

154. Has there been an increase of output during recent years, or has your business diminished ?—There has been a considerable reduction this year in the matter of output, as compared with that of last year.

155. Are you employing fewer hands than formerly ?—I think we are in our clothing-factories. The mill employs about the same number—probably a few more, because we have gone more into the manufacture of hosiery.

156. Take the mills in other parts of New Zealand, such as Ross and Glendining's, have they not increased the number of their hands in recent years ?—Yes, I believe so. They have a worsted plant, which we have not.

157. Can you tell us the total amount of wages you now pay as compared with what you paid some years ago ?—No, I do not think I can.

158. You alluded to the question of ladies' jackets : was not the slump due largely to the season—the fine weather ?—No ; it was caused by the great quantity of low-class lines imported into the colony.

159. With regard to the cheaper goods, have you not an advantage of 50 per cent. in the tariff ?—We have about 40 per cent. total landed charges. As I said, I am not asking for more protection.

160. With regard to the prices, what can a person buy a tweed suit of decent quality for, wholesale ?—£1 5s., and very ordinary lines for £1.

161. And an ordinary trader could buy half a dozen suits at that price ?—Yes.

162. What is the price of a ten-quarter blanket, white ?—15s. 6d. upwards.

163. And grey, of the same size ?—13s. 6d.

164. Do you think those prices are above what the working-classes can afford to pay ?—Not at all.

165. With regard to branding, would you advocate branding all woollen goods or only shoddy ?—I would want to consider that point before recommending anything. I think if all shoddy material were branded it would be satisfactory.

166. *Mr. Harding.*] With regard to shoddy material, would it not be satisfactory if it were branded with the percentage of wool it contained ?—I think that would be unworkable.

167. *Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] You think the originating mills should brand it ?—Yes, or the exporting house. Of course, the matter is surrounded with difficulty.

168. *The Chairman.*] What do you think the increased cost in the manufacture of your goods amounts to now as compared with former times ?—The number of hours of labour in the mill has been reduced, and the cost of making the goods has been increased. The unskilled labourers in the mill got an increase of 1s. per day.

169. You cannot give me the percentage of increased cost ?—No.

170. *Mr. Laurensen.*] I understand that you do not ask so much for protection as that something should be done to brand shoddy goods ?—Yes ; to keep them out.

171. You think if that were done it would improve your position to a very large extent ?—Yes, so far as shoddy goods are concerned. I think the difficulties the woollen-mills are labouring under at the present time are due more to internal than external causes.

172. Do you not think the public would buy the products of the woollen-mills more than they do at present if the prices charged were lower, and that that would increase the output of your mills ?—Certainly. Every reduction in the cost of an article largely increases the output of it.

173. Do you not think the profits levied by the middlemen are such as to prevent that output from the woollen-mills that we all would like to see ?—I do not think the profits are excessive when you take into consideration the cost of distribution. It is like this : the qualities of our goods are so well known that competition amongst the traders for business keeps the price down to the general public. I am referring now largely to such goods as blankets, rugs, flannels, and so on.

174. Say that a suit is bought wholesale at £1 4s. : what is that retailed at ?—One-third advance—that is, about £1 12s. 6d. That is the ordinary profit that the large houses put on colonial goods. A great deal depends on the appearance of the suit. A good-looking suit will fetch 5s. more than a commoner line.

175. *Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] Have you found the net results of your business—say, over the last five years—fluctuating very much ?—They have fluctuated very much. Such a business as ours very largely depends upon the price of wool.

176. And in any case that fluctuation would depend upon the price of wool ?—Very largely, and the results of internal competition.

177. Your opinion is that if the originating mill were compelled to mark shoddy, that would assist the discriminating public when purchasing ?—Very largely, especially in dress goods.

178. And it would have the effect of enabling people to avoid purchasing it ?—Yes. In the sale of cheap articles there is a larger amount of profit, and retailers get more profit out of the imported goods than out of the colonial-manufactured goods.

179. And, in addition to the marking, you think there should be an extra duty placed on shoddy ?—Yes, a duty that would be absolutely prohibitive. Take that tweed that I just now produced, no one in the colony could compete against that.

180. Your check would be in the public really knowing what they were buying ?—Yes, in great measure.

181. *Mr. Harding.*] Is much of your business done by machinery ?—Yes, very largely ; with workers attending to the machines.

182. There is a great deal of talk about using up-to-date machinery : do you consider your machinery equal to the machinery that is used in America and England ?—We import every improvement that comes out, and we keep ourselves thoroughly in touch with what is going on through the machinery journals and our agents in England.