

inferior, and not so good as ours. It is the importation of cheap leathers from America that causes a demand for low-priced articles, and it is impossible to produce good material and compete against it. The manufacturers did their best to keep up the quality for years, but they have been compelled now to start introducing machines, with a view of making similar leather: it is their last resort, although many of them have been ruined in trying to keep up the standard of leather which has been reduced through American importation. The export of cheap material from America is very much encouraged by the McKinley tariff. The American manufacturers are, as it were, paid to export bad qualities by their Government, which find their way here and destroy legitimate industry. I find that they are resorting to a plan in the colony which is doing away with scientific labour altogether. Table men are now greatly used, and instead of receiving £3 a week they only receive £2. The tendency to produce inferior leather vastly reduces the skill required of the workman, and therefore reduces wages.

5. I wish to refer again to the question of harness-leather. You state the employ given in the production of harness-leather to be about double, and that the importation of harness-leather has correspondingly decreased; but you have not yet mentioned the duty which was placed on harness-leather?—The duty is 6d. per lb.

6. What duty would you suggest as being a suitable duty on East India kip?—I will give you the opinion of the leather-dressers, tanners, and curriers of the colony: that all the articles mentioned in the petition before referred to be raised to 6d. per lb., that is an addition of 5d. per lb. on East India kip. There is now 2d. per lb. duty on some inferior leather imported from America to Auckland which I would increase to 6d. Of course, you know it is more natural for us to lean towards the Old Country, and if any exception was made I would strongly advise that all American stuff should be raised to 6d. per lb. duty. I was in charge for some time of a leather-dressing yard in Glasgow, and I know what it costs to produce East India: tanning and currying East India, 5½d., and 2d. extra for grease, making a total of 7½d. The price in the colony: tanning, 4½d., currying, 6½d., and grease, 2d., making a total of 1s. 0¾d. The difference is not altogether owing to wages, but partly to the inconvenience and expense of bringing the wattle-bark from Australia for tanning, whilst at home they have oak-bark handy. The cost of bark is £10 or £11 per ton, landed in Wellington. They have, too, great labour-saving machinery at home. East India kip is nearly all produced by machinery; they have splitting machines and stuffing machines, &c.

7. How much time do you consider men lose from being out of work, and from short time and short hours owing to insufficient supply of work?—In Wellington, during the last two years, I may say, taking it altogether, I am sure that the men have not obtained more than nine months' work in the year. I now know of some men who have not had any work for three weeks.

8. I have a letter here from Bailey and Co., of Dunedin, who wish the duty taken off leather used in bookbinding?—In regard to the duty being taken off leather used in bookbinding, it would be opposed to Bowron Brothers, of Christchurch, who have tried to produce it: moreover, there is no leather specially made for bookbinding but is used for other purposes as well.

9. If the shoemaker has to pay more for his leather is it not an impediment in his way, and will it not bring him into close competition with the imported shoe?—What I hold is that it would prohibit low-class material from coming into the colony, and enable the bootmaker to get a higher price. We consider, however, that the two things are required, an increase of duty on boots should go hand-in-hand with an increase of duty on the material.

Mr. Chairman: I beg to thank you for your assistance.

[*Vide* also evidence of Mr. Glasgow, pages 37, 38, and 39.]

TIMBER INDUSTRY.

TUESDAY, 23RD AUGUST, 1892.

E. F. BROAD examined.

I am manager of the Kauri Timber Company (Limited), Auckland. I make the following statement: The kauri timber comes into competition with Baltic and other timber from Canada and America in the Australian Colonies. At the present time about two-thirds of the entire cutting of kauri finds its way into the Australian markets, where it meets the Baltic timber, which can be laid down with a profit in Sydney or Melbourne at a rate of 12s. 6d. per 100ft. superficial, dressed. It also meets the timber from the Pacific Slope of United States called Oregon, which can be laid down at a profit for 9s. 6d. per 100ft. superficial. The quantities of Baltic and Oregon used in Australia per annum roughly amounts to 60,000,000ft., while the quantity of kauri is nearer 15,000,000ft. The cost of production of kauri timber is, roughly, as follows: 4s. per 100ft. for the timber put into rivers. On an average, it takes four or five years before this timber reaches the mill-booms. To the cost of 4s., therefore, you have to add the four or five years' interest on the cost of logs placed in the river. Under these circumstances, you may allow that the logs cost, delivered to the mill, between 7s. 6d. and 8s. per 100ft. At the present rate of wages, and the number of hours worked per day, it costs to convert the logs into sawn timber—allowing for interest on mills, machinery, &c.—3s. 6d. per 100ft. The loss made in sawing is about 25 per cent., which makes the total cost, under these circumstances, about 14s. per 100ft.; but where dressed the waste is increased by one-eighth, which is added to the total cost, as well as the charges incurred in dressing, handling, &c., which may be taken at about 1s. 3d. per 100ft. Freights from the West Coast to Melbourne are usually 3s. 6d. per 100ft., against 2s. 1¾d. per 100ft. from the Baltic, or 2s. 9d. from the eastern ports of the United States, and about 3s. 6d. to 4s. from different points on the Pacific Slope. The position of the industry in the North is this: that people are not willing to pay more for kauri timber than they would pay for timber from the Baltic or from the Pacific Slope. The consequence is the kauri-timber sawmillers are much hampered in their endeavour to increase the consumption of