

*Hats and Caps.*—The imports in 1886 amounted to £10,343. The whole of these goods can be made in the colony, and give employment to a large number of people of both sexes.

Since the protection-duty on hats and caps was imposed in South Australia last year, the drapery houses there have formed a hat-manufacturing company, and admit that the manufacture can be equally well done in the colony.

*Precious Stones unset.*—The imports under this head last year amounted in value to £48. Evidence has been brought before the Conference to show that the value was many thousands, and that smuggling in this matter can hardly be prevented. The Conference were desirous of encouraging the industry of the cutting of precious stones by a differential duty between stones cut and uncut, but the consensus of opinion was against this course. The recommendation therefore is that unset precious stones should be duty-free. The effect of this will be to develop the working-jewellery trade without loss to the revenue, and open another industry to the youth of the colony.

The following suggestions have been made to the Conference respecting sundry matters in connection with the Customs Department, which suggestions, as they relate to the working of the tariff and are cordially approved of, are submitted for the special consideration of the Government:—

*Exemption of Duty in certain Cases.*—That, in the discharge of all vessels, it shall be the duty of the Landing-waiter or other officer to attach a statement showing what goods have been landed on which exemption of duty has been allowed, whether for Government use or otherwise, and by what authority such exemption has been authorised, and that a copy of such statement shall be posted in the long-room of the Customs Department.

*Shipment of Bonded Goods.*—That shippers of bonded goods by vessels on the colonial register shall not be called upon to enter into a bond for the delivery of such goods at the port of destination, that a general bond by the owner or owners of such vessel shall be deemed sufficient, and that within seven days of the discharge of such vessel the owner must be served with notice of any bonded goods short-landed, otherwise he is relieved of his bond; such notice to be given by telegram or post, if necessary.

*Private Importations.*—It is undeniable that the revenue is diminished by quantities of goods being imported by private individuals for their own use, upon which no duty is collected. In the interests of the revenue, and of the industries of the colony, it is necessary that a much more strict supervision should obtain in these cases.

The following recommendations, being the unanimous opinion of the Conference, are submitted for the consideration of the Government:—

*Railway Rates on Fruit and Fish.*—The present rates on the conveyance of fruit and fish by rail are, to a large extent, prohibitive, in many cases leading to the destruction of these valuable articles of diet. If specially low rates were arranged, not only would they be found to assist these industries, but the railway revenue would be considerably increased, as a large trade would at once spring up.

*Property-tax on Industrial Machinery and Plant.*—It is felt as an intolerable hardship, by all sections of the manufacturing community, that they should be required to pay property-tax on the machinery and plant used in their industries. It is strongly held that these should be as absolutely free from taxation as “agricultural implements in use” and “vessels” now are under the Property Assessment Act. The effect of the present law is to seriously handicap the manufacturing industries, whose profits are small compared with that of other branches of trade. An immediate amendment of the Act in this direction is urgently pressed.

*Chinese Labour.*—The threatened invasion of large numbers of Chinese into Australia and New Zealand is viewed with considerable anxiety by the industrial associations. At the present moment the Chinese in the colony have absorbed several branches of trade, to the great injury of the legitimate settler and trader. They are in no sense colonists, and the united voice of labour calls for such parliamentary action, in conjunction with the Australian Governments, as will effectually prevent the further settlement of these people in Australasia.

*Industrial Halls.*—The varied information put before the Conference respecting the industries of the colony brought out the fact that considerable ignorance existed between city and city as to the manufactures actually in existence in the various quarters of the colony. There appears, therefore, to be urgent need for the establishment of industrial halls in the large centres of population, which shall be used for the purpose of exhibiting samples of the manufactures and productions of the colony. It is suggested that this could be best brought about by the Government providing suitable land-sites, on the condition that the various industrial associations shall erect substantial buildings and fill them with the necessary exhibits. The effect of such permanent exhibitions of the industries of the colony would be widespread: not only would they bring about an accurate knowledge of its productions and resources, but they might be made auxiliaries to a much-needed system of technical education, and thus bring valuable information and instruction to both old and young in the community.

*Mining Regulations.*—This question has engaged the attention of the Conference in consequence of its intimate connection with the labour and capital employed in the mining industry, and the fact that the present laws seriously interfere with the development of the mining districts, and greatly limit the enterprise of the working miner. One operation of the law at present is as follows: A.B. pegs out and applies for a licensed holding. He is debarred from prospecting the same until such time as his license is granted, which usually takes three months, thereby practically throwing A.B. out of employment during that time. The remedy proposed is, to allow every miner to prospect the ground as soon as he has applied for the holding, without waiting for the formal license.