

To take one line in particular—biscuits. Have you been hampered by any manufacturer of biscuits throughout New Zealand?—There is a biscuit and confectionery association under which all the manufacturers belonging to this association have a table of discounts. These discounts are determined by the association and then the members will supply you at wholesale.

Does that association embrace all manufacturers of biscuits and confectionery?—It embraces every manufacturer of biscuits and the principal confectionery manufacturers.

In regard to the dried fruits; there was a claim put up to the Australian authorities that if they refused to supply you the New Zealand Government would be requested to remove the duty on dried fruits from America. Can you give the Committee any evidence to justify that statement?—We were told that the association reverted to its old list. Inquiries were made by us as to exactly what took place in Australia, but this we could not get. The people who are making inquiries for us told us that.

That is all the evidence you can give to the Committee on that?—Yes.

It is fairly serious to state that New Zealand merchants had threatened to shelter behind the Government in moving in a certain direction?—I was quite aware of the difficulty of definitely proving up to the hilt what did take place and consequently my statement was “we are informed that.”

You are not prepared to go further than that?—I could not take a photograph of Mr. Paterson over there and it is very difficult to get evidence in these cases, but we are definitely convinced that that is what took place.

Do you think that the distributors were influenced?—I would say yes.

They would not supply you on the assumption you were not members?—We offered to sell on any terms the members might determine.

With regard to the Bell Tea Co. You referred at a later stage to their having refused to supply you; what was the basis of their refusal?—I wrote to them just as recently as this year and we were informed that they were not prepared to add us to their list.

You also referred to a “black list”; what is the qualification for admission to a “black list”?—I do not know. I have not done any harm to the Bell Tea Co. people. We know that other merchants and retailers have had sent to them what is known as a “black list” and on it appears the name of National Distributors.

What was the specific objection to the proposed amendment to the Act?—The amendment? I have given that in my evidence.

What do you say was the main objection?—The action of combines in bringing influence upon manufacturers to withhold supplies from National Distributors.

Mr. McSkimming: Nothing to say.

The Chairman: You differentiate in your discount on the same quantities of certain purchases through your association?—I am not a member of any association.

Then what is it?—We would make a special price.

For the same quantity? *Mr. Norrie* gave evidence—I do not know that it is special to your company—that he had to sign certain things before he could get on a special list?—I think that would be with reference to manufacturers’ items.

We will say £500 worth of goods. Would you treat them all the same as regards discounts?—Well, certain manufacturers give us a resale rate—that is, we will charge 13s. 6d. per dozen for items sold in one-case lots, but if we sell them in ten-case lots we would be charging 13s. In many cases the manufacturers fix the retail rates at which we can supply.

Mr. O’Leary: *Mr. Ansell* asked you the possible reason suggested for your being kept off the Australian list of dried fruits. You said you had offered to maintain whatever price they fixed.—That appears in the memorandum *re* the National Distributors and the Commonwealth Dried Fruits Board; page 20, letter of the 11th May, 1933:—

The Chairman,
Australian Dried Fruits Control Board,
Melbourne.

DEAR SIR,—

We wish to make application to be placed on the direct wholesale list of buyers of Australian dried fruits.

We are strictly a wholesale organization having warehouses in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin. In addition to many other stores, we supply the whole of the requirements of the Self-Help Co-op., Ltd., a company which owns 145 retail stores throughout New Zealand.

We have in the past been compelled to draw our vine fruit requirements from America and other sources, and are most anxious that this business should go to a British Dominion and that our money should be kept within the Empire.

We give this undertaking that our prices to the Self-Help Co-op. and other stores will be the standard ruling rates fixed by the Board, and in no case will these terms be broken.

Our organization handles approximately 10 per cent. of the total dried fruit business in New Zealand.

We have withheld placing our requirements for the coming season in the hope that you will make it possible for us to place this business with our sister Dominion.

Yours faithfully,

NATIONAL DISTRIBUTORS, LTD.

(Signed) A. F. H. SUTHERLAND, Director.

Mr. Harris: I would like *Mr. Sutherland* to make it clear in these circumstances why they were not supplied.

Mr. O’Leary: Well, they were not supplied.