employed a large number of men, besides the labour employed indirectly, such as carters, coal-miners, foundry-workers, and others, have been compelled to cease operations, and others will have to follow suit unless some means of relief can be introduced. The question naturally arises, What can be done to retrieve the position the industry enjoyed previous to the war, and to endeavour to improve the productiveness of the country's resources? This could be done providing it were possible to secure a better price for gold. There have been statements made that gold has been sold as high as £15 15s. per ounce in London, and we think that the Government of the country should take measures to ascertain if it is true. If so, the producers here should get the benefit of the increased value. We are perfectly aware that the standard price has not been raised, but there are other ways in which the British Government can make a profit on our gold, and we claim that we are entitled to that profit, particularly as we had no freedom of sale after production. We also think that much good would result were the Mines Department to institute an inquiry into the whole condition of mining in Otago, such inquiry to be conducted by experienced mining men with an experience of both alluvial and lode mining, with whom should be associated some one having a good local knowledge of districts that might be worthy of further exploration. We are quite aware that assistance to some extent may be procured through the Mining Act, providing the County Councils subsidize, but we think that what we propose should be undertaken by the Mines Department, as few county bodies have funds to spare from the maintenance of roads, &c. We advocate this course as we think that the work of this Committee will be chiefly confined to the principal towns; hence those actively engaged in gold-mining will have few opportunities of placing their views before you. Some immediate relief should be given by a substantial reduction in railroad rates on all machinery and material used in the industry; also all material used in the industry to be free from import duty. We thank you for your patient and courteous hearing, and trust that you will consider the life of the mining industry, which has contributed so largely to the past prosperity of the Dominion, worthy of your consideration and favourable recommendation to the Government.

H. F. NEES examined.

I have not a great deal to add to what Mr. Sligo has said. What I ask the Committee seriously to consider is the question of stimulating the mining industry. Mr. Sligo has pointed out the many disadvantages under which the industry labours. A Committee which sat at Home under the presidency of Lord Inchcape suggested that the standard value of gold should be raised. The result of the finding of that Committee gives us no hope that in New Zealand the Government can give us any relief in that direction, for if the Imperial Government can do nothing in that respect it is useless to expect that the Dominion Government can do anything. The only thing left is that some assistance should be given to the industry generally. There is one thing that comes pretty hard on the miners, and that is the income-tax. A mining company acquires a claim and puts up plant, and if the venture fails it generally results in the plant being sold as scrap iron. The taxation of mining companies is the same as that of ordinary companies except that it is based only on one-half the declared dividends. That sounds all right, except when this occurs: The capital of a company is, say, £5,000. It may pay £4,000 in dividends; it pays income-tax on £2,000 of that. Then it goes out of existence, and the shareholders pay taxation on a certain amount of their supposed profit. It is a wasting asset in that sense. They pay on half the total amount paid in dividends. I think the taxation is unfair in such cases, and some relief should be given. In regard to railage concessions, I think they should extend to coal used on dredges. Mr. Sligo spoke of the Mines Department. There is one way in which the industry might be helped—the provision by the Government of experts who could advise miners. In the case of the other primary industries officers of the Government give assistance in various ways. Nothing of that sort is done for mining. The officers representing the Mines Department here are good men, but their duties are confined practically to inspection. I think mining is entitled to some assistance in that respect. I am not speaking as a miner, but as president of the local association.

The Chairman: Are you engaged in dredging?—Yes.

What about the position of good agricultural land being destroyed by dredging in certain localities?—There is very little of that taking place; but it does happen occasionally.

To the Chairman: As to the destruction of rich agricultural land by sluicing, that question has been a good deal discussed, and there is a good deal of argument both ways. The majority of the land worked for dredging or sluicing is practically useless for agriculture. It only becomes valuable when the miner wants to buy it, and then the owner wants perhaps five times the amount he is paying rates on. I agree to that question being considered in the event of the inquiry being held that we ask for.

W. R. HAYWARD, President, Dunedin Furniture Employers' Union, examined.

The furniture employers principally seek relief in the way of the Customs tariff. At the present time, although we have a tariff on manufactured articles, we also have a somewhat similar tariff on the material used in the manufacture of those articles. Take such lines as upholstery-coverings, cabinetmakers' ironmongery—we ask that these should come in free. In cabinetmakers' sundries you include dowelling; it may be argued that it can be made here, but in actual fact it cannot be made here, because there is no really suitable timber. We also ask that there should be a special tariff designed to encourage the manufacture of chairs locally. The tariff that would be necessary to do this would need to be somewhat on the lines of the tariff on imported boots and shoes, or on the lines of the Australian tariff. On chairs coming into Australia—cheap chairs—the duty is 3s. a chair, or 35 per cent., whichever is the higher rate, if imported from the United