

*To Mr. Hornsby.*] As to our being up against the proposition of increasing the price of the food of the people, why should not the men who work the land be protected?

*To the Chairman.*] The tariff on outside wheat is only a small one: it is 5½d. a bushel. The Australian tariff is 2s. a cental: that is about 1s. a bushel. We only want to be put on the same level.

*To Mr. Veitch.*] As to the suggestion that there may be undue profits between the farmer and the consumer, it goes in labour—entirely in labour. Labour has its rights, but it goes in labour. I am referring to the cost of distribution.

J. B. LAURENSEN, representing the Industrial Exhibition Executive, examined.

On behalf of the proposed industrial exhibition, I would like to say that we expected to be in a position to be able to present details—figures and plans—to the Committee. We are not in a position to do that now. We hope before the Committee has finished its sittings to meet you in some other place; in the meantime I would like to say, on behalf of the Industrial Association, that we hope, if the Committee think the industrial exhibition would benefit the industries of New Zealand, it will give the matter favourable consideration.

*The Chairman.*] Do you propose to hold an exhibition in Christchurch?—Yes. The date has not been fixed yet. We thought first of all that it would be held at the end of the present year; but thinking over the matter more in detail we think it will take longer. We would like the Committee to give an expression of opinion whether it would be beneficial to the industries of the Dominion to hold such an exhibition.

*The Chairman:* We will give the matter our careful consideration.

J. L. OWER, Cycle Woven Wire, Fence, and Gate Company, examined.

I particularly wish to give evidence in connection with wire netting, staples, and that sort of material. Some years ago barbed wire was made in New Zealand; then the duty was taken off, and the industry closed up, simply because barbed wire was dumped in here cheaper than we could get it made for. Three thousand tons of barbed wire are imported every year, and a large quantity of staples. There is no reason why it should not be made here. We could make it here even without the duty if it were not for the dumping. America dumps wire here. Some years ago there was no duty in Australia. To-day eleven firms are making the wire. The duty in Australia is 5s. the hundredweight. Staples come under the same heading as wire here. Staples mostly come from America.

*To Mr. Forbes.*] I suggest a similar duty here to that in Australia—namely, 5s. It would not cost the farmer any more. We get our wire mostly from America and Canada; it comes in free at present. The raw material for the manufacture should also come in free. I would charge the same price as the farmer was paying prior to the war.

*To Mr. Craigie.*] We employ thirty-two hands, and if the 3,000 tons referred to were manufactured in this country we would employ about ten additional hands. In addition there is the indirect benefit to be considered. Our works are in Christchurch, and electricity is an important factor in our production; it is very much cheaper.

*To the Chairman.*] The machines for manufacturing the barbed wire come in duty-free; the machines used in connection with wire netting also come in free. With regard to wire netting, we have been manufacturing that here for ten years, and we got on very well for a considerable time. It is duty-free from England, and 10 per cent. from America. Australia would be the same as from England. We make a netting to compete with the ordinary sheep-netting. We did very well for a while. Suddenly a ship arrived with very much the same material. We heard that a shipment was coming, and I advised the Customs of it. The Minister in charge classified it as manufactured metals—30-per-cent. duty. A week or so afterwards there was a change of Government, and the new Minister classified it as wire netting. That article has been coming in here ever since, and it has reduced our trade very considerably. The same steamer brought this electric-welded stuff. They also brought it to Australia, where it was classified as manufactured metals, and there has never been any shipment to Australia since. That was invoiced at nearly double the discount that I could buy it here. In consequence of my request the Customs made a regulation providing that the invoice should be the same as for domestic use. That did a certain amount of good, but it does not go far enough. We want more than that to check the declarations. If they made a small charge of 2s. 6d. a hundred, that would pay expenses and bring in a considerable amount of revenue to the Government. In Australia the duty is 33½ per cent.; and we ask for the same duty here. In regard to wire netting, we could supply the whole demand of New Zealand. It would cost a considerable sum of money, but there is plenty of money to put into manufactures. I am referring to sheep-netting, especially the welded netting that is now coming in. Rabbit-proof fences could also be made here. All we ask is a fair profit, and the Government can examine our books if they want to. People buy the welded stuff because it is cheaper. The electric-welded stuff is also largely used for reinforcing concrete; for that purpose it is classified as manufactured metals. In regard to railage: at pre-war rates it cost 15s. 11d. to rail a ton of oats from here to Dunedin, whereas it costs £1 19s. to rail a ton of netting. In Australia they have a permanent Commission to deal with the tariff. I think a similar body should be set up here. That Commission interprets the tariff and makes representations to the Government from time to time.

I. WOOLF, Managing Director, Bunting and Co., examined.

I wish to speak about the hair curling and drafting industries. Considerable quantities of curled hair were imported to this Dominion before 1914, and no doubt so soon as matters