied such a lot of late years.

63. Is it during the last few months?—I should say probably two years.

64. *Mr. Gresson.*] In your particular case you do not assume that the grocers who put your article under the counter and sold other lines have done you harm?—Yes, if it is taken over a number of years.

65. *Mr. Collins.*] Was the amount you spent on advertising effective in giving you your increase in expected sales when cutting took place?—It was effective in maintaining our expected sales. To make it more effective we circularized perhaps every housewife in the Dominion with particulars of what was going on in the retail trade and pointing out the reason why we had taken this measure as being in our own defence. The law would not allow us to take any other measure.

66. The ——— spent on special advertising on cookery-books could not be charged to any particular period. I presume that was advertising which would not necessarily be repeated except at three or four years' interval?—That is so.

67. That would have a lasting effect?—Yes.

68. Are you definitely of the opinion that it would be in the best interests of you line to have it sold at 1s. 6d. per tin—that is, at a fixed price?—I would not say 1s. 6d., because that would be a question for probably the Government to decide. I have been of the opinion that if price-fixation came into line we would be prepared to allow the Government to say what the retail price should be and what should be a fair profit on turnover.

69. Would you be content to the fixation of the price from the point of view of the wholesaler and retailer?—We would be content. The trouble is that the retailer picks out the popular lines and treats them as an advertisement to get other business.

70. If a cash grocer is selling your baking-powder at, say, 1s. 4d. and making a reasonable profit would you consider it was doing you a wrong if others were selling it at 1s. 6d.?—There is this to be said for the retail business in the Dominion, and it is that it cannot be run on the same lines. For instance, the farmer has to be supplied with credit, and therefore the cash store cannot cater for him.

71. Do you consider, as a business man, that efficiency in business should count?—Yes, it should count, and I am agreeable that there should be an equivalent reduction as between the cash and booked prices.

72. Have you any idea of what your line should be—on, say, your article at 1s. 4d. what do you consider is a fair discount to give?—Probably  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per tin.

73. That works out at what?—That is a difficult matter for the retailer to do—namely, to split a penny.

74. Do you know of other parts of the world where the price of baking-powder is controlled?—I believe there is a price-control in United States, but I would not be certain of that.

75. No, not in the United States?—Do you mean in regard to baking-powder alone?

76. Yes?—I have no knowledge as to that.

#### BENJAMIN SUTHERLAND sworn and examined. (No. 23.)

1. *Mr. Gresson.*] You are a grocer in Wellington, are you not?—Yes.

2. And you have been in the grocery business since 1922?—Yes.

3. Prior to that you were in the Railway Department?—Yes.

4. Originally how many stores did you have to start with?—We had five to begin with.

5. At the end of last year how many did you have?—At the end of last year we had twelve.

6. At the present time you have—how many?—Twenty.

7. All those stores are operated upon what is called the “cash and carry” principle?—Yes.

8. In your stores do you wrap up parcels?—No.

9. Is there any string in the stores?—No.

10. Articles like flour and sugar are put in bags?—Yes.

11. With respect to butter, what is done with that?—The paper is there and the customer can wrap the butter up in a newspaper. Of course, the butter is in its own wrapper.

12. What saving do you effect by that means?—A very considerable saving.

13. Does it save as regards employment of labour—that is, are your assistants able to do more?—Yes, considerably more.

[At this stage witness asked that the room should be cleared before proceeding further with his evidence, and this was agreed to, and the Chairman asked all present, other than counsel, to withdraw from the room. The evidence which followed, being of a confidential nature, is not published.]