

JOHN BARR, President of the Christchurch Trades and Labour Council, examined. (No. 6.)

15. *The Chairman.*] You really represent the Trades and Labour Council?—Yes.

16. What number of workers do they represent?—A little over three thousand. I have really very little to say. The two last speakers have dealt with the technicalities and the details of implement-manufacture. It only remains for me to bear out certain statements which have been made, particularly by the first speaker, one of which was to the effect that we are supported by all the allied and unallied trades in Canterbury, and practically throughout New Zealand. It is a well-known fact that the Christchurch Trades and Labour Council represent almost every trade, there being connected with the Council even agricultural farm servants; and, as to this matter, we were simply asked for an expression of our opinion by the executive set up by the implement-workers. We gave our opinion that trusts were entirely detrimental to the welfare of this or any country in which they were allowed to get a footing. As to the question of the tariff, we want to support the putting of a duty on goods manufactured in the colony. We should like to point out, as a Trades and Labour Council, that we recognise the fact that this duty cannot be of a lasting nature; that it is simply only a palliative, and that something else must be done: but we recognise also that immediate steps must be taken to thwart the methods of this trust as far as New Zealand is concerned, and the putting-on of a tariff we take to be the easiest remedy to apply in the meantime. We expect the Parliament of this colony will require—and we trust it will be done by this Parliament—to pass legislation to prevent the trust from being firmly established in the colony and doing harm to it. That is the feeling of the Trades and Labour Council—that it is against trusts. It is no use my pointing out to this body of men the hurtful nature of trusts. You are all aware, gentlemen, why protection was first introduced in America—to nurse the industries, to bolster them up: and now that they have grown old and have obtained a firm footing, we find that those duties have not been taken off as they ought to have been, but the protected industries extend their operations in a hurtful manner, particularly when the industry is formed into a trust combine. We are quite well aware that the same thing is required here. The same thing was required in the Old Country in 1775 or thereabouts—in the manufacturing industries there. They had to be encouraged by protective tariffs, while the agriculturalists at that date were, short-sightedly, practically asking for free-trade. I think there is nothing else for me to say. I only wish to express and to emphasize the fact that all the trades in and around Canterbury which I represent are unanimous—there has not been one dissentient voice in this matter—in supporting the workers' executive in their application for protection. We recognise that if the industry in question is encouraged in this colony it means that more workers must come to the colony. You will have therefore a better home market for the farmers, and I always hold that the home market is preferable to the foreign market, because your freights and other charges are saved. You invariably can get a better price for your goods right at your own door. That has been my experience in Canada and the United States. We trust that this will be the outcome of the protection of the home industry—an increased market for manufactures and an increased production.

QUESTIONS AND REPLIES.

Mr. Willis: I should like to correct a statement that has been made. Some time ago Mr. Hall spoke to the Premier, as the representative of the employers of Christchurch. In trying, I presume, to make his case as strong as possible, he let his anxiety get the better of his discretion, and the statement he made was that while in America the employees in the agricultural-implement works worked ten hours a day, and worked like slaves, the employees in New Zealand worked only eight hours or eight hours and a half, and went at it in a go-as-you-please way. I think that is a direct slander on the employees of New Zealand, and I contradict it straight out. The employers who gave evidence the other day spoke of the employees in the trade in the highest terms of praise.

17. *Mr. Ell* (to Mr. Willis).] Do you think it would be a material advantage if the railway tariff were so adjusted as to enable the locally-manufactured article to be carried at considerably reduced rates as against the imported article?—I certainly think it would be a very great advantage indeed, but I do not think it would be a sufficient advantage.

18. I am not suggesting that?—I think it would be an assistance, certainly.

19. *Mr. Taylor.*] Does the deputation cordially indorse the suggestion made here recently by Messrs. Beaven and Trolove, that there should be a sliding-scale tariff?—Yes.

20. *The Chairman.*] You are unanimous upon that point?—We are quite prepared to accept that.

21. *Mr. Taylor.*] That is, if the arrangement were accompanied by substantial guarantees from the manufacturers?—Yes.

22. *Mr. Tanner.*] What do you understand by a sliding-scale tariff?

Mr. Mitchell: I understand that the proposal made by the employers is practically as follows: If the Parliament of this country is prepared to impose a sufficient tariff against the importation of American machinery, the employers are quite prepared, as a safeguard to the farmers, that the employers will not exploit them by forming a local combine to have a clause embodied in any enactment that may be placed upon the statute-book, to work on something like these lines: they are willing to hand to the Collector of Customs their present catalogues as the basis of their present retail values, and if from any cause over which they have no control they raise the prices of their machines a proportionate amount of the tariff—four times the amount, I understand—is to be taken off, and so leave the door so much more open. The arrangement would also operate in the opposite direction, so that, if by reason of increased production they found they could manufacture cheaper and so sell cheaper, they would ask that a corresponding increase be made in the Customs tariff. It would be an automatic arrangement, so that there need be no trouble.

23. *Mr. Hardy* (to Mr. Mitchell).] Is the advantage which the manufacturers now have over