

ing. We quote statements made as to the cost of various classes of machines. Allowing for all managing and other expenses of every kind and character, the total cost to the company of a first-class harvesting-machine does not exceed \$57, which is sold to the farmer at \$125; a first-class mowing-machine costs \$20, price to farmer \$42; corn-harvesting machine, \$55, \$120; shredder, \$85, \$235. It is alleged that the sales amount to more than \$40,000,000 annually, of which at least 40 per cent. is profit." Another instance which directly affects New Zealand manufacturers is the case of binder-twine, which the Harvester Trust—in addition to many other lines which seemed to us, in the first place, to be altogether beneath their notice—intend to handle. Binder-twine was originally made in America of manila sisal and black hemp, the farmer paying from 11d. to 1s. 1d. He agitated and got a tariff of about 15 per cent. Then the twine was sold for 9d. It then came down to £26 a ton wholesale, and that was the price under the tariff, on the removal of which the price advanced to £37. The farmer, in the first place, had to use the three-ply twine. The single-ply twine, which is the most satisfactory—in fact, the only one satisfactory for use for reapers and binders—was first of all manufactured in Christchurch. It was a New Zealand invention, but was pirated by the Americans, and is now exported from America to New Zealand. Coming to the machines, that more intimately interest the workers represented by this deputation, I will take grain-drills—grain, turnip, and manure drills. The total output for the whole of the New Zealand factories for August—the busiest month—was about forty-three, and we have indisputable evidence that the drills delivered by the Harvester Trust to one station alone in New Zealand up to the end of the same period this season exceeded fifty. The inference is that the same proportion of business is done by them in other lines in other parts of the district, and also in the same lines elsewhere, more particularly in the North Island. Then the terms which the Harvester Trust is prepared to give make it absolutely impossible for the New Zealand manufacturers to do business on anything like an equal footing. The terms offered in many cases—we have accurate knowledge of this—range to four years, the interest running from 6 per cent. to 10 per cent. A clause in the conditions under which their agents handle the goods makes it rather a difficult matter for them to handle articles of any other make than those controlled by the trust; consequently the New Zealand manufactures are placed at a disadvantage in that respect. There are many other considerations which all tend to prove, if you go into them in detail, the disadvantage under which the New-Zealander works—such considerations as distance from the source of supply of raw material, the freights being against us; the difference in the length of the working-day in America as compared with New Zealand; and many others. This brings us right down to the fact that the American machines manufactured under trust conditions—under very much less favourable conditions to the workers than obtain in New Zealand—are admitted to the colony duty-free, while the raw material is in many instances dutiable. I do not propose, as there are one or two speakers to come after me, to occupy the time of the Committee further by detailing anything in the way of technical evidence, but I shall be pleased to answer any question in this respect which you may put to me. In regard to the manufacture of implements generally, I have had an experience of about twenty years, and know just exactly—and feel already—how the operations of the trust will affect us as workers in New Zealand. We feel, with the manufacturers, that the advent of the trust, if not checked, is going to have a very injurious effect on the trade. As a matter of fact, our output this year has up to the present time been very much smaller than it was for the corresponding period of last year, while the total sales of implements in New Zealand have increased enormously, the increased demand being supplied not by locally made, but by imported implements. The very fact that last year the imports of machinery from America and elsewhere totalled £124,000 out of a total amount of about 225,000 pounds' worth sold in the colony is quite sufficient justification for the alarm we feel at the advent of the trust and trust conditions into New Zealand. If the conditions under which we work were equal, or any near approach to being equal—if the conditions were not so enormously in favour of the trust, which can borrow its money at 3 per cent. and lend it out to the farmers at from 6 to 10 per cent., which in itself is a profit, and would enable them if they chose, in order to sweep aside opposition, to sell their goods at cost-price, or even less—the New Zealand manufacturer might have a chance; but the conditions being as they are, it is quite apparent that the New Zealand manufacturer has a very small chance of standing against the competition. We feel that if the conditions are such that the New Zealand manufacturer cannot stand his ground, then the only avenue left open to him will be to turn his attention to importing rather than manufacturing, in which case we, as workers, are the ones who will suffer. The worker is the one who must feel the pinch if the manufacturer decides on that course of action. If it is not possible for the New Zealand manufacturer to go on manufacturing, and he does not turn his attention to importing—because it may be competent for the Harvester Trust with their unlimited capital, if they so chose, to make the conditions unfavourable even to that course of action—then the New Zealand market must immediately become absorbed by the trust. Then will come the inevitable reaction against the farmer. The only inference is that the Harvester Trust will adopt the same tactics that they have adopted in other countries and force prices up to whatever figure they like to ask for any particular machine, and supply only such machines as it suits them best to handle, irrespective altogether of the peculiar requirements of the New Zealand farming community.

W. W. CHARTERS examined. (No. 3.)

9. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Charters?—President of the Canterbury Industrial Association. I have no connection with the trade itself, except that I represent the Canterbury Industrial Association.

10. It consists of employers, I think?—Employers and employees. I am an employee, but I am president. I wish to emphasize that, because mistakes have been made in the past in that respect. The Canterbury Industrial Association has a very large number of employers as