

in Dunedin?—They are doing a small business, but they have been informed that the stumbling-block is their own representative.

374. Are you aware that there was one reason given one day and another reason given another day?—I have only heard of that one reason.

375. Will you give us the correspondence relating to Steven and Co.'s secession about March, 1903, which took place between the Flour-millers' Association and your union?—There is a letter dated Dunedin, 7th April, 1903, from A. Steven and Co. to Mr. B. Ringer, secretary of the Master Bakers' Union, as follows: "DEAR SIR,—In reply to your favour of yesterday, we beg to inform you that we were in no way responsible for the last reduction in flour, as the position was forced upon us by the action of some members of the Millers' Association, who were apparently allowed to do as they pleased, being both in and out of the association. We have never been made aware of the correct association price of flour, and we were being undersold in small bags at least ten days before we took action. Previous to reducing both small bags and sacks we pointed out to your president the position we were placed in, and what we would be compelled to do, and he took no exception to our action as bearing on your association. We also informed the Millers' Association, but did not even get a civil reply. You will see from this the position was forced upon us, and we could not help ourselves, as fifties at £10 15s. and two-hundreds at £10 10s. would be absurd. However, we trust the reduction will be a gain to your members, as it is not sufficient to affect the price of bread."

376. Did Mr. Meek correspond with you about Steven and Co.'s secession?—These letters are copies of correspondence between A. Steven and Co. and Mr. Meek. They were sent to us for our information. [Letter-book referred to]. There is a letter to Mr. W. Evans, dated the 23rd May, 1903, from Mr. Jameson, general manager of the Flour-millers' Association, which says, "At a meeting of my directors held yesterday the question of the sale of your flour was again considered, and it was decided to advise you that as all the Dunedin millers had (by special arrangement) the option now of selling their small bags outside the association if they wish it, that you should be placed in the same position if you are still willing that the association should have the sale of your sacks from the Crown Mills. Kindly let me know your wishes."

377. Have you any other letters about the freedom of millers to sell their small bags at what price they liked?—Personally, I do not know that I have anything to do with these letters, they belong to Mr. Jameson.

378. Did the association inform your union generally as to what policy it was pursuing in regard to its business?—We were generally advised by the local representative of the association.

379. Was that because there was a working agreement between the Bakers' Union and the Flour-millers' Association?—There was a mutual understanding in regard to the position between the two unions, but there never was any agreement.

380. But there was an understanding?—Yes, as to how we would work with Steven and Co.

381. If a baker chose to fix a cash price for bread sold over the counter and it was lower than the price your union chose to fix, would you try and stop that baker getting flour from the association?—If he were a member we should immediately put our rules into operation. If he were not a member we should not have anything to do with the miller who supplied him.

382. That is to say, you boycott men who do not conform to your views with regard to the price you fix for bread?—I would not say "boycott," because he could buy flour elsewhere.

383. But you made it difficult for such a man to get flour?—That is provided for by our rules.

384. Were there any bakers in Dunedin who were undercutting?—Yes.

385. Have you any idea where they got their flour?—No, I cannot say that I have.

386. They would not be able to get it from a Dunedin miller?—They did on several occasions.

387. And what happened?—They got the flour, and when that avenue was closed—

388. Who closed the avenue?—I do not know.

389. Who is supposed to close the avenue for these free bakers?—If the association were supplying the bakers as a whole, and found that a baker was underselling, it would be their policy to supply the majority of the bakers in preference to one man, would it not?

390. And close up the avenue of supplies to the underseller?—I do not know whether they did so or not.

391. But you assume they did?—I suppose they would.

392. What is the price of bread in Dunedin?—6½d. delivered, all through.

393. That is to say, you have no counter or cart price?—No.

394. Supposing a baker was agreeable to charge 6½d. for what he delivered by cart and thought that 6d. would pay him in cash over the counter, that would be a breach of your rules if he sold for 6d. over the counter?—Decidedly.

395. And you would do all you could to stop him getting flour?—No, we would not do that; I would see him and remonstrate with him.

396. And if he persisted?—Well, we know what the rules say and what the penalties are; but I never had a case where it actually came to a breach.

397. You keep them up to the mark?—That is so; they have been amenable to reason.

398. What are you paying for flour in Dunedin?—I do not know.

399. Is it lower than it was a year ago?—I cannot tell you.

400. Is it lower than it was six months ago?—I do not know.

401. Do you know whether the price of bread has followed the fluctuations in the price of flour?—I know that; but there has been no alteration in price since I took charge of the secretarial duties.

402. I ask you again, have you any correspondence with the Millers' Association bearing on the question of Steven and Co.'s secession?—[Letter-book referred to]. There are no letters here bearing on it.