

Messrs. A. and T. BURT to the Commissioners on Local Industries.

GENTLEMEN,—

Dunedin, 19th May, 1880.

No. 9 exemption on the enclosed list does not appear on the Government tariff; but we believe that at some of the ports the same is admitted free under "Materials especially imported for the construction of gas and water-works." We would therefore suggest the advisability of defining these exemptions. We may mention that our Collector in Dunedin, Mr. Huckworth, does not allow lead pipe to come in free under the above clause; but we are of opinion that, according to the way it is framed, such might be insisted upon. Your kind attention to this will oblige.

We have, &c.,

A. AND T. BURT.

No. 137.

Evidence of Messrs. REID and GRAY, Ironfounders, before the Commissioners on Local Industries, at Dunedin, 18th May, 1880.

MR. REID: We have very little to complain of at present. Formerly we paid duty on nearly everything we imported; but now nearly everything is free, with the exception of timber, the duty on which is costing us about £100 a year just now, while finished implements come in free. We think that, while a duty is put on articles that we use in our manufactures, there should be a corresponding duty on the articles that now come in free. We do not consider it free-trade at all that we should be handicapped against the importers.

195. *Mr. Stevens.*] Will you kindly mention the classes of timber that you use?—Hardwood, for instance. We cannot find it in this colony; indeed, it is impossible to get it here. We use blue gum chiefly, and also ironbark.

196. And Australian hickory?—That is now free.

197. Are you of opinion that the reimposition of timber duties has been a hindrance to your industry?—Certainly. It is a matter of £100 a year to us at the present time.

198. Does that represent any considerable percentage?—On some articles it is as much as 20 per cent. For instance, swingletrees for ploughs. If they came from Home they would be admitted free.

199. *Mr. Bain.*] Have you succeeded in making reaping-and-binding machines?—No. No doubt we shall when we take the thing in hand.

200. You are making all kinds of agricultural machinery with the exception of reaping-and-binding machines?—Yes: we make nearly all kinds of agricultural implements. We make reaping-machines, ploughs, harrows, and seed-sowers.

201. You are quite satisfied with things as they are, with the exception of the timber duty?—Yes.

202. If you had a rebate of that for manufacturing purposes, it would meet your requirements?—Yes.

203. *The Chairman.*] Can you not get plenty of blue gum in the colony for manufacturing purposes?—No; not grown in the colony.

204. Is there none in New Zealand?—There is not sufficient. There are some hardwoods in the colony, but you cannot get them. We have advertised for it.

205. Then it is not in the timber-market of the colony?—It is in the bush, but not for sale in the colony. Ironbark would answer for a good many purposes; but it is impossible to get it.

206. I suppose this little duty on timber puts you to a certain amount of expense: there is a certain amount of clerical work to be done, &c.?—We pay £100 a year now, which is a rather large sum.

*Mr. Gray:* On one present invoice of timber we are paying £20 for duty.

207. *The Chairman.*] Would it be better to take it away altogether, or to allow a rebate?—The better way would be to do away altogether with it.

208. Your business is extending?—Yes, very steadily.

209. And you make all kinds of agricultural implements?—Yes; we employ from 130 to 150 hands regularly.

No. 138.

Messrs. FRASER and TINNE to the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Native Industries, Wellington.

SIR,—

Auckland, 27th May, 1880.

We wish to bring under the notice of the Commission an especial hindrance to private industry, from which we have suffered ever since the initiation of the public works policy. We have been carrying on the business of engineers and ironfounders in Auckland since 1864, and up to 1872 had a well-established and prosperous industry. When the railway-workshops were commenced we wrote to and met Sir Julius Vogel, and expostulated with him as to the Government entering into competition with us in the manufacture of machinery and other things for which we had specially laid out our plant. We represented to Mr. Vogel that the workshops being worked by the Government would require a large number of skilled workmen, and, not only would our artisans be drawn away from us, but we should also be deprived of work which we had good grounds for supposing would have been open to public competition. He requested us to furnish him with a specification of the kind and number of tradesmen that would be likely to be required in the Government workshops in Auckland, so that such hands could be obtained from abroad, and thus our hands would not be drawn away from us. We did this, and received a letter from him stating "that just such an assortment of hands had been ordered by the Agent-General to be sent from England." The outcome of the whole matter is that, while our trade has from various causes continually fallen off, it has at the same time become more and more unprofitable to us, from the enormous rates which we have been compelled to pay for labour directly in consequence of the competition of the Public Works Department for the skilled labour that has been available. We have trained apprentices, and as soon as they have been "out of their time" they have