

## COST OF LIVING.

### INTERESTING EVIDENCE.

#### BAKERS' APPEAL CASE.

The hearing of the appeal made by the master bakers on the Bakers' Wages Board against the award of the board on June 12 last, which increased the minimum rate of pay from 1/0½ per hour, or £2/10/ per week, to 1/1½ per hour, or £2/14/ per week, was resumed in the Court of Industrial Appeal, before Mr. Justice Hood, yesterday. Mr. Starke (instructed by Mr. J. M. Shannon) appeared for the master bakers, and Mr. Arthur (instructed by Mr. J. Woolf) for the employes.

Henry Hurst, master baker, of Canning-street, stated:—I have been 27 years in the trade. A fairly intelligent man could learn to be a board hand in between 12 or 13 months. I do not know of any increase in the price of commodities except tobacco.

Thomas Passfield, master baker, of Brunswick and Coburg, said:—I employ seven hands. I have had 33 years' experience in the pastry-cook business. There is less skill required by a board hand in the bread trade than that required in the pastry-cook trade. I have not noticed any increase in household commodities since June 1.

To Mr. Arthur.—I pay my pastry-cooks above the minimum wage board rate, but under the bakers' board rate.

This closed the case for the employers.

Mr. Arthur, in outlining the defence, said that it would largely relate to the cost of living. According to the newspapers, there had been an increase in the prices of commodities since the last determination of the board. So far as Queensland was concerned, it was shown by an extract in "The Argus" that morning, taken from the "Worker," a labour journal in that state, that the cost of living had gone up recently from 3/ to 5/ a week to a worker's family. A point to be considered was that the great majority of shops were small shops, where the bread was made by hand. In shops where machinery was used there was no broken time. Where bread was made entirely by hand the employes had to work in the middle of the day as well as at night.

Robert May, baker, of Raglan-street, South Melbourne, said:—I am a foreman for Wilson Bros., of South Melbourne, and am paid £3/5/ per week. There is another man and a boy employed. It takes five years to become a skilled board hand. We go to work on Sundays at 12 o'clock.

Mr. Arthur.—Then you don't go to church on Sunday.

Mr. May.—There is no church on Sunday for a baker.

A description of the process of bread-making was given by the witness to show that it was skilful work. Continuing his evidence, he said:—About two hours is occupied about the middle of the day in making the dough in a shop where machinery is not used. After about eight hours' interval work is resumed to bake the bread. There is a variation of about 25deg. in the temperature in the various places where I work. We work from six to eight hours on other days than Friday. On that day we work from nine to twelve hours a day.

Mr. Justice Hood.—Do you work on Saturdays?

Mr. May.—We work Saturday mornings.

Mr. Justice Hood.—Then you work seven days a week?

Mr. May.—We work on seven days in a week. Several things have altered in price lately.

Mr. Starke objected to any reference to changes consequent on the tariff. The tariff was a matter of speculation at present. The Court had to look at the position at the time of the determination. It was not legitimate to take into consideration things when legislation was in a state of flux.

Mr. Justice Hood.—You are only conjecturing what Parliament may do.

Mr. Starke.—This is a transition period.

Mr. Justice Hood.—You are assuming that it is a transition period. I don't know that it is. Witness has not said anything about the new tariff. He says he has to pay more for his food.

Mr. May.—My wife has told me that it costs more to live now than it did eight months ago. Meat has gone up 1d. per lb., bread is dearer, and wood has been increased in price 1d. per cwt.

To Mr. Starke.—It is probable that with the new harvest the price of bread will be brought down.

Carl Andersen, secretary of the Australasian Federated Butchers' Union, stated:—Meat has gone up 50 per cent. in price during the last six months. The retail price has never been so dear during the last four years.

To Mr. Starke.—The price of meat is not necessarily affected by the price of stock. At the present time meat is dear owing to the scarcity of supplies.

To Mr. Arthur.—Rent has increased from 25 to 40 per cent. during the last seven years. I have lived in 25 houses since I was married. (Laughter.) One has been raised from 12/ to 17/, and another from 15/ to 18/ a week.

Henry Hancock, wood and coal merchant, of Prahran, stated:—Coal has gone up 30 per cent. in price and wood about 8 per cent. in price during the last 12 months.

James Sutch, secretary of the Federated Sawmill, Timber-yard, and General Wood-workers Employees' Association, said:—A worker's family uses 3cwt. of wood in the winter and 2cwt. in the summer. This means 6d. a week increase in price at the present time. Rent to a working man has gone up 1 6 a week; milk, 7d.; meat, about 1 6 to 1 9; kerosene, at 4 7 a tin, 4d. a week. The extra cost of living for the last three months amounts to about 5' a week.

To Mr. Starke.—Since the introduction of the tariff I have paid 4 7 a tin for kerosene.

On a question by Mr. Starke as to whether prices of commodities had not decreased during a period of 20 years, argument took place over the scope of the investigation. Mr. Starke said that it was fairly notorious that the tariff recently introduced had increased the prices of some articles. It was evident that there were going to be strenuous endeavours to prevent it passing. Therefore the increase of price could be said to be only temporary. The average prices of goods should be taken over a series of years. Besides, it was never intended by the act to fix what might be called a fair wage for work done in a trade. The object of the act was to prevent sweating.

Mr. Justice Hood.—I cannot see any suggestion of that in the act. I shall keep to the course previously taken in these cases. If there is nothing wrong with the present rate I won't touch it. If there is, I will remedy it.

Joseph Hudson, grocery manager at the Civil Service Co-operative Store, stated:—During the last 12 months flour has increased in the wholesale price from £7 10 to £9 5/ per ton at the present time; bacon, sides, 7d. to 8d. per lb.; soap, 22' to 27' per cwt.; candles, all-round increase of 1d. per lb.; starch, 33' to 37' 6 per cwt.; washing soda, 5/ to 5 6 per cwt.; sago and tapioca, from 24/ to 27/ per cwt. Since the tariff wholesale prices have risen for the following among working men's commodities:—

ties:—

	1906.	1907.
Matches, per gross .. .. .	1 0	3
Kerosene, per tin .. .. .	3 6	4 4
Tobacco, imported, increase of 3d. per lb.		
Tobacco, locally manufactured, 9d. per lb.		
Clothes pegs, 1d. per gross increase.		
Cocoa, 1d. per lb. increase.		
Dates 1d. per lb. increase.		
Curants, 1d. per lb. increase.		

Mr. Starke.—Did Mr. Burke, the general manager of the stores, say the increases were insignificant?

Mr. Hudson.—The "Age" stated he said so. The list quoted by the "Age" was not contradicted at the time. We have not increased prices on some lines yet.

Mr. Starke.—Is the increase in the price of starch due to the tariff?

Mr. Hudson.—No. The keen competition had brought the price down, and the manufacturers came to an understanding amongst themselves and put the price up two months ago. (Laughter.)

Mr. Justice Hood.—After the hearing of the appeal case in this court, during which it was sworn that there was no arrangement.

Mr. Hudson.—Potatoes, jam, oatmeal, and onions are cheaper than they were 12 months ago.

Mr. Starke.—Some grocers have increased prices on some goods as the result of the tariff, and other grocers on other goods?

Mr. Hudson.—Yes.

Mr. Starke.—Then if you go round to the various shops, I suppose you will be able to get all your articles at the old prices?

Mr. Hudson.—Not all of them.

Robert G. Large, secretary of the Operative Bakers' Society, stated:—Out of 370 members in the union, about 120 of them get about £2 a week through working less than 48 hours a week.

William John M'Eldeu, baker, of Bendigo, and Joseph Weeding, master baker, of Richmond, also gave evidence.

The Court adjourned till half-past 10 o'clock this morning.