

the loss of the export trade?—I said that when we were exporting flour our sales amounted to 7,000 tons. That was including the local and the export trade together.

359. To-day are you selling locally, as members of the association, as much as you used to sell before the association was formed, when you made as much as you liked and sold as much as you could?—No, I do not think so.

360. If Steven and Co.'s output has been reduced from 530 tons to 180 tons a month, do you think the decrease in output has been in consequence of the loss of the export market?—I cannot say.

FRIDAY, 16TH OCTOBER, 1903.

A. H. BLAKE examined. (No. 15.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—Master baker, of Christchurch.

2. *Mr. Loughnan.*] You are president, I believe, of the Master Bakers' Union in Christchurch?—I am.

3. How long have you held that position?—About sixteen months.

4. How long has the Bakers' Union been in existence?—Two years and four or five months—from memory.

5. Was it in existence before the Flour-millers' Association?—Yes; but it was only nominally in existence.

6. You have a rule in your union relating to members doing business with the Flour-millers' Association?—Yes.

7. Will you explain how that provision came to be inserted in your rules?—The master bakers met and considered that by asking the millers to join them they would be more likely to get a reasonable profit on their bread, for this reason: we thought that those cutting the price would be prevented from doing so, which would enable others to get a living wage for their work.

8. That relates to the clause about the price committee?—That is a different thing. The millers were waited upon and asked to join our association, because it was thought they would help us to maintain a fair and equitable price for our bread. Consequently we asked them to sit on our price committee. The reason for doing that was because a majority of the bakers might be wanting to charge an exorbitant price, while others would be in favour of cutting, and we thought that if we had millers on the committee we should have a medium price fixed; and the result proved the last view to be correct. The millers sat on our price committee, and were rather inclined to prevent a high price than otherwise.

9. The effect of the millers sitting on the committee was to keep the price down?—Yes. For instance, it was proposed that bread should be raised 1d. a loaf on one occasion, and the chairman of the price committee advised raising the price  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rather than 1d. It was proved afterwards that  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. would not be sufficient. The tendency of the millers has been rather in the direction of the bakers having a fair price for bread and not an exorbitant one.

10. *The Chairman.*] What was the decision of the committee—that it should be raised 1d. or  $\frac{1}{2}$ d.?—It was 1d., and that was due to our own initiative.

11. *Mr. Loughnan.*] Did the millers sit on your price committee before the inauguration of their association?—No.

12. Are you sure that is so?—Yes.

13. The millers do not now sit upon your price committee?—They do not.

14. Since when did they retire?—About twelve or sixteen months ago—perhaps more than that.

15. Is there now anything like a working-agreement between you and the association?—None whatever.

16. It is suggested that the bakers cannot select their particular brands of flour in dealing with the association: is that so?—I can only speak personally when I say I have never experienced any difficulty in getting any brands of flour I wanted.

17. Have you ever heard from other bakers complaints as to the difficulties they had in getting special brands that they might require?—Yes, I have heard them complaining that they were asked to take—but not compelled—different brands; but those bakers were in a larger way of business than I, and would have less difficulty in getting whatever brands they wanted. I had no difficulty, and I am in a smaller way of business. I only heard of one case.

18. Have you heard of any instance of interference by the association in the way of inducing bakers to join the union?—I think their action generally tended in that direction. That was the reason for asking them to join, so that they could assist the bakers in getting fair prices for their bread, consequently I dare say their action would be in that way.

19. What do you mean by "their action"?—Their salesmen would probably ask the bakers to join the union.

20. Do you know of any instance of actual coercion having been brought to bear on any individual baker?—I do not.

21. Do you know whether any such case has existed?—If it had existed I think I should have known, but I do not know of any.

22. Since the inauguration of the Millers' Association has there been any improvement in the quality of flour generally?—A slight improvement. Speaking for myself I have been better pleased with the way I have been served with flour than before. I had the advantage of getting any brand of flour I wanted at the one office.

23. *The Chairman.*] You say that the bakers were free to select what brands of flour they liked from the association?—I never knew anything to the contrary. I always got any brand I