

better suited for breadmaking than much of the wheat that millers are at present compelled to mill into flour for the baking trade; (b) that very substantially increased grants be given to agricultural colleges for research upon the lines indicated; (c) that popular lectures to farmers be inaugurated throughout the country on the growth of wheat, to be addressed by capable scientists.

5. *To Mr. Sidey.*] It is recommended that domestic science be taught on a broader and more comprehensive scale. I recognize that at Otago University they are taking up that matter in a very thorough manner; but I am speaking with respect to the Dominion as a whole.

JAMES A. BLACK, representing the Christchurch Furniture-manufacturers' Association, examined.
(No. 34.)

At a special meeting of the Furniture Union three delegates were appointed to draw up what they thought would be sufficient to bring before the Committee. They reported to the association this week, and all the points were confirmed. The following are the first five recommendations: "(1.) That we regard the present duties as applied to furniture made in the British dominions to be sufficient. (2.) That 12½ per cent. preferential tariff be imposed on furniture made in European and American allied countries. (3.) That further restriction be placed on the importation of furniture from those countries where the rate of wages and standard of living is lower than that of New Zealand. (4.) That goods made in countries which were enemies during the late war be prohibited for the next ten years. (5.) That the Committee be strongly urged to inquire into the manufacture of three-ply veneer from the most suitable New Zealand timber." Our men work forty-four hours per week, and the minimum pay is £3 13s.; they are asking for a further increase. It is not thought to be fair that we should have to compete with a country where the rate of wages and the standard of living are lower than they are here. I have seen in this town a folding-chair selling retail for 10s. 6d. It could not be made wholesale here for less than 14s. There is Japan and China also, and there may be other countries. The position in regard to the trade is likely to be serious. Here is another instance: Japanese oak, the freight on 450 ft. of timber was £6 10s., and the price of the timber in Japan is £1 9s. 6d. per 100 ft. I will give another instance. I have seen in this town a roller-top desk sold at £5 12s. 6d.; it was in oak. We are the largest makers of roller-top desks. The timber costs just about £5. The wholesale price of a desk is £13. I think the last instance occurred about four years ago. That could not happen at the present moment, but it would cut under our present prices. Large numbers of desks are bought, and the average person does not know the difference in regard to quality; we are competing against an inferior article at a very low price. As to the tariff that should be fixed, that is a matter for inquiry through the Consuls in the different countries as to the conditions there—as to the rate of living and the rate of wages. The 12½-per-cent. tariff is against all foreign countries; our suggestion is in regard to allied countries in Europe and America. A further restriction might be put on all foreign countries. Under the conditions I have indicated our trade would suffer severely; in fact, a large number in the wholesale trade would be put out of business altogether even under the present 37½ per cent. Our sixth recommendation is: "(6.) That the manufacture of raw spirit for industrial purposes be encouraged to commence at once." I understand that the present price is 8s. 6d. per gallon; before the war it was 2s. 5d. and 2s. 7d.; 4s. 9d. was the cost about six or eight months ago. With regard to our recommendation that inquiries be made into the question of the manufacture of three-ply veneer from the most suitable New Zealand timber, I would like to show the members of the Committee some samples which I have here of different woods. The New Zealand beech is very similar to the Russian beech. We consider that one or more suitable persons should be sent to America, where they make these three-ply veneers, and samples of our New Zealand timber should be taken over there and made into three-ply veneers, and the samples should be sent back for examination by builders and cabinetmakers in the Dominion. I believe the New Zealand beech is equal to the Venesta veneer, which is practically imperishable. [Samples of veneer produced.] I am convinced that neither white-pine nor black-pine are as good as other timbers for three-ply veneer. The point I wish to make is that it has not been tried out sufficiently. They have tried only two or three timbers, which are not suitable. Experts ought to be appointed to look into the position—that is, to test the suitability of New Zealand timbers for three-ply veneering.

To Mr. Craigie.] Japanese workmen receive from 2s. to 2s. 4d. per day, against over 13s. per day here. We work forty-four hours per week; I do not know how long they work. It is a delicate question to put a differential tariff on Japan. We are aware, however, that if we are to meet the competition openly we must go down.

To Mr. Sidey.] America does not enter into competition with us as Japan does.

To Mr. Forbes.] The furniture trade in New Zealand is progressing ever, say, the last ten years. It is the most progressive trade there is in timber—in output and number of men employed. Employers are putting in more machines.

R. A. BEVERIDGE (Furniture Trade) examined. (No. 35.)

I represent A. J. White (Limited). I wish to make special representations respecting the tariff. We are asking for the removal of the duty on furniture-coverings which cannot be produced in New Zealand, such as velvet, moquette, tapestry, plush, upholsterers' twine for springs, sewing, and mattress-work, and the like. We feel that if these things came in free we would have a better chance in competition with foreign countries. Within the last twelve months I saw a six-piece suite of furniture in oak and covered with hide which was sold wholesale at £4 10s.