

276. What was the understanding with the Flour-millers' Association when you saw them about Steven and Co.'s opposition to the trust?—I cannot answer a vague question like that.

277. Have you ever discussed with them about Steven and Co.?—Yes.

278. What kind of conversation did you have? Was it understood by yourself, as a representative of the Bakers' Union, and the millers' representative whom you saw that the two organizations were going to stand in together as against Steven and Co.?—I am not aware of anything of the kind.

279. Was that the understanding?—At what time?

280. I do not know the dates of your meetings: I want to know whether that was the general understanding between the two organizations?—I do not know that it was.

281. Will you swear that it was not? Was there not at this conference between yourself, as the representative of the Bakers' Union, and the representative of the Flour-millers' Association an understanding that the two of you were standing together in the fight against Steven and Co.?—I never interviewed the Millers' Association officially or privately to enter into any negotiations as against Steven and Co.

282. Was there not an understanding between you, as the representative of the Bakers' Union, and the representative of the Flour-millers' Association that you were going to work harmoniously with the millers?—We were willing to work harmoniously with Steven and Co. or any other millers. Our attitude was that we were quite willing to do business with Steven and Co., or any one else, so long as they gave us what we asked.

283. As the representative of the Bakers' Union and the representative of the Millers' Association, did you not understand that you were going to stand in together as against Steven and Co.? Was not that understanding existing?—No.

284. What used you to talk about?—Do you want private conversations?

285. What used you to talk about?—If I had had a reporter there I should have been able to give you that, but I cannot remember now.

286. You cannot answer?—I said there were no negotiations between us whatever.

287. At the interview at which you were present, as president of the Bakers' Union, with the representatives of the Millers' Association was it not understood between you that the two organizations were going to stand in together in this contest with Steven and Co.?—No.

288. Was it understood that you were not going to help the Millers' Association?—No, that was not understood.

289. What was understood?—It was understood that the millers could fight their own battles. It is not our quarrel.

290. You were asked the question, "What has been the effect of the association upon the quality of the flour?" and you said that it has been materially improved, and that the millers have worked up to a higher standard, and no bad flour is produced at all now?—Not so far as I know.

291. And if a witness said he had been compelled to take second-quality flour through the millers' organization, what would you say?—That he had his remedy—that he could have told them to take it away.

292. You said that the millers could afford to buy first-class wheat?—I do not think they could now.

293. Are they buying second-class wheat new?—I do not know that they are.

294. Do you not think that you have said a great deal too much on behalf of the millers?—I said I presumed they could afford to pay more.

295. Then, they must be able to force higher prices from the public if they always buy first-class wheat?—They might.

296. Supposing a baker who was not a member of your union, but was a capable business-man, had better organization and more modern machinery, and was able to produce bread at 1d. a loaf lower than you were producing it, and was giving the public the benefit of that, your Bakers' Union would still try and prevent that man getting flour, would it not?—That man should come to our union and say, "This price is quite good enough for me," and endeavour to get our members to conform to his price.

297. But if he ignored you altogether would you not try to prevent him getting flour from an associated mill?—So far we have not had such a case to deal with. When we have a question of that kind to settle we shall no doubt find a solution of the difficulty.

298. Would the removal of the import duty of £1 per ton on flour be of benefit to the bakers?—No.

299. Would it affect the operations of the millers' trust, do you think?—Yes.

300. Practically it would make the bakers free?—It would throw the millers into direct competition with the Commonwealth, and probably the farmers too.

301. Had you any complaints at all to find in connection with Steven and Co.'s flour, or with their representative, while they were members of the Millers' Association?—We did not come into contact with either Steven and Co. or their representative during that term, because we dealt solely through the association.

302. You had no complaints? You did come into contact with their flour?—No. Generally speaking, their flour has given satisfaction.

303. Since Steven and Co. withdrew, the association has been on the defensive, you say?—Yes.

304. Do you know anything about the association giving a free hand to their members to sell fifties to meet Steven and Co.'s competition?—Yes.

305. Do you know that fifties are being sold at 15s. a ton less than 200 lb. sacks?—Yes; but quality has to be considered in that.

306. You said that the last drop in flour was made by Steven and Co.?—Yes.

307. That is to say, they were being pushed very hard?—Yes.