

25. I am not saying it is?—You would require to be cautious in jumping at this sort of thing. The mild-steel manufacturers are all under the Board of Trade surveyors at Home. The plates, more especially for boiler purposes, are all tested, and I find from the Board of Trade list that there are plenty of steelmakers at Home whose brands are not recognised by the Board of Trade. If I sent Home an order for steel-plates, and did not get the brand recognised by the Board of Trade, I could not get it passed by Inspectors of Machinery here.

26. That means that some of the material in the market is guaranteed?—Yes.

27. Others are not?—Yes; it is not guaranteed; but, according to the Board of Trade regulations, you cannot make a boiler of any steel that is not of a recognised brand.

28. Are you aware that last year about one hundred and thirty thousand pounds' worth of iron has been imported here?—I am not aware.

29. More or less in a manufactured state?—Yes.

30. If we depend on the Old Country for our supplies of raw iron, what would be the effect if our communication with the Old Country were cut off by a foreign war?—That is a subject that I must admit I have not studied.

31. Would it not send up the standing price of iron?—Well, it would naturally enhance it; it would all depend on the severity of the struggle, if it did take place.

32. Would not the community in that case suffer very heavily?—Well, they would not suffer any more than they would provided you supported those iron-works with the proposed impost of 20 per cent. There is no war, but the moment a war breaks out we know that manufacturers generally take advantage and raise prices; they put the price up to the foreign price all the same. You do not tie them—the Onhunga Company—down that they are to sell the iron at a certain price per ton. Suppose war were to break out to-morrow, with or without a tariff, we will suppose, for instance, what they are selling now at £10 would be £20. I do not reckon there is any relief in that so far as the tariff is concerned.

33. Are you not aware that this Committee have received assurances that, in case the duty is raised so as to protect their industries, they will guarantee that no increase in price takes place?—I should not care to trust them.

34. You do not think their assurances are of much value?—No, I do not: I know it is the English market that rules the price of iron in New Zealand.

35. *The Chairman.*] Do you not see that this argument is rather against your own position as to protective industry?—No.

36. *Mr. Pinkerton.*] We can put on a high duty on the manufactured article?—Yes; you can take it off too. I may say that I am not aware that the protection tariff of the Atkinson Government has done any appreciable good. It has not increased the price of the manufactured article. It has not done the engineering trade any good at all; and, as far as I am concerned, the present Government is perfectly at liberty to wipe it out.

37. Has it not in some way increased the volume of the trade?—It has not.

38. Are there not more engineering works carried on now?—No; there are less.

39. And there is no profit accruing from the existing tariff?—Practically the volume of trade is no larger.

40. And the import trade has not been diminished?—No; the financial position of the trade is even now worse than before the tariff was put on.

41. Was the volume of the colonial trade not increased? Has it not tended to keep the imported article out of the market?—No; as far as my knowledge is concerned, it has not increased the volume at all.

42. Do you think the falling-off in the trade has been affected by the stopping of public works more than by any thing connected with a protective tariff?—Well, there is no doubt the stoppage of public works had a certain depressing effect, only the tariff came subsequent to stoppage of the works.

43. And supposing the public works had been going on at the rate they had been when the tariff was introduced, what effect would it have had then?—I do not believe it would have had any effect as far as affecting the iron foundries.

44. *The Chairman.*] Do you mean to say by this that the proportion of the manufactured article in this colony still bears the same relation to the manufactured article at Home as it did before the tariff?—Yes; that is so, as far as my experience goes.

45. Do you not think, by giving some encouragement to the iron productions of the colony, seeing that we have plenty of ore in the country, it would be a safeguard against any such interference—that it is not so much the enterprise as to have a certainty of supply?—Well, I consider you are looking a long way for bogeys. I would take the risk.

46. This is a list of articles which the ironmasters gave to the Hon. Mr. Seddon from the firm of John Birch and Co., Liverpool, of iron and steel lap-welded boiler tubes, and accessories, when they waited upon him a month or six weeks ago, and asked to have the tariff rectified with regard to the articles mentioned, as they press unduly on the trade. [Printed list produced.] You want the present tax taken off these articles?—Yes.

47. *Mr. Tanner.*] You find the difficulty in the tariff in your trade to be this: that the finished article in one trade becomes the raw material in the more advanced trade; as for instance, cloth is a finished article with the weaver, but is raw material with the tailor; and leather is a finished article when it leaves the tanner, becomes raw material for the bootmaker?—That is so. My complaint is that the raw material should be free of taxation. What I would suggest is, from my experience of the tariff and the Customs together, that a practical man ought to be appointed to give advice to the Customs authorities. Some practical man should be appointed to look after this matter. For instance, with respect to bolts and nuts, they cannot possibly be manufactured with advantage in this country, and we wish to be put on the same level as coachbuilders, whose bolts