

79. You said you had suffered severe losses on account of cutting bakers, and resolved never to supply any more of them : have you ever made losses on account of bakers who did not cut ? —I do not think I have. My memory cannot call up a single instance where I lost in a case where the baker kept up the price.

80. You told us that you had not joined the association : you were not working with an understanding with the association ?—No.

81. Are you a large miller ?—I have a five-sack plant. I erected a new plant not long ago. Formerly it was a two-sack plant.

82. How many hours do you work ?—On an average twelve hours the year round.

83. You have no idle machinery ?—No.

84. It has been suggested that one of the objects of the millers' trust was to make the public pay interest on the capital sunk in idle machinery : working reasonable hours you have no interest to make up on idle machinery, and therefore it follows that your profits must be greater than those of millers who have to provide interest on capital sunk in idle machinery ?—If rational hours were worked there would be no idle machinery.

85. How many hours do you have to work so that you will have no idle machinery ?—It depends entirely upon my sales. If I were pushing my business I could work twenty-four hours and get rid of all my flour.

86. You have stated that wheat was cheaper in Australia than it was here : do we understand that taking it as a usual thing wheat rules cheaper in Australia than it does here ?—Yes.

87. *Mr. Hogg.*] Do you think that the association has accomplished its object in Dunedin and Otago ?—I do not think it has accomplished its object, because there are so many mills outside of it ; but I am satisfied that if it did accomplish its object it could supply flour cheaper than any individual miller could possibly do it, because it saves so many expenses—cross-railage, bad debts, and so on.

88. You do not say its object is to reduce the price of flour or wheat ?—They know their own object, and what it is I cannot say ; but so far as I have studied their articles their object appears to be to put the milling industry on a fair, sound basis, which it has never been on before, not to exploit the public, but to get a fair profit for their labour—in fact, a living wage.

89. Has the association improved the position of the millers ?—I believe it has—those who are connected with it. I believe it has considerably, without raising the price of flour.

90. And it has improved their position in Dunedin ?—Yes.

91. But you told us that the trade there is thoroughly rotten ?—Just now it is, it is worse now than it was before the association was formed.

92. Then, the association has not improved the position of the millers ?—It did during the two years.

93. But, contrasted with the past, the trade is worse now than it was before ?—Yes, I believe it is, owing to cutting prices.

94. You have also told us that it would be better to distribute the work over all the mills than to have a monopoly amongst the large mills ?—That is my opinion.

95. Is it not the case that milling machinery is being largely improved from time to time ?—Yes.

96. And that old machinery is liable to become rapidly obsolete ?—That is quite correct.

97. Do you think it would be desirable to prevent men with capital and experience introducing the best labour-saving machinery into the colony ?—Every miller has to do that. However small his mill, he must do that to enable him to compete in the market.

98. Is every miller in a position to do it ?—I have had to do it. I have had to put in a new plant furnished by Henry Simon. Every miller who remains in the trade feels that he must have his mill up to date.

99. With regard to the price of Australian flour, is it not the case that a considerable quantity of Australian flour has to be introduced into New Zealand ?—Not necessarily. It had to be introduced during the last two seasons owing to the fact that a large proportion of our crop was damaged by wet.

100. Does not that occur continually—that New Zealand wheat is of such a character that it requires Australian wheat to improve it ?—No. I know that in ordinary years we can produce as good wheat in the Oamaru district, and at Ashburton and elsewhere, as you could wish for, and that no outside wheat comes in except in a special season.

101. Then, New Zealand millers are not in the habit of mixing Australian wheat with New Zealand wheat ?—Not so far as I know. They had to do it during the last two wet seasons.

102. You say that the New Zealand farmer should not be required to compete with the farmers of Australia—that is, that it is not desirable that Australian wheat should be introduced into this country ?—I did not say that. I gave my opinion as to what would happen if the duty were taken off wheat and flour.

103. Do you think that in a grain-growing country like this it is desirable to have a duty on wheat and flour ?—That is a matter of opinion. We are shut out from Australia, and if the duty were removed our colony would be made a dumping-ground.

104. You have been speaking of moral grounds, and I wish to have your opinion as to whether you think the consumer should have moral grounds against competition in this way ?—Certainly ; I have always been a Free-trader, but I believe in reciprocity—not to have free trade on one side and protection on the other.

105. Being a Free-trader, do not you think it would be wise to take the duty off ? Do you not think that farmers who are growing 33 bushels of wheat to the acre are able to compete with any colonies outside ?—We ought to, but the farmers should be the best judges. Besides, we are not on equal terms as far as expenses of labour are concerned.