

## REGULATING PRICES IN GROCERIES.

A number of questions of interest to the trade were discussed at the quarterly meeting of the Oldham and District Grocers' and Provision Merchants' Association, on Aug. 18th, at Oldham, near Manchester, England. Railway rates, bonded tea, the action of other Grocers' Councils, the advisability of further combination, the conditions of trade in the north of England as contrasted with those in the south, etc. At the request of the committee, Mr. J. W. Taylor, the chairman of the Association, gave his views on cutting prices. All present agreed, he thought, that it was an evil adopted not only in their own town, but in almost every town and village throughout the United Kingdom. (Hear, hear.) "Cutting, of course, meant selling at less than cost price, and, to give one instance where it had been done in their own town, he might say that one grocer, whom all present probably knew, had been selling sugar at a shilling per cwt. under cost, or about 7½ per cent. below the market value. They all, without doubt, deplored this kind of trading, as, when some grocers adopted it, it must of necessity compel the other grocers either to lower their price, or place them in the unhappy position of selling at a price higher than their neighbors, which would place them at a great disadvantage, as customers naturally would not go to one particular shop for an article if they knew they could get it cheaper at another. This, evidently, was the best scheme upon which the Federation had dropped in order to do away with cutting. It stated in one particular clause that it was not right to sell without a profit. This meeting certainly fell in with that view, and would give support to any movement that had for its object the 'stopping' of people who would persist in selling below cost price. (Hear, hear.) In their consideration of the scheme, it was their duty to see whether it was practicable or not."

The secretary, Mr. Arthur Faulkner, urged that any attempt of enforcing higher profits than the public would agree to would be both wrong and foolish. This scheme he thought would be practicable as regarded proprietary articles. He did not blame a man, whether he was selling under anybody else or not, if he was making a profit. Of course one person might buy better than another, and would thereby be able to sell better.

In discussing the clause of agreement bearing on articles which fluctuated in price, Mr. Wm. Perkins was almost bitterly outspoken. He said that the "fixing of prices" was one of the corruptibilities of the trade. They all knew, as traders, that if one man bought Kiel butter in a drooping market he paid more than a man who, probably knowing the feeling of the market, purchased later in the day. His general opinion was that the grocery trade had been degenerating for the last ten or fifteen years, and it was time something was done to alter the state of affairs. \* \* \* If the scheme was generally approved of by the bulk of the associations, he thought if they set to work, with the Federation at the head, they could obtain the favor of three-fourths of the members of the trade. From general observation he had found that many of the bankruptcy cases had resulted through selling below cost price. They in Oldham were in the very hot-bed of co-operation, and, as all present were aware, the stores were really the main factors in the fixing of prices.

In Mr. Smith's scheme he did not see the desirability of regarding the co-operators as too much of a "bogey." No doubt they were a gigantic body, but he maintained that they could be made to toe the line. (Hear, hear.) The largest organizations in the world connected with other industries had been made to do so at various times. He believed that co-operative societies were not their worst enemies on this question of cutting. In fact they were their friends as far as the fixing of prices was concerned, as they endeavored to obtain a fair and honest profit. Of course the scheme altogether was a speculative matter, but it was a matter which he would like to see attained. In conclusion he said the Federation was deserving of their warmest thanks for having brought the scheme before the grocers of the country.

The Chairman observed that they could not decide definitely as to every particular contained in the scheme, as only an outline had been placed before them.

Mr. Jones said he was not in favor of the scheme. As regarded co-operative societies, if they bought at the same price as grocers,

and paid "divi," it would place the grocers at a disadvantage. Continuing, he said, if a man could buy to sell cheaper than another man, and make a fair profit, he had a right to do so, no matter what the market value was.

A Member: It is not fair play, though.

Mr. Jones: I think it is absolutely fair play.

Councillor Schofield: If a man is fortunate enough to buy at a great advantage, what right has he to go and "set up" against the whole of his neighbors, and to the great disadvantage of everybody else?

Mr. Jones: A man ought to be in a position to please himself.

Mr. Perkins: Supposing, for instance, we take a hundred grocers, and one of these buys flour at a shilling below the others, and sells accordingly, he is using his good fortune to impose upon his fellow traders. That being so, I should take him to be a "blackleg."

Mr. Jones: I don't think so. I think he is showing his business ability.

Mr. Perkins: I think he is showing his meanness.

Mr. Jones: A man has a right to adopt every legitimate means to increase his trade, and it, by his forethought, he is enabled to buy cheaper, and consequently sell cheaper than the other grocers, he ought not to be termed a "blackleg."

Mr. Tetlow thought Mr. Smith's scheme did not touch that point. It referred to when a man was selling under cost price. When a trader adopted the cutting system it was really ruining the interests of his neighbor, the interests of the trade, and also the general interest of the country. (Hear, hear.)

The Chairman said he understood that the scheme did not attempt to deal with the man who bought better than another, but if a man was so fortunate, as Mr. Schofield had said, as to buy cheaper than another, he would be in a position to use his own judgment, but if he decided to sell cheaper than the market value, he would be doing an injustice to his fellow traders. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Perkins observed that the ideas of Mr. Jones were to the effect that if a man purchased better than the others in the same trade, he had a right to sell it as he liked, as long as he was making a profit, even though the other traders could not afford to "do it" at that price. Now, he maintained, that it was only legitimate business that when a trader had made a fortunate purchase, he should recoup himself not only for past losses, as no doubt there were always losses accruing on certain articles, but for losses which might possibly occur in the future. This, he took it, was the essence of business. Any benefit which accrued by fortunate purchasing should be taken by the grocer himself, and not have the price lowered to the detriment of other traders. If a man was subject to losses, he had a perfect right to be subject to gains. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Jones: I firmly believe that a trader ought to have the liberty to please himself.

Councillor Schofield: Why should a trader please himself?

Mr. Jones: If a man gets a reasonable profit he ought to be able to sell at any price he likes.

Mr. Tetlow: As far as right is concerned, it may be so, but is it honorable?

A number of members: Not at all.

Mr. Perkins: I say it is only honorable between man and man, and between one trader and another, that they should either reap the reward of forethought on the one hand, or swallow the bitter pill of disappointment on the other; but to sell at a price beneficial to one trader, and to the detriment of others, is not an honorable action.

Mr. Jones remarked that what he was contending for was that he should have the liberty to do as he liked. A trader ought to be in a position to give it away if he liked. (Voices: "No, no.")

Mr. Tetlow: I cannot see where his right comes in to give it away. It is not right to do wrong.

Mr. Perkins observed that if anything beneficial was accomplished nowadays, as regarded the grocery trade, they would have to get the hearty co-operation of traders generally, as it was only by co-operation that anything tangible could be effected. (Hear, hear.) If they adopted a course, such as Mr. Jones had suggested, they would be frustrating their own aims. (Hear, hear.)

The Chairman said he thought the meeting had rambled away a little from the point at issue. As regarded the remarks of Mr. Jones, he could not find anything in them which was

substantially against the scheme, and he thought, after the discussion which they had had, that he would give in his adhesion to it, at least as far as the members generally were prepared to go.

After further discussion Mr. Faulkner moved a resolution to the effect "That they supported any scheme brought forward by the Federation having for its purpose the stopping of undue cutting in proprietary articles." Continuing, he said he moved this resolution, as it might be a stepping stone to something better. They ought not to reject the scheme as long as it contained something which would be beneficial to the trade. If they could not get all they wanted, they must try for a part of it.

Councillor Schofield said if he had adopted what Mr. Jones had been contending for, he thought there had been a time when he could have "swamped" all the grocers in Oldham, but he did not think it was right. (Applause.)

Mr. Ogden agreed entirely with what Mr. Schofield had said.

We learn from the *Grocer's Review* that ultimately the resolution was carried.

## THE USES OF PULP.

Speaking of paper pulp, Prof. B. E. Fernow, of the Forestry Bureau, at Washington, says in his last annual report:

While the use of paper has been superseded in ship building, the latest torpedo ram of the Austrian navy received a protective armor of cellulose, and our own vessels are to be similarly provided. While this armor is to render the effect of shots less disastrous by stopping up leaks, on the other hands bullets for rifle use are made from paper pulp. Of food products, sugar glucose and alcohol can be derived from it, and materials resembling leather, cloth and silk have been successfully manufactured from it. An entire hotel has been lately built in Hamburg, Germany, of material of which pulp forms the basis, and it also forms the basis of a superior lime mortar, fire and water proof, for covering and finishing walls.

The State of New York leads all other States in the manufacture of wood pulp, having 75 mills engaged in the industry, out of the 237 mills in the United States. Wisconsin comes next, with 29 mills; then comes Maine with 24, and then New Hampshire and Vermont with 18 each; Canada has also a very large production of wood pulp from its thirty-three mills, besides supplying large quantities of timber to mills situated in the United States. Of the seventy-five mills in the State of New York, sixty-four mills draw their entire supply from the great forest of Northern New York, or what is known as the Adirondack woods.

## ELECTRICITY FOR MINING.

Electrical experiments that promise much for the prosperity and development of mining in the West, are being made in Nevada County, California. A large part of the mining industry of that region has been suspended during recent years because of the great difficulty and cost of securing power to run the machinery. With steam or direct water power the cost is from \$150 to \$300 a horse power a year. The attempt is to be made to generate electricity by water power at a considerable distance from the mines and to transfer the power to the mines by wire. Two 450 horse-power generators are being put in at a point on the Yuba river, seven miles above Grass Valley, and the power will be transferred this distance to run the mining machinery. The engineers believe power can be supplied in this way for \$100 a horse-power at the most. If the scheme is successful very many similar plants will be built to utilize water power now going to waste in that region, and the system will undoubtedly be adopted all over the West.

\*—This is the salutatory of an Arkansas editor: Our aim—Tell the truth though the heavens take a tumble. Our paper—Of the people, for the people, to be paid for by the people. Our religion—Orthodox, with a firm belief in hell for delinquent subscribers. Our motto—Take all in sight, and rustle for more. Our policy—To love our friends, and brimstone our enemies. If thine enemy smite thee on the cheek, swipe him with haste and dexterity at the butt of his most convenient ear. What we advocate—One country, one flag, and one wife—at a time. Our object—To live in pomp and splendor.