

10. Then, you believe that a burden of £2 on an estimated value of £10 or £12 would have the effect of driving an industry of the kind out of the country?—I believe it would have a very great effect on the engineering and boiler-makers' trades. Also, I believe it would be an important item to the iron-founders in the country, and others associated with the building-trades. I mean by that, in the making of columns, girders, and other ironwork in use for buildings. It would mean 20 per cent. additional on the cost of all these articles, and the substitution of wood for ironwork.

11. Do you think that wood would be substituted for iron in the manufacture of girders and columns?—Yes I do.

12. Then, I understand you to say that the effect of this impost would be to drive the iron-trade out of the colony?—Not quite; I say its effect would be a substitution of woodwork for iron for portions of buildings, such as girders and columns. In these cases undoubtedly hardwood would be used. In some cases even now it is a question of cost, and in one or two cases wood has been used. My fear is that if duty is put upon the iron, hardwood will be almost universally used.

13. But they could not substitute wood in the making of boilers?—Oh no; not boilers.

14. But you think this 20 per cent. would induce the builders to adopt wood instead of iron girders?—Yes I do. In fact, instead of hampering the manufacturing trade with fresh imposts, my decided opinion is that an industry of the kind, such as manufacturing iron, as proposed, should be fostered by way of the granting by Government of bonuses.

15. You would prefer, then, that an industry of this character should be encouraged by the granting of a bonus?—Yes, that is certainly my opinion.

16. Do you know if that is the view of the trade generally?—No, I am not at all sure of that.

17. *Mr. Smith.*] Can you say if the raw material found in the colony is equal, or rather superior, in its quality to the imported article?—I believe this: that if the iron I saw of yours can be put into the market at the price charged for the imported article, your iron, I have no doubt, would have the preference.

18. Do you think the people in the trade would join in establishing workshops in New Plymouth, if I could assure them of wrought-iron at a cheaper rate and of better quality than they could import it into the colony?—If you do that, without imposing a duty, then I say the industry should be supported in the country. I would like also to mention that the duty is put upon so many odd sizes that it is most inconvenient, and produces only a very small revenue.

19. *The Chairman.*] Do I understand that remark to mean that you are of opinion the Government should exercise discrimination, as to the imposts to be imposed, so as to relieve the industry from any unfair or unusual taxation?—That is so. I wish to state that I am aware of my own knowledge the coach-building trade is in a languishing condition; a number of portions of undergear and other ironwork parts are now imported, in spite of the duty imposed upon them, and if we put further duty upon the raw material, which is the portion used here in manufacturing, it will make it still more difficult to manufacture as against these imported lines.

20. Take other branches of the trade, for instance, railway-iron?—It seems to me that the requirements of the colony in that direction will be so small that it would not be wise to put the duty on that class of iron—I mean, on steel rails.

21. *Mr. Smith.*] You are aware that all the rails now in use are manufactured out of steel?—Yes. That being the case, it forms a strong argument that while we may manufacture some of the lower grades of iron, it would be very difficult to manufacture the higher qualities, and especially so as regards large steel-plates for boilers, and rails required on our permanent-ways.

*Mr. Luke:* I would also wish to add, for the information of the Committee, that I am generally in sympathy with the assisting what may be termed legitimate industries, and for that purpose certain duties may be desirable; but we must discriminate carefully which are industries likely to become of importance to the colony and afford employment to our artisans and labourers.

Mr. DAVID ROBERTSON examined.

22. *The Chairman.*] Your occupation and address?—I am an ironfounder, residing in Wellington.

23. You have heard the evidence given by the previous witness, Mr. Luke. Have you anything to add?—I would like to say this industry of ours has been fairly represented as one of the most languishing in the colony. There can be no doubt but that it is suffering from various causes, and that such is its present state from one end of the country to the other. I was one of a deputation who interviewed Ministers. Our object was to secure relief for the trade. We were referred to this Committee, where a full opportunity would be given to us to go fully into the details of all the circumstances of our case. We are all agreed on this point: A very material assistance would be rendered if we could get the raw material entirely free of charge. It would tend to cheapen the manufacture, and thereby enable us to compete with other markets. That is a well-established fact, and is acknowledged all the world over. In the prosecution of this industry we have really no manner of protection. We are taxed to the fullest extent. Indeed, a great many of the things we use—I mean implements, &c.—are heavily taxed through the Customs revenues and otherwise. On the other hand, all the things we manufacture are admitted into the colony free of charge. To make our case as clear as possible, and leave no room for misunderstanding, we have prepared a list, now read and produced, of the articles upon which we think the duty should be remitted.

24. This list contains a list of the articles you consider should be admitted free of duty—I mean, your deputation think they should be admitted free, as representing the trade?—That is so. I will give you a case in point which will illustrate the serious disadvantage in which the industry in New Zealand is placed. A contract was let for fitting up a dairy factory, and it was secured by a Sydney firm—Tangye Brothers of that place. The establishment—I mean, the machinery and fittings for the factory—was admitted into New Zealand free of duty. The Sydney firm