

dition? A.—I think the condition of the atmosphere has a great deal to do with it I do not think, however, that water gas has any more effect in that way than the other, but it is the consumption of the gas, and the breathing of the people that makes the air impure. If the gas lights were themselves made use of for ventilating purposes it would improve affairs very much.

PHILLIPS THOMPSON, Journalist, of Toronto, called and sworn.

By the CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—What statement have you to make to the Commission? A.—I may say that I have resided in Toronto for twenty years. The point that struck me in connection with the holding of this Labor Commission was, that it would be incomplete if some notice were not taken of the remarkable increase of rents that has taken place in all the large centres. It has been noticeable to anyone who has had occasion to rent a house or a store that the rent has gone up in proportion as the population has become centralized here and the value of property has increased. Speaking for myself I may say that when I first went into housekeeping fourteen or fifteen years ago I could get a house that suited me, a small comfortable house in a nice locality, within reasonable distance of my business, say half or three quarters of a mile, for fourteen dollars a month. To get such a house now I have to pay eighteen or nineteen dollars and go twice or three times as far out. That is the tendency of the increase of the city, and it bears with considerable hardship upon a good many of those who have only fixed incomes or salaries. Whatever advances may be made in the way of increase of wages by combination or strikes, these are offset and more than offset by the constant tendency to increased value for the land and consequent advances of rent. I can give an instance. I had not thought particularly of looking up any special instances, but one occurred to me. A relative of my own a few years ago rented a business place on Yonge street to do a small business in the dressmaking way. At the time she rented the small shop with a house in the rear the rent was fourteen dollars a month. In a few years it was advanced to sixteen dollars, shortly afterwards to eighteen dollars; then she left, and the present occupant pays twenty dollars for the same place without any material improvement. All of those increases took place within a period of three years. That is merely one instance of the tendency of increase in rents to bear down heavily upon those whose income or salary is not increased to any considerable extent by labor movements.

By Mr. WALSH :—

Q.—With respect to a house such as you speak of; is there increased trade at the present time to warrant anything equal to the rise in rent of which you speak? A.—I think not. I do not know, but I think the general experience is that trade remains about the same. The population has increased, but with increased population comes increased competition in the different classes, not only among the laboring class proper, but among tradesmen in a small way and even in a large way. The only real gainers by the increase of the size of the city are the men who hold land for speculation or for rental. For instance, suppose a man owns a house and lot which at that time was worth \$2,000. With the increase of population the value advances. It is worth perhaps three or four times the figures at which he purchased it but as a house it is no more valuable to him than before. He can sell it for more but if he desires to remain in the same city and pursue his regular business he has to rent another place, so he has no advantages otherwise than as a landowner; he is not advantaged in any other capacity.

By Mr. ARMSTRONG :—

Q.—Is there any practical remedy for this grievance about house rent? A.—As far as I can see, and I have given the question some little thought, there should be an appropriation of the land value or a considerable proportion of the land value either