

- 41 Do you know the firm of Suckling Bros., of Christchurch?—Yes.
- 42 Do you know that "S.B." is still the brand put on their best boots?—But does that indicate their name, or is it their trade-mark?
- 43 The name is almost as well known in Christchurch as Hannah is in Wellington and in the North Island?—I did not know that it referred particularly to Suckling Bros., but I have not come in contact with their goods. I question whether I have seen a pair of their boots for years, even in my travels.
- 44 Is it within your knowledge that some of the old-fashioned firms that make really good boots and have made a name for themselves—that they still continue to brand their boots with the name of the firm?—That may be, but, of course, with certain lines.
- 45 For good goods?—Well, I do not think you will find many extensive manufacturers doing so.
- 46 Is it not a fact that some manufacturers are very large importers?—That is so. Unfortunately we are compelled to import.
- 47 And is there not a danger of the one coming into conflict with the other—that is, the importing and the manufacturing?—Not the slightest.
- 48 You only import what suits you, and make up what suits you?—We do not import what suits us, but import what we are compelled to import.
- 49 But there must be profits out of those goods?—Of course, you are putting a very important question—probably more important than you really imagine. Now, I went to some considerable expense in erecting a new factory.
- 50 I know it is a splendid factory?—I had it made up to date, and I was under the impression that we could reduce our imports by at least one-half. We have the facilities for turning out the work—labour, and so forth; but the quantity of labour, and suitable labour, is not procurable in the colonies. Now, this year we have had to cable on three different occasions, and no later than last Monday, for stuff that we could manufacture well in the colonies; and that was owing to the deficiency of labour.
- 51 Is that owing to the scarcity of hands?—Yes.
- 52 You cannot get hands?—We cannot get suitable hands. I do not think there is labour of any description available.
- 53 How do you account for the scarcity of hands?—Of course, you can account for it in more ways than one. Apprentices, of course, have been wiped off the sheet.
- 54 Does the working bootmaker earn sufficient money to induce him to put his boy into the trade?—I do not know of any other trade, taking it on the whole, that will earn more money than the bootmakers are and have been doing for years past.
- 55 That is the ordinary man employed by the manufacturers?—Yes.
- 56 What is the rate of wages in a factory?—Well, the rate will run from £2 10s. to £4 10s., and, of course, exceptional hands will get £5.
- 57 That would be when you are working at full time?—Well, we always work at full time.
- 58 But do the ordinary manufacturers that have not got shops—are they able to work at full time?—No, they are not.
- 59 Then their men are placed at a disadvantage as compared with yours?—They are, but at the same time it does not pay them to shift to take up a position with me, or with men who are able to work full time. They have their homes and their families, and, of course, there is a considerable expense in the men shifting with their families if it is merely temporary employment.
- 60 Is it generally known that the rate of wages you pay is so good?—Oh! that is the trade, I am not referring to myself.
- 61 There is a difference between you and the ordinary trade in that you can keep your men on always?—Yes.
- 62 You have already told us that your men do well because your men can be employed at full time?—I think that is the first consideration a man should take up—namely, permanent employment. That is the question that both employee and employer should give consideration to.
- 63 But some manufacturers are not so favourably situated as you are?—Yes; there is nothing so annoying to a manufacturer as not to be able to work full time.
- 64 What is the average rate of wages for a bootmaker in New Zealand, do you think?—I think, if you take the average rate it would be £3—about £150 a year. I think they will average that for permanent work. Of course, I was not speaking of permanent or not permanent.
- 65 Reverting to branding, you are perfectly satisfied that if you were to brand your boots made in New Zealand with your own name, or with the name of your firm, the sales would go down?—Decidedly.
- 66 And after making such splendid stuff all these years people still really do not believe in it?—Not in the higher-graded goods. Of course, trade has been pretty well turned upside down for the past ten years. At one time the purchasing public in New Zealand went in for wear and weight; now they go in for lightness and appearance.
- 67 You do not know anything about woollen materials?—No.
- 68 Do you know good tweeds are made in New Zealand?—I do.
- 69 And you think it would be wise to brand them?—We are ruled by the public.
- 70 Would it surprise you to know that I asked at one time for an imported piece of material to have an overcoat made with, and that I was given a piece of Roslyn instead, and that I was told it would last as long as a piece from Home?—Probably it would.
- 71 I obtained it ten years ago, and the material is as good now as the day I got it?—They were dealing with you honestly.