

Auckland for the greater part are satisfied with clothing which will meet our demands. I cannot be accused of having a direct self-interest in this matter, as I am a working-carpenter on a weekly wage, but I am representing the workers in the northern part of the Island. Our purchasing-power, as pointed out by the previous witness, might be very considerably reduced by an increased duty. I am the father of a family. I have girls of my own, and in this category I am placed with other workers who have girls who want, for instance, a jacket for a season. Now, if we were precluded by reason of an increased cost or duty being placed upon such goods, we should be thrown back upon the colonial article, which costs at present much in excess of the imported article—that is, the raw material which goes to make up these jackets. For instance, our women in the North—and I do not suppose they are different from the women in the South—are bound down by fashion. Whereas, as men, we can get a suit to wear for two or three years, first as our best evening suit and then as a working-suit, our women-folk cannot be placed in the same position. Fashion is so inexorable that a woman will not wear a jacket, even if not half worn out, if it is out of date. We kick against fashion, but we follow it all the same. I have a girl, and she has to wait for a new jacket the same as other girls; but they do not have to wait so long at present, because they can get one for 15s. or £1, of the cheaper kind, whereas a warmer article would cost them from £1 10s. to £2. There may not be that difference at present, but we have to consider a prospective rise in the colonial article if the duty were increased. The imported article now keeps the colonial article down in price, and it is only human nature to suppose that the colonial article will go up in price if a further duty is placed on the imported article. Machinery may be introduced to produce the article required in the colony, but until the machinery is introduced, as workers we have to think of our present needs. I have already mentioned that the matter of climate should enter into the question. Although we workers in the North have our battles to fight with employers in other directions, yet on this subject we combine forces, and I am sent by the Trades and Labour Council to give the mind of the Council on this question as it affects the workers.

211. *Mr. Rutherford.*] Do I understand you to say that in your opinion the imported article is, as is the colonial article, made with wool, more or less?—Yes.

212. *Mr. Barber.*] You instanced the matter of ladies' jackets, and said that you could get one for £1 or £1 10s.: how many yards would there be in a ladies' jacket?—I could not tell you.

213. Would you be surprised to learn that there were not more than 2½ yards in a ladies' jacket?—There would be about that, I should say.

214. Can you not see that the difference in the price between £1 and £1 10s. would be in the labour, and that you are working against the interests of the Tailoresses' Union?—The members of the Tailoresses' Union are bound down by a log, and have been for several years.

215. But the difference in cost is not on account of the material, but the labour?—Well, by the time it reaches the workers it is past finding out where the difference is clapped on.

216. *Mr. Witheford.*] Do you speak for the Tailoresses' Union of New Zealand?—No, because we are not federated.

217. With regard to the tariff, you think the workers do not approve of any increase?—Not in Auckland.

218. Who will pay that increase if it is levied?—The workers would, every time.

219. What is your opinion in regard to improving the position of those engaged in manufacturing? Do you think the tariff should go up or that wages should come down?—I think it should be left as it is. We do not want wages to come down. We are fighting to keep them up to their present level. As to the tariff, I think when you once commence to interfere with it you will not know where it will lead to.

220. What about the woollen-mills?—I understand most of the woollen companies are paying 8 per cent. on their capital.

221. The Auckland factory has not only made no profit during the last year or two, but has lost the profits of previous years?—I am not aware of that.

222. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You referred to the question of jackets as one article of clothing: broadly speaking, what would you think is the difference between the cost of the imported article and the colonial-made article, either in money or percentage?—I have no idea—not the slightest.

223. Are you afraid that if the imported article were shut out the cost of the colonial-manufactured article would be greatly increased by a combine or trust between the woollen-mill companies?—Yes.

224. Do you think the buyer of clothing is a reasonably fair judge of the value of what he buys?—It all depends on whether I buy it or whether my wife buys it.

225. Have you anything to tell the Committee as to your opinion whether wages have risen faster than the cost of living?—I have conducted many cases before the Arbitration Court—over twenty of them—and my opinion is that the cost of living goes up with the increase of wages.

226. And do you wish the Committee to infer that the workers have not benefited at all by the rise in wages?—No, not to that extent.

227. You think the rise in wages has been greater than the increased cost of living?—Yes.

DAVID ROBERT CALDWELL examined. (No. 8.)

228. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am a partner in the firm of Macky, Steen, and Co. I can only speak in corroboration of what previous witnesses have said. I might mention that in connection with what are called cheap suits we import very little of the cheap material. Speaking for the colonial department of our firm, it is nearly all colonial stuff that we manufacture. It is only, as Mr. Finlayson has pointed out, for these little boys' knickers, costing from 2s. 6d. to 4s. 6d., that we import the cheap stuff, because people do not want their boys to climb trees and romp about in the better-class goods.

229. You do not think that a great quantity of inferior stuff is foisted upon the public?—No; I think the public are very good judges of what they buy. You may find a man now and again paying £2 5s. for an inferior article, but he will never again go back to the shop from which he bought it. People are very often much better judges of material than the salesman who sells it to them.