

183. Have you any system whereby your machinery can be kept right up to date, or by which you can find out the very latest improvements?—Yes; we are in touch with all the large machinery-makers of the world, and we have our own agents advising us of all improvements. During the last year we have imported numerous machines to keep us thoroughly abreast of the times. At the present time in our clothing-factories we are throwing out our gas-engines and substituting electrical driving-power, while we are adopting the very latest machines and methods that are in the world.

184. With regard to shoddy, do you not think it would be possible to brand it, and prohibit it from coming in unless it were branded with the percentage of wool it contained? Do you not think that would be a sufficient guide to the public?—I do not think the public would understand it, but if you said it was shoddy they would understand what that meant.

185. What does "shoddy" mean?—The general signification of the term is that the fabric is made of yarns that have been in use before. The original woollen cloth has been used, torn up, and spun over again, and it also contains a certain amount of cotton and other cheap staple.

186. But if they knew that a certain amount of wool was used—say, 75 per cent.—they would know what they were buying. I think you are underrating the intelligence of the public?—I consider that the term "shoddy" carries its meaning to the public better.

187. *Mr. Withford.*] What percentage of wool would there be in the sample of vicuna which you have shown?—There is no percentage of pure wool there, I should say; it is all shoddy.

188. *Mr. Hogg.*] Can you give us an idea of the reason why people buy shoddy?—The cheapness of it.

189. Do you think they buy it knowingly?—I think the lowness of the price is the cause.

190. Is not the price almost the sole consideration?—I do not think it is. I think if you put the two lines before a buyer—pure woollen goods and shoddy—he would not deliberately choose the shoddy.

191. Do you think if shoddy were branded in the way suggested by Mr. Harding it would affect the consumption of the material?—I think it would.

192. Do you not think the general public when they see one article at 4s. and another at 2s. know that one is very much better than the other although they look very much alike?—They ought to, but the public are often very poor judges of these things.

193. Do you supply your workers with goods at a lower price than you supply others?—No; we do not supply our workers with goods at all.

194. Do you supply working-tailors?—If a tailor keeps a shop we may supply him.

195. In suit-lengths?—In any length he chooses to buy. Our business is slightly different in nature from that of the previous witness. The Mosgiel mill sells to the warehouses, while we sell to the retail traders direct.

196. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Is it, in your opinion, the best plan to deal with shoddy by shutting it out altogether?—I do not think so. I think the best plan would be to brand it and combine with that a tariff that would reduce the importation.

197. To put it on the same footing as chicory in coffee, which must be marked as a mixture?—Yes. I do not think it can be altogether excluded.

198. *Mr. Hanan.*] Do you think you can obtain experts who would be able to detect shoddy?—There would be considerable difficulty, but I think you could.

199. Do you think you can obtain people in the colony sufficiently well acquainted with shoddy to undertake this work?—Yes.

200. You desire that such goods shall be marked "Shoddy" so that the public may know what they are buying and so get better value if they wish?—Yes.

201. What dividend does your company pay?—Seven per cent. during the last few years.

202. You spoke of the competition in ladies' jackets and dress goods: what suggestion do you make to remedy your grievance?—I think the imported jackets should be marked or branded in the same way if they are made from shoddy materials.

203. As to hosiery, what position is that in?—We are fully occupied in that branch.

204. And there is no diminution in colonial trade generally owing to imported goods, so far as you know?—Not with our company; but there is an immense amount of hosiery still being imported.

205. Give us a few articles which constitute the nature of the importations?—Children's stockings, ladies' stockings, low-class pants and shirts, ladies' underclothing of all classes, gentlemen's underclothing of a very fine nature—made of silk and wool—and that class of goods.

206. Could you not compete against such imported goods?—There are many lines that we cannot make—we are not adapted for them.

207. Is there a branch or branches of the woollen-manufacture that could be encouraged but which are not established in the colony?—For one thing, there is nothing being done in carpets, mats, and woollen goods of that description. There are those low grades of serges, cloths, and that sort of thing, which we cannot get hold of. But take it all round I think the woollen trade is being pretty well captured—that is, the all-woollen goods.

208. *Mr. Harding.*] Has it come within your knowledge that some of the woollen companies have made heavy losses in the past and that some of them have had to go into liquidation?—Yes, that is so.

209. Can you give us the names of any companies that have gone into liquidation or have had to be reconstructed?—I think the Timaru mill was one company that had to be reconstructed.

210. And the Ashburton mill?—Yes; and I do not know whether or not the Onehunga company was reconstructed.

211. Have you had any experience of your own company getting into low water and losing heavily?—Yes, I believe that was so; but it was before I went there, so I cannot say positively what took place.

212. Notwithstanding the present success of your industry there was a time when it was not so successful?—Yes, certainly; but that was before I had any knowledge of the company.