

253. Why did you decide to join ultimately? Was it to avoid the threatened competition?—No.

254. Was it not to avoid the threatened conflict?—No.

255. What did you join for?—They asked me to stand out, and explained that they would support me.

256. The members of the Trades Council?—Yes; and they said I would have the moral support of three thousand trade-unionists if I stood out. I said I wanted something more substantial, and I offered to sell my business at a price.

257. Do you remember writing this letter to Mr. F. J. Wilson, of Christchurch: "Cust, March 8, 1902.—DEAR SIR,—Yours of 6th instant to hand, and contents carefully noted. From the first we decided to stand out from joining the Flour-millers' Co-operative Association, and are no more inclined to join now than we were formerly. We wish to offer our thanks to your Council for its assurance of assistance, and should the necessity arise we will ask you to assist us in keeping our stand.—We remain, Yours, &c., R. GARDINER and Co. (R. G.)"? Do you remember writing that?—Yes.

258. Three days after you saw them you decided to join: did you not telegraph to them?—Yes, I think I did.

259. Can you not tell the Committee what influenced you, between the date you saw these men and the following Tuesday, in deciding to join the association? Did you get more for your flour?—No. I think in the meantime one of the Christchurch bakers had heard that I was likely to stand out, and I think one or two of them came up, and one wired to me for quotations for forward sales, and I did not feel inclined to enter into a contract for forward sales.

260. What did you base your ultimate decision upon? What reason had you for joining the association after resisting so long?—A day or two after the deputation from the Trades Council saw me I met two or three of my principal customers, and they told me that they had decided to join the Bakers' Association, because they believed it would be a good thing for the bakers.

261. Did you know of the rule of the Canterbury Master Bakers' Union to the effect that they would not buy flour from any miller who sold flour to a baker who was not a member of the Bakers' Union? Did you know that was their policy?—No.

262. Do you think the decision of the bakers in your district to join the Bakers' Union would affect you?—They simply said that they thought it would be a good thing to be members of the Bakers' Union, as it would do away with the people who got flour and started cutting.

263. How would that affect you?—They said they would have to get their flour from the association mills.

264. And therefore you decided to join the association?—That was one of the reasons. My principal reason was to do away with the forward sales. I had an idea at the time that wheat would rise. I had a good stock on hand, and if I had made these forward sales and wheat had risen I should have been selling my flour, which would have given them the advantage of my buying wheat instead of myself.

265. I suppose it was a number of these things combined with Mr. Allan's threat that decided you?—No. Mr. Allan's threat did not cause me to join. I told him that if he offered a certain price I would go one better.

266. But was not that one of the considerations that influenced you?—No; I do not think that would have made me come in.

267. Are you now a member of the association?—Yes.

268. What was your output per month before you joined?—It varied. Some months I sold about 100 tons, and other months I sold less.

269. What would be the average?—About 50 tons a month.

270. Since you joined?—Yes.

271. What is it now?—The average would be about the same—perhaps a little less.

272. Have you got a good price for your flour since you joined the association?—Taking it right through I have got less profit since I joined the association, because since last year flour has sold for less than it used to do.

273. Less than for what you would have sold it if you had been a free miller?—No; I should have sold it at the same price as the other mills.

274. Do you know that the association has been selling flour in Auckland for less than the market rates to meet the competition there?—I understand they have at times.

275. Do you know that the millers of Otago have been selling at a low figure to meet the competition from free mills there?—I know that flour has been very low in Dunedin.

276. Do you know that it is the result of the fight between the Millers' Association and the free mills? As a miller do you not take an interest in the fight in Otago?—I do.

277. And do you not know that that fight has been caused by the fact that Steven and Co.'s is a free mill?—I have always understood that Steven and Co. led the fight against the association.

278. I am asking you whether you do not know that the low price of flour is due to the fight that is going on in Otago?—I do not know that it is specially due to that.

279. You are quite satisfied now with your membership of the association?—Yes.

280. *Mr. Rutherford.*] When that deputation from the Trades Council interviewed you at the Cust did you tell them that you had been offered special inducements—that is to say, inducements not offered to others—to join the association?—I do not remember telling them that.

281. You would not swear that you did not tell them?—I do not remember any special inducements myself. The association did not offer me any special inducements.

282. It was so stated by a witness to-day that a representative of the association had offered you special inducements outside others to join the association?—No; I do not remember any