ARCHIBALD CHARLES MITCHELL examined. (No. 2.)

6. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Mitchell?—Works foreman at Messrs. Cooper and Duncan's (Limited), Christchurch.

7. Will you make your statement?—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—In view of the remarks that have fallen from our chairman of executive, Mr. Willis, who has touched in a general way on most of the subjects that I had intended to to speak upon, my statement will necessarily be very brief.

8. You say that Mr. Willis is your chairman of executive. What executive?—The committee appointed by the workers to engineer this agitation against the trust. I think I can pass over the reasons that have led to the visit of this deputation, as they have been fully gone into, and turn my attention immediately to our reasons for stating that the operations of the Harvester Trust are going to be injurious to the workers in the implement trade in New Zealand. It seems to me that the best way to prove that contention is to refer to the actions of other trusts which are now operating in New Zealand, and the effect of whose operations is apparent to every one of us. Take, for instance, the Standard Oil Company. I have a note here, which can be proved in its entirety, to the effect that three years ago the wholesale price of kerosene in New Zealand was 1s. 3d. per gallon, and at that time it was under a duty of 6d. a gallon. With the 6d. duty removed the wholesale price of kerosene to-day is 10⅝d. a gallon, out of which the merchant gets a rebate of 1d. six months after the purchase of the kerosene. The Standard Oil Company took the handling of the business from the merchants who previously handled it, and they now sell through only four agents in New Zealand, who get a very small profit out of the business. The company specify the price at which the merchant must sell the kerosene, and before the merchant takes delivery he must pay cash for the oil and take all risks. He gets the refund only after six months. He pays the cartage on the kerosene both in and out, and the Standard Oil Company hold as a menace over his head the 1d. which he has already paid, and which is refunded only if he can produce a definite statement that he has handled no other oil in the meantime. In this connection I might say, although it is no part of the mission of this deputation, that it seems to me to be a point which might be worthy of the consideration of the Government, whether it would not be wise to further refine Eastern oils, and so tend to break up this monopoly. Another instance, which immediately affects implements, and which is the direct result of the operations of the Harvester Trust in New Zealand, is the case of reapers-and-binders, a machine which it is not our intention to ask for any duty to be placed upon, simply because reapers-and-binders are not manufactured in New Zealand at the present time. It is a significant fact, in our opinion, that a machine which is not now manufactured in the colony should be the very first machine to come under the reforming hand of the Harvester Trust. They are shrewd enough to realise that there is no opposition to be feared from colonial manufacturers in regard to the binder trade, and consequently they feel that they have a much freer hand with the binder than with any other implement. As a result of that the Deering binder, which was sold last year through a local agent for £35, cannot be obtained now, under trust control, under £40. The price from the 1st of the present month is £40. To prove that the price they got last year was a fair one, I might mention that another binder, the Plano, which is now controlled by the same trust, last year sold through agents as low as £28. It will thus be seen that the machine which the trust has practically the sole handling of, and with regard to which local opposition does not affect them, has been immediately subjected to a rise in price. Our contention, of course, is that when they kill opposition or seriously cripple it in other lines of implements the same mode of procedure will be adopted with them, and we can only expect that the price will take an upward turn. That is where, in our opinion, the farmers are going to suffer by the attitude they take up at the present time—to give the Harvester Trust a free hand in the Colony. If they assist us in our request for the imposition of a duty on the American article so as to place us on an equal footing with the American, whose advantages have been pointed out by Mr. Willis, then we feel that the menace under which the farmers stand of having to face this position will be in a very great measure removed. Following the same contention, and to prove that where opposition is removed the Harvester Trust immediately adopts the policy of raising prices, we may take the case of the Sunshine Harvester, a machine very largely manufactured and used in Australia. It was a purely Australian invention, but was pirated by the Americans, manufactured in America, and sold by them in large numbers in Australia. That machine has been invoiced to Australia for Customs requirements at as low a price as £26, and is sold in Australia, where the trust has the local competion to contend with, at £80. In the Argentine, where the trust has practically swept aside all opposition in that particular line of machine, the price the farmer pays is £140. This proves conclusively the result which the unrestricted operations of the trust are sure to have in any country. Then, in further proof of our contention regarding the price of the binder, which the trust have decreed now shall not be sold for less than £40, I will read a short extract as to the cost of harvesters: "The International Harvester Company has had for some time as an employee, at a salary of more than £4,000 a year, Rodney B. Swift, who was several years previously with the McCormick Company. Swift was recently sued by the International on serious charges. His wife has now brought an action against the company, as the holder of twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of stock, claiming an account and relief on the ground of many illegal actions, and that the managing directors be compelled to restore sums fraudulently expended to the amount of nearly $6,000,000. The bill filed by her solicitor, with interrogatories, constituted a volume of 120 printed pages, from which the *Implement Age* of the 29th June makes some extensive extracts. The illegal acts are bribery of Legislatures, securing illegal rebates from railroads, payments to strike-leaders, evasion of payment of taxes, conspiracy to monopolize the implement and twine industries, corruption of City Councils, fraudulent purchase of four harvesting-machine companies. The case has not yet come on for hear-