

did tend to shut out the low-quality stuff, because the duty from a percentage is very much higher on that class of boots, which is really unduly taxed; whereas, in regard to the higher grades—anything from over 10s. per pair—the alteration in the tariff did not affect them. The fixed duty per pair and the reducing of the *ad valorem* duty did not increase the duty on the higher-grade boots, but it did tax the lower-grade boots, and practically shuts them out. The effect of that, I think, has been to educate the people up to a better class of stuff. The imported stuff that comes here now is of a higher grade, and the whole of the public has been gradually educated to demand a better class of stuff. What would happen if that cheap stuff were in the market I am not prepared to say.

14. *Mr. Hall.*] A previous witness stated that some of the low-priced stuff could not be manufactured in New Zealand at anything like what it can be manufactured in England. Is that so?—Yes, undoubtedly.

15. He was speaking of slippers, for instance?—There is stuff made in England we could not compete against without the duty.

16. Can you compete with them with the assistance of the tariff?—We can just hold our own. The position of the tariff is this, and it is rather an important point to know: our wages-bill is exactly double the wages-bill in England and Germany. I recently saw a detailed statement of the wages paid in the various branches of manufacture in England and Germany, and they were just half our rates. The tariff we have got puts us just about on the same footing. We estimate that we are now practically working under free-trade conditions: that is to say, the difference in our wages compared with their's is counterbalanced by the tariff.

17. *Mr. Veitch.*] You say that the wages here are double those paid in England?—Yes; in England a man gets £1 8s. 6d. a week, and here we pay £2 16s. per week. In regard to the wages of cutters, machinists, &c., we just about pay double the rates paid in England. I am not quite clear whether they work rather more hours than we do, but the statement I have made is near enough.

18. *The Chairman.*] You do not suggest that the minimum rate given to men in the boot trade here is too high?—No, I do not think it is. The minimum rate that we pay is £2 6s. 10d., and we have not one man receiving the minimum rate in our factory. Although that is the minimum rate, and there has to be a minimum rate fixed, our wages run up to considerably over that—to £2 12s., £3, and £3 5s., and up as high as £4, not including foremen. £3 and £3 5s. is a common wage.

19. *Mr. Hall.*] Do I understand that some cheap lines are still coming in from England in spite of the tariff?—Yes, undoubtedly—a certain class of slipper and evening shoe; but all the time progress is being made here. But those lines are really checked by the scarcity of female labour: that is where all our factories are blocked. We could get the men, but it does not matter what men are available, you have to have a stitching-room. You can only get the boots made when you have the girls for the stitching-room. That is the weak spot of the extension of our factories. There is a certain growth, but not a very rapid growth.

20. Are there any materials which you use in the manufacture of boots upon which you are paying a high duty?—No, I think the tariff is a very fair one. The tariff was adjusted, I think, during the time that Mr. Millar was Minister of Customs, and he gave a great deal of attention to the subject. As I have said, I believe the tariff is a very fair one. I do not think there is any special handicap in that way from the materials point of view.

21. There is nothing handicapping the local manufacturer?—Not in regard to the importation of the materials. There are, I suppose, some items in leather that the manufacturer might desire to have free of duty. But, of course, the tanner has to be considered. I do not think that the industry is handicapped by the tariff at all.

22. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] You say that the labour cost of production of the goods is about one-third: does that apply to boots invoiced at 6s. a pair?—I was speaking of our own manufacture.

23. Do you not make boots of that nature? You say that the cost of labour is about one-third?—That is an average. The cheaper the boot, there is more material in proportion and less labour.

24. Approximately, 1s. 6d. would be the cost of labour?—Yes.

25. I want to analyse this: a pair of boots invoiced at 6s. in England—on youths' boots there would be 1s. duty to start with—16 per cent on 6s.—that is another 1s., making 2s. The duty, therefore, becomes equivalent to 33½ per cent.—namely, 2s. But the cost of labour in making a pair of boots of that kind would only be 2s., so if you are paying double the cost, you are paying 2s. on labour that would be got for 1s.: is not that so? I mean to say that the value of labour in England would be 1s. 1d., but you are paying 2s. here. So that it is not quite free-trade conditions on cheap boots, but I grant you it is on more expensive boots?—No, I do not think it is on cheap boots.

26. This is a very serious question to numbers of families—the cost of children's boots—say, children from seven to twelve years of age—the cost of their boots would be a big item. What we want to get at is some means of reducing the cost of these necessities of life?—You know that all infants' boots are free up to sixes.

27. But in the case of children from four to twelve years of age, the duty runs pretty high in consequence of a uniform tariff per pair, quite irrespective of the value?—Yes.

28. Would the boot-manufacturers object to a reduction? Would it be against the interests of your factory to reduce the duties on the cheaper class of goods—children's boots up to twelve or thirteen years of age?—There is a large number of youths' boots made lately, but I do not think anybody is keen on making children's boots in the Dominion.

29. So we were informed. One manufacturer said he would not like an abolition of the duty?—I do not think I would like to answer that question on behalf of the trade. There is a federation of the whole of the manufacturers in New Zealand, and I would not like to speak