eventually they gave way and allowed the price to be 6s. 10d. in Hawera. Subsequently the agent who was handling it admitted that my contention was right.

52. Do you find that the margins allowed on proprietary medicines are larger margins than you require to carry on successfully in your business?—Yes, considerably.

53. You could sell at a lower figure to the public and still get what you consider adequate returns for yourself?—Yes.

54. *Mr. Myers.*] Is the Committee to understand that you sell foodstuffs cheaper than your competitors?—I would not say in every case.

55. But in most cases?—Yes, very often.

56. And I suppose the very fact that you are selling foodstuffs at less than your competitors brings you a certain amount of custom?—It is done for that purpose.

57. I suppose you have your regular customers?—Yes.

58. And most of your business is cash, and it is done with regular customers?—Yes, most of it is cash.

59. Not what might be called casual trade?—There is not a great deal of it in Taranaki.

60. So long as you are selling your foodstuffs at a price which is less than your competitors you would expect to hold your custom?—All things being equal, yes.

61. Very well, then, if you are getting fixed prices for your proprietary articles and you are still able to sell the other articles to your customers—that is, foodstuffs—at prices less than your competitors. what have you to fear?—I have to fear this: that I might have people coming to me for proprietary articles who are not buying all their groceries from me.

62. You have told us that your trade is mostly with regular customers?—Yes, that is so; but the people who come to me for proprietary articles do not buy foodstuffs from me at all.

63. Do they not buy their foodstuffs where they can get them cheaper?—No. A farmer coming into town does not always come in to buy his foodstuffs from me. Another thing is that even my own customers, as soon as they have to pay cash, in most cases will go elsewhere if there is no inducement to come to me.

64. On the other hand, if you sell fewer lines you would get the increased profit?—If I could sell any at all.

65. If you are able to keep your trade in proprietary articles and make an increased profit?—Yes, on your supposition.

66. You say you have eleven men working for you?—Ten people employed.

67. What is the amount of your wages bill—you can write it down?—I cannot give you these particulars.

68. How many men did you employ last year?—Possibly three or four at different periods.

69. When did you go into your new shop?—About seven months ago.

70. That is, during last year?—To get my last year's figures would it not be to the end of March?

71. What I want to get is your wages bill for the same period?—I would have to send them down. Of course, I could give you an approximate figure.

72. That would suit me?—Very well. [Particulars written down on a piece of paper and handed in.]

73. You have informed the Committee that you sell about a ton of butter per week?—I have reached a ton per week.

74. Would it be about the same last year?—No.

75. What was it last year—was it half a ton?—I cannot say that. My business has increased enormously since I have got the new shop. I should not say it was half a ton.

76. Could you give me the particulars approximately?—It would be only guesswork. I suppose we would be running about seven boxes, and that represents 362 lb. of butter per week.

77. What would be the average price at which the butter would be sold?—I cannot say at what price it was sold last year. It is being sold to-day at 1s. 5d. and 1s. 6d.

78. I am asking you because you spoke about a ton of butter per week, and it would appear that the increase has been made all at once?—I had a shop built which is three times the size of the old one; and, furthermore, it is in a good position.

79. What margin of profit do you get on butter?—Butter is showing about 1d. and 1½d. profit.

80. Last year it was about the same, was it not?—We were getting better prices for butter last year.

81. Could you give me the percentage?—I should say that we would be getting 11 per cent. on turnover, but this year we are not getting that. I have two shops where I had one before.

82. In January last year were you doing 1 ton of butter per week?—We did not do 1 ton in December, on account of the hot weather; and, of course, the holidays being on, the people went away.

83. What quantities did you do in January?—I would not go near that figure in January.

84. How much butter did you sell in December?—At the latter part of December it began to fall off.

85. Can you give me the quantity of your output in butter for December?—In the early part of December it would be about 1 ton.

86. I want the output for the month?—I did not take figures for that month.

87. Did you average it a week for the whole of December?—At the end of December there was a falling-off—that is, in the last week.

88. Were you averaging a ton a week up to that time?—Yes, for about three weeks.

89. Inasmuch as there were thirty-one days in December, we may take it you did 4 tons?—The shops were closed on several days of those thirty-one days in December. I would not have done a ton in December even if I kept up my average.